

Statement of

Steve Sadler

Assistant Administrator

Office of Intelligence and Analysis

Transportation Security Administration

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Before

The United States House of Representatives

Committee on Homeland Security

Subcommittee on Transportation Security

September 18, 2014

Chairman Hudson, Ranking Member Richmond and members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Secure Flight program.

TSA is a high-performing counterterrorism agency charged with facilitating and securing the travel of the nearly 1.8 million air passengers each day. Our Secure Flight program is an integral layer of security, crucial to our ability to deter and prevent terrorist attacks in aviation. As you know, this system performs secure, efficient, and consistent watchlist matching of passenger names for all covered domestic and international flights into, out of, and within the United States. TSA also performs these services for domestic air carrier flights between international destinations. TSA vets approximately 2.2 million passengers per day on 250 domestic and foreign carriers.

Secure Flight History

As you know, the Secure Flight program had its genesis in the 9/11 Commission Report, which recommended that TSA take over watchlist matching from aircraft operators. The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRPTA) of 2004 codified this recommendation into law, requiring DHS to conduct pre-flight comparisons of passenger information to the Terrorist Screening Database (TSDB) watchlist. Prior to the implementation of Secure Flight, airlines were responsible for matching passenger information against the TSDB.

Since November 2010, Secure Flight has conducted watchlist matching of passenger information against the TSDB for all covered U.S. and foreign flights into, out of, and within the United States, including point-to-point international flights operated by U.S. airlines. Secure Flight also performs watch list matching for flights that overfly, but do not land in, the continental United States.

By transferring these matching responsibilities from the airlines to TSA, Secure Flight allows for expedited notification of law enforcement, airlines, and our partners in the intelligence community to prevent individuals on the No Fly list from boarding an aircraft, as well as ensuring that individuals on the TSDB with the “selectee” designation receive appropriate enhanced screening prior to flying. Secure Flight allows TSA and our partners in the intelligence community to adapt quickly to new threats by accommodating last-minute changes to the risk categories assigned to individual passengers. Passengers making an airline reservation are required to provide their full name, date of birth, and gender, as well as a Known Traveler Number and Redress Number, if applicable. TSA matches this

information against the TSDB, then transmits the results back to airlines so they may issue or deny passenger boarding passes.

The Secure Flight program continues to evolve as TSA's approach to transportation security has shifted from a "one-size fits all" approach to a risk-based security approach. Improvements in technology and intelligence collection and sharing have allowed TSA to strengthen the TSA Pre✓™ program and focus our resources on individuals who may pose a higher risk to transportation security. Secure Flight is an essential component of efforts to provide population who have volunteered information about themselves such as pilots, flight attendants, members of the military, clearance holders, and individuals enrolled in Trusted Traveler programs with expedited screening. Travelers within these populations use their Known Traveler Number when making flight reservations, which allows TSA to vet them against the TSDB, confirm their eligibility for expedited screening, and provide the appropriate designation on the traveler's boarding pass.

Program Accomplishments

The Secure Flight program is vital to the success of TSA's mission. Since its inception, Secure Flight has demonstrated reliability and superior effectiveness and performance compared to the aircraft operators' watch list matching abilities. Secure Flight vets more than 800 million travelers annually to ensure that individuals on the No Fly list are denied boarding and that selectees are identified for appropriate screening.

In October 2011, TSA introduced TSA Pre✓™, a program which expedites the screening of certain known populations at the airport passenger security checkpoint, thereby enabling TSA to focus its efforts and resources on those unknown passengers. Secure Flight is critical to the

operation of TSA Pre✓™. Watchlist vetting and confirmation of eligibility for expedited screening are conducted by Secure Flight, which enables TSA airport staff to appropriately route and screen passengers. In December 2013, TSA expanded this program, allowing U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents to participate via the TSA Pre✓™ Application program. Applicants undergo fingerprinting and a background investigation prior to being granted expedited screening benefits. As of August 2014, more than 500,000 individuals have applied and been successfully enrolled in the program, further allowing TSA to focus its watch list matching efforts on high-risk individuals.

Secure Flight is capable of identifying passengers flying internationally for enhanced screening measures based on risk-based, intelligence-driven information, as well as randomly selecting a percentage of passengers for additional screening to build unpredictability into the matching process. In 2013, TSA initiated TSA Pre✓™ Risk Assessments, which allows Secure Flight to enhance prescreening by utilizing intelligence driven rule sets to identify high- and low-risk passengers, for either enhanced, standard, or expedited screening.

Privacy and Redress

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) integrated a robust privacy and redress system as part of the Secure Flight program. TSA has dedicated privacy staff to ensure Secure Flight systems and analyses are in compliance with applicable laws, procedures, and best practices. The system also has built-in safeguards to manage privacy risks.

TSA serves as the executive agent for the DHS Traveler Redress Inquiry Program (DHS TRIP), an interagency program made up of components of the Departments of Homeland Security, Justice, and State. It is a single point of contact for individuals who have inquiries or

are looking to resolve security screening issues they have experienced during international or domestic travel, including enhanced screening, delays, or denials of boarding. These individuals can use the DHS TRIP to request redress and request that DHS, the Terrorist Screening Center which houses the TSDB, and any other involved agency review their personal information and correct their record to resolve their travel-related issues or to prevent misidentification as appropriate.

DHS TRIP has received and processed more than 185,000 redress requests and inquiries since its establishment in 2007. Once the TRIP review process is complete, and all traveler records have been updated as appropriate, DHS issues a letter to the traveler signaling the completion of the review and closure of the case. Historically, approximately 98% of the applicants to DHS TRIP are determined to be false positives. To avoid such instances, DHS TRIP assigns applicants a unique Redress Control Number, which they can use when booking travel.

Since TSA has taken over watchlist matching from airlines through Secure Flight and since the implementation of DHS TRIP, DHS has seen a significant decrease in the number of redress requests.

Government Accountability Office Recommendations

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has recently conducted two audits of the Secure Flight program and provided TSA with invaluable feedback through their recommendations to strengthen our systems and procedures. In their audit on Secure Flight operations, GAO recommended TSA take the following steps: develop a process for regularly evaluating causes of screening errors, implement corrective measures based on this analysis, tie

performance more effectively to program goals, and document cases to improve program performance.

TSA has already made great strides in addressing GAO's recommendations by developing data collection mechanisms to evaluate the root causes of screening errors. TSA's Office of Security Operations has taken the lead through the Security Incident Reporting Tool to collect feedback at airports including cause, corrective solution, and lessons learned from each incident. TSA expects to have this reporting system completed and implemented at all airports by the end of the month. These lessons learned will also be incorporated back into relevant program offices at TSA headquarters to ensure consistency and accountability throughout the agency.

TSA has also implemented a number of critical data security protections within the Secure Flight system, including restricting access to authorized users and requiring audit logs as well as increasing privacy training, and strengthening the approval process to allow access to data. TSA also instituted a Management Directive to manage all requests for Secure Flight data and will implement additional systems to track all data access requests.

Finally, GAO recommended that TSA develop a system to document Secure Flight system matching errors so TSA can better analyze data errors and address any matching issues in the future. Our Office of Intelligence and Analysis is developing a detailed tracking capacity for instances of system matching errors, which we expect to have completed by the end of the calendar year.

With regard to GAO's review of Secure Flight's privacy protections, TSA has already begun to incorporate their recommendations to provide privacy refresher training and to track decisions pertaining to Personally Identifiable Information (PII). Secure Flight employees will

receive job-specific privacy refresher training by the end of the calendar year. As stated earlier, we have dedicated privacy personnel on our staff to help with these efforts. As far as tracking decisions pertaining to PII, efforts are already underway to establish a tracking process and we expect a completion date early next year.

TSA greatly appreciates the work GAO put into these audits and looks forward to enhancing the program through addressing their recommendations.

Conclusion

TSA's Secure Flight program is a robust system that allows TSA to make Risk Based Security decisions that are crucial to the security of our transportation systems. Today, Secure Flight not only identifies high risk passengers by matching them against the TSDB, but it also uses the information to assign all passengers a risk category: high risk, low risk, or unknown risk. At the same time, TSA has also enhanced Secure Flight's privacy oversight mechanisms to protect personally identifiable information.

Secure Flight continues to be the Nation's frontline defense against terrorism targeting the Nation's civil aviation system. It is an incredibly effective tool in identifying individuals of concern for denial of boarding, enhanced screening, or expedited screening. TSA will continue to expand on these successes even further as we work toward our goals of enhancing the passenger experience while at the same time keeping bad actors from doing us harm.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I look forward to answering your questions.