

Panel Discussion 1: Airline Security – What’s Next?

Presentation:

Passenger Survey Results – Perceptions of Security

Dee Allsop, Executive VP, Wirthlin Worldwide

- 65% of the people surveyed thought we are doing the right thing by tightening security and we are moving in the right direction.
- But this may be the “halo” effect, as presidential approval rating jumped as well
- When people are asked about the “perceived” problems the nation is facing after Sept 11th, foreign policy and economy jumped up as the most important problems. Lately, economy has overtaken foreign policy as the most important problem
- A recent Gallop polled asked respondents “Are you afraid to fly?”, and 44% said they are very afraid or somewhat afraid
- The problem with this survey is that only 1/3 of the population fly more than once a year, so survey results are skewed toward non-flyers or infrequent flyers
- We did a survey that only looked at people who travel more than twice a year. Instead of 44% saying they are afraid to fly, only 19% said they are afraid to fly
- Of these travelers who fly more than twice a year, 45% said they have made no changes in their travel trends, and only 16% said they have used video conferencing instead of flying
- Survey respondents pointed out 3 main reasons for not traveling – hassle, economy, and security – and all three reasons are about the same in terms of their weight
- When asked about threats to air safety, back in 1999, 78% of survey respondents thought poor maintenance; after 9/11, the ratio dropped to 53%, but has increased back up to 72%.
- Back in 1999, only 15% of the respondents thought terrorist attack was the biggest threat to air safety; this ratio increased to 43% after 9/11, and has since dropped down to 24%
- People have gone back to think mechanical safety of the aircraft as their biggest concern
- About 80% of Americans support a national identification card, which is a tremendous support level.
- A recent CBS poll said 90% of travelers say they are willing to spend more time for security checks and are not criticizing the longer checks after 9/11; 40% of travelers have had their bags searched, and 59% say they think the airports/airlines do a good job with security
- When people were asked how do they rate different constitutions in the role they can play in providing and insuring air travel safety, the Congress is weighted 45%, the FAA 45% and the Airline Industry 42%, all of the three are rated about the same
- People want to know what is going on in terms of security policies. People want information about what we’re doing and they want to know if there are things

being done. 3 out of 4 people studied said: "tell me about it". Less than 1 out of 5 people said this kind of information makes them less comfortable.

Panelist Remarks:

Ed Merlis, Senior VP – Government Affairs, Air Transport Association

- The TSA – Transportation Security Agency – is new at its job
- The passenger loads in the system have not returned to pre 9/11 levels
- The question which is raised in mind is: are things going in a direction that when the loads return to their pre 9/11 amounts; first, we'll be having a system in place which meets the level of security necessary to deal with those amounts and second, we can create an environment in which passengers and goods can move through the system and experience the benefits of air transportation which is faster movement between points compared to the other modes of transportation.
- For security, the focus of TSA should be on "people", not on "things"
- Protecting air transportation 'system' is totally different from protecting a single 'individual' like the president of the United States.
- Security should be passenger/people based; Israelis have a very good security system – it is intelligence driven, focusing on people who are on a 'watch list', are 'wanted' or are 'suspicious' in any sense. They interview people and ascertain the level of risk that an individual has and then apply the level of security search on that individual based on the level of risk involved. It can even start long before an individual can find his way through the airport.

Patricia Friend, President, Flight Attendants Association

- We cannot pretend things are just like before 9/11
- The airplane is a workplace for the flight attendants
- Passengers are willing to spend more time/ pay some more money in order to make sure that they can get to their destination securely.
- She encourages airlines to speak out about what they are doing to improve security
- She believes that no security system can be totally safe. Whatever we do, bad guys still will get on the airplanes every now and then.
- There is a report this week – in recent tests performed by the government, it is still very easy to deliberately get weapons through security
- After 9/11, the procedure is that pilots 'under no circumstances' can leave cockpits to assist with problems in the cabin.
- That means people in the cabin, namely flight attendants and passengers, are on their own
- The Aviation Security Act says that within 180 days, airlines should provide flight attendants self-defense training – but US airlines are not moving forward

- Unfortunately neither the government nor the airlines have responded to AFA requests for security, such as cabin camera and better communication equipment between the cockpit and cabin, so far.
- AFA cannot assure passengers safety of flight unless airlines step up and provide what AFA has asked them to do

Captain Edmond Soliday, former VP of Safety, Quality Assurance and Security, United Airlines

- Some of our most valuable customers are still afraid to fly
- We need to restore our customers' confidence
 - First and foremost – get employees confidence back
 - Second is to issue photo badges or ID's – which need to become standardized, universal and federally kept track of, we need to know exactly who is on the aircraft and who is touching the airplane.
- Provide employees with more training; we have to make them sure that the way to build a secure system is to make everyone involved
- We have marginalized airports and focused our attention on security checkpoints, but we have ignored other parts, such as on the airplanes
- We need to train employees to recognize what's normal and what's not, and what to do about abnormal situations
- One issue is photo badges – need to become standardized, and federally done
- Remember there are 2 types of security, the one like what we have in Israel and the one that we want to implement in this country that can guarantee our values and civil rights.
- In this country, we value more civil rights, so we need some balance. We cannot give up all our civil rights to make our planes safe and secure.
- There are 3 kinds of terrorists – 1) well trained, financed, and are willing to die for their cause, 2) just plain crazy, and 3) criminal types. Security checks we have in place work well for 2+3, but not 1
- Still, we need to move forward with deployment
- We can harden the airlines, but there are other transportation modes still vulnerable, so we need to make sure we spend the R&D money
- These days, the press has focused on sensational stories about security holes, which basically show terrorists where the weak points are in our security system.
- Although I believe in a free society and press, I still believe that we need some behind the scenes security system that people are not aware of
- Real security systems need to be transparent so that terrorists would not know what to expect. We need to keep the 'Flexible' system 'Unexpected'.

Professor Arnold Barnett, MIT

- Security seems to have improved since 9/11
- I am concerned about losing some of our gains over time
- Recently in the Washington Post, there was an article about a new “database” based system
 - The question is – Will it work?
- Finding the terrorists is like finding a needle in the haystack of 1 in million events
- What do we do with such a system (ranking passengers by security risk, colored light for screening, etc) if we do implement it?
- New systems sound high tech and sophisticated, but we have to worry about the possibility that we are being lead by these daydreamers. We should not rely on people’s minds.

Discussions:

Capt. Soliday

- A retired Captain wrote me a recommendation that he was sure would stop terrorist attacks – he said terrorists are unable to die in the presence of pigs, so we should put pigs in cockpits
- Everyone makes mistakes, so we need layers in security. Increasing security screener’s pay, or having more screeners, don’t mean a higher safety level
- We need to make a security system that recognizes human errors.

Professor Barnett

- We need to think realistically
- He has no problem with identifying high risk people, but it has to be done effectively
- We have to understand which people can really pose threats?

Capt. Soliday

- The dumbest thing for profiling system is to talk about it – we do not want the terrorists to know how to beat the profiling system
- Good security are done by professionals, not by those talking in public

Ed Merlis

- Good security is a redundant system
- Everyone should be subject to scrutiny; there should be no free pass
- We should not talk about it to give terrorists roadmaps to holes

Dee Allsop

- 75% of the survey respondents would like to know what is being done in terms of security, but they do not want to know the level of detail that is being provided in the media lately

Audience Questions:

Is the message being taken by the INS?

Capt. Soliday

- INS is getting a lot of scrutiny

Survey indicates 80% favor national ID cards. Was the figure from survey of frequent flyers?

Dee Allsop

- No, the survey was by the general public. We think the number would also be very high among frequent flyers

TSA's security deadlines is 9 months away – if we miss those deadlines, would there be blame placing?

Ed Merlis

- The system is setup by politics
- By October, it will be clear if we will be able to meet deadlines – and this timeframe is 3 months before the election
- He thinks people should go out and tell the truths about compliance NOW
- We need to step back and talk about interim measures
- We can't wait until Oct 15, and then reveal all the problems. It would be too late. We should start discussing now
- Waiting will do nothing for security

How about the need to cover open spaces around airports or hire new security people?

Capt. Soliday

- Changes in security have been event driven (PA 103, TW 800, etc)
- As time goes on, interest wanes
- We need to constantly fund R&D; we need a strategic direction, and a commitment to see it through

Each panelist was asked to think of one thing that can be done now for security

Capt. Soliday – better training for employees

Ed Merlis – no one thing, all things should be done now for security

Patricia Friend – Echoes Capt. Soliday's view about better training for employees