# *The Cost of Aviation Security*
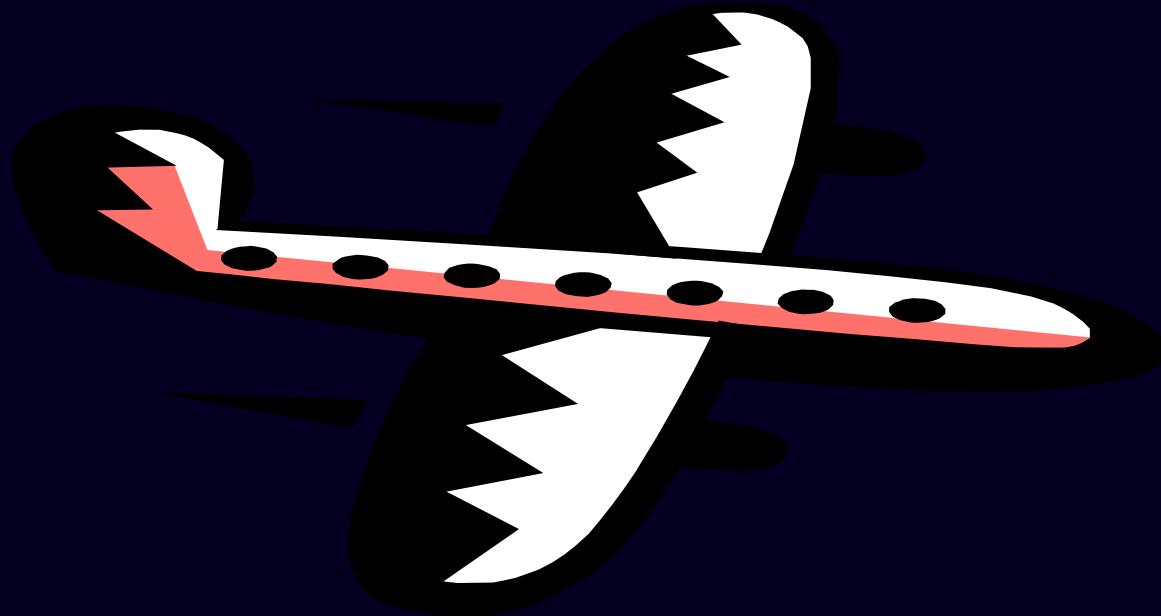
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Has aviation been sufficiently *hardened* *as a target that future terrorists will go elsewhere?*

Perhaps, but we should note that:

- *More US civilians were killed by terrorists during air journeys than during any other activity.*

- *On a per-hour basis, the terrorism death risk during air journeys was 600 times higher than at other times.*

And these statistics are all based on the 35-year period *prior to 9/11!*

Since 9/11, we have seen:

- The **Shoe Bomber's attempt** to destroy a Transatlantic US jet

- A **shootout at LAX** that caused several deaths and injuries

- Strange flight cancellations in late 2003/early 2004 that, according to Tom Ridge, *"probably"* prevented a terrorist attack

Indeed, the very fact that aviation has been hardened as a target might make it especially attractive to terrorists.

(Academics love paradoxical statements like this one.)

The terrorist fascination with aviation, in short, *long preceded 9/11 and has persisted since then*. It seems hard to argue that the massive attention to aerial security is excessive or irrational.

How Much Would *Further Terrorism Against Aviation* Affect the Industry *Economically?*

"If there were another incident on a commercial airliner in the United States, it's game over, lights out. It's beyond a disastrous fall. It's over."

--Kevin Mitchell, head Business Travel Coalition August 29, 2003

On the Other Hand, Consider Some Reactions to:

- **The Israeli Bus Bombings**
- **AA 587**
- **The Start of War in Iraq**
- **The Madrid Train Bombings**

Most present air travelers may already believe that further terrorism against aviation is a question of "when not if."

And they might not be deterred from flying should their grim expectations be realized.

Who Should Pay the Bulk of Costs for Aviation Security?

Passengers ⟷ Airlines ⟷ Airports

or

Government
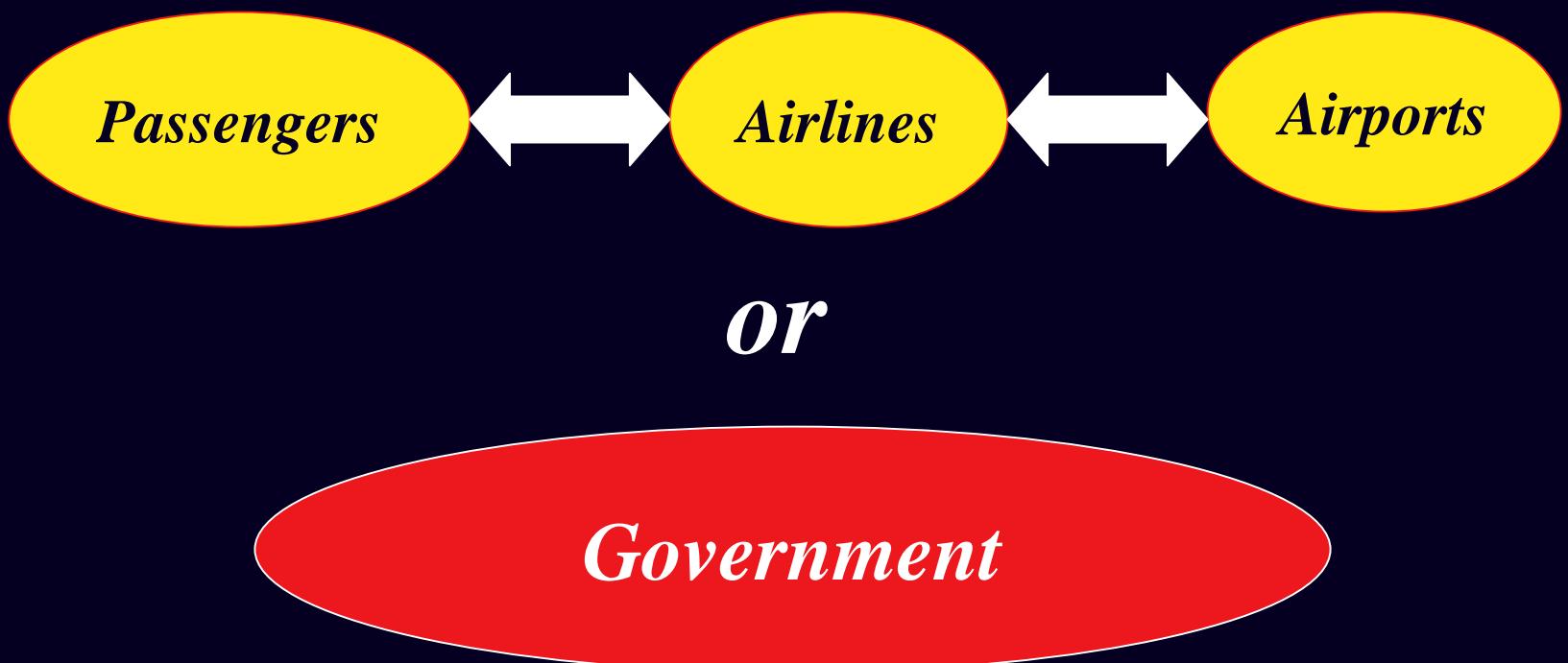
"Dollar" Costs of a Terrorist Attack on a US Airplane That Kills 100 People:

Passengers Aboard: $300 million   (FAA)

Airlines/Airports: $5 billion (ATA)

Rest of Nation: *Presumably Many Times $5.3 billion*

Has aviation actually been *as hardened against terrorists* as it should be?

One Specific Issue:

Why have they resumed transporting *heavier US mail* on US passenger planes?

Keeping heavier mail (weighing more than one pound) off passenger aircraft cost US airlines *$250 million in revenue per year*. (ATA)

At the same time, ATA has suggested that a terror-induced plane crash would cost about *$5 billion to the airline industry* in future revenue.

(We will use that estimate.)

Comparing $5 billion to $250 million suggests a rule of thumb:

A ban on heavier mail would be "cost effective" if it prevented *one air disaster over a 20-year period*.

This linear analysis is far from perfect. But have there any better *cost-benefit analyses* been performed in the decision process?

Spurious Argument:

   If heavier US Mail is banned from passenger planes for security reasons, then it follows logically that *all cargo* must be banned.

And….

Thinking about the Unthinkable

So, where are we?