

The world is fixated on recent events, i.e. box cutters and shoe bombs. However, terrorists tend to be brilliant and the next attack is and always will be unpredictable. We must fixate on the root cause. Unfortunately, terrorism has many different causes and will probably never truly be understood nor eliminated. Therefore, the next best option is profiling through the sharing of the various worldwide intelligence agencies (re Homeland Security) and the mandatory use of a centralized identification system (i.e. Passports). Biometrics is better but is many years away. Granted the argument of civil liberties, however, we have already lost our liberty to life and the pursuit of happiness so lets try to regain what has been lost through a very simple means of positively identifying the folks that wish to travel on airplanes (through the use of passports).

Secondly, airport security is and should be inherently the function of the airport authority. They know best where the weakest points are of accessing the airside. If the airport is not conducting screening and profiling accordingly, then the airport is not allowed to operate. This is severe but will ensure that screeners are appropriately trained and that passengers are appropriately profiled. The authorities should take on this responsibility up to the point in which the passenger will depart airport property and board the plane (the gate). At this point, the airlines should take responsibility of ensuring that only no-risk passengers board the plane with sanitized baggage. It would be impractical to install x-ray machines at every gate; instead, airlines should limit size of carry-ons to that of a laptop/diaper bag and each and every carry-on should be physically checked. The passengers should be given a list of items disallowed on aircraft at the time of purchasing their tickets. If items are confiscated at the airport, that is the passengers loss.

Thirdly, aircraft/vessel security is always the function of the vessel captain. Therefore, it is the captain's duty to ensure that his/her plane is fit and secure to leave the gate. He should not have the right, however, to profile pax based on race, sex, ethnicity or any other physical description. The only discriminatory practice allowed by the captain should be that based on pax behavior. All flight crew should be trained in the use of wrist restraints and all vessels should be equipped with them. Gags/sedatives should not be allowed at the risk of causing bodily harm. If a pax is being disruptive, he/she should be detained and placed within a conditioned area (e.g. bathroom/galley). The chief flight attendant and the captain should be trained and issued stun guns and allowed to use them at their discretion. It should be made public knowledge that flight crews may chose to use the stun guns and detain passengers if their behavior is deemed disruptive. Regarding securing the flight deck, this is not a panacea; a terrorist can just as easily eliminate all the pax and/or destroy the aircraft before it ever has a chance to land. He/she may choose to destroy the aircraft over a particularly heavily populated area in which casualties can be predicted. The cabin should be secured as is normal practice, with the addition of a no-pax zone within x-feet of the cabin which would be monitored at all times by a flight attendant.

Most of these ideas are not new nor are they innovative. I have simply attempted to put together a list of items that are highly achievable and will make a marked difference. The Security Bill was correct in many areas but was also very off base in others. Lets fixate on the root cause of terrorism and then we can see clearly how to better protect aircraft flight.