



Remarks by TSA Administrator John S. Pistole at the ICAO Symposium on Innovation in Aviation Security

Speech
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Good morning. Thank you Dr. Aliu, thank you Mr. Kallas. It is a pleasure to join you here in Montreal to discuss the need for innovation in aviation security, and share with all of you some thoughts on the current threats we are facing, and how we might work together in an effort to mitigate them.

Before we begin I also want to say thanks and welcome to all of you, our friends and colleagues from throughout the aviation industry, from academia, as well as airport and airline partners.

TSA and ICAO enjoy a strong working relationship. We share an over-arching goal to strengthen aviation security for all travelers, regardless of where they board or where they are going. Our goal is the same – and that is to provide every passenger with the best possible security as they travel from place to place. At the same time, our workforce is dedicated to accomplishing these goals and objectives as efficiently as possible. Whether we're talking about domestic traffic or international flights, we at TSA do not believe security and efficiency are mutually exclusive, and that is where innovation can play a significant role.

Innovation is vital to remaining a step ahead of those seeking to do harm. Whether it is an investment in new or improved technology, a way to refine some of our current processes to strengthen security, or even security checkpoint configuration as a way to maximize throughput and make the best use of taxpayer resources, there are always ways to look at an old challenge in a new way; to do things more efficiently, more effectively, or both. That is at the heart of innovation.

We are pleased to be part of this symposium, and the presentations we have prepared are thoughtful in their approach and comprehensive in their application. Engaging in global partnerships through forums and symposiums such as this fosters a greater degree of collaboration. It enhances the way we share key information and best practices, which will often lead to a more secure aviation system for all of us. Later today and again tomorrow, some of my colleagues at TSA will offer presentations that discuss human factors engineering at TSA, person-borne IEDs, and facilitating the efficient flow of passengers in the future.

As I mentioned just a moment ago, whether it is the current Ebola outbreak or the rise of another violent extremist group such as ISIL in Syria, the international aviation community is stronger and our efforts are more effective when we work together. Global harmonization of security procedures and a strong dialog between partners helps ensure the strength and stability of the international network, and we all can benefit from the successes any of us enjoy individually with respect to aviation security.

Since joining TSA four years ago, one of the goals I set for our agency remains as vital today as it was on day one; to improve TSA's counterterrorism focus through better information sharing and the use of advanced technology. Like many of you, TSA operates along a broad intelligence continuum. Sometimes we are strictly consumers of information, and other times we are a source, or producer, of intelligence used by others in the global community. Those of us who have worked in the intelligence field for any length of time can attest to the fact that having the right piece of information in the right hands at the right time can make all the difference in successfully detecting and disrupting a terror plot before it can have a chance to succeed.



Throughout TSA, our officers and analysts are using the latest technology; analyzing, sharing and, when necessary, operationalizing intelligence in real time; and applying risk-mitigation principles to strengthen security. We have built, and continue to fortify, a multi-layered approach to aviation security that begins before a traveler even arrives at the airport.

Without a doubt, the world remains a dangerous place. Events in Syria and the Middle East highlight some of the threats we are all confronting as we work to strengthen the overall security of the global aviation network.

We know that commercial aviation is still an attractive target to our adversaries, and more specifically, we believe that increasingly sophisticated, non-metallic IEDs remain one of the most serious threats to aviation security. Detecting these items, as well as the components needed to build them, is critical.

Of course, we all know that one way to address the ongoing threat to aviation security is to implement stricter, more draconian security measures – where every bag and every passenger is thoroughly searched before boarding every flight. In such a scenario, airports would tend to look more like prisons and individual rights and liberties could be largely ignored. I can't imagine any of us think that's a good idea. Instead, we've taken a different approach; one that is built upon the understanding that risk can be significantly reduced through coordinated, advanced screening of individuals and cargo. It's the fundamental idea behind risk-based security, or RBS.

Since mid-2011 TSA has implemented more than two dozen policy changes within the construct of RBS. Many of these changes are seen every day.

As an audience of aviation professionals, you understand the merits of implementing RBS better than most. Many of you are working to effect similar process-oriented and results-driven changes around the world. We support those efforts. Given the high volume of passenger interactions many of us process in the course of a year, there is an enormous benefit to finding new efficiencies within the parameters of strengthening security.

For example, each year TSA screens approximately 640 million passengers and approximately 2 billion checked and carry-on bags. Thanks to a variety of risk-based initiatives, more than 45% of traveling public, including more than 21 million known crewmembers are receiving some form of expedited screening every day. Wait times – which many travelers cite as a key measurement of customer satisfaction – are also down; this summer less than 1% of passengers waited longer than 20 minutes at the checkpoint.

Overall, TSA Pre✓™ remains the agency's most impactful RBS effort to date. What began as a proof-of-concept at just a handful of airports in 2012 has grown to include 120 airports and millions of travelers. From an innovation standpoint, TSA Pre✓™ represented a fundamental shift in our screening operations, and has proven to be quite a success. Late last year we began inviting the public to visit a TSA Pre✓™ enrollment center to apply for the benefit directly. With more than 300 application centers nationwide, more than 600,000 travelers have applied for TSA Pre✓™ through this new process.

Recently, we began to take the next step is the expansion of TSA Pre✓™ by exploring partnerships with industry to provide third-party passenger vetting. By engaging the private sector to help support the vetting process, based on TSA's established criteria and algorithms, our ability to grow the population of TSA Pre✓™-eligible travelers will be stronger than ever. Last month in Washington I announced a plan to move forward with private sector passenger information vetting, and on October 7 we hosted an Industry Day at TSA HQ. Representatives from 72 companies were given our idea of what such a partnership could entail as well as the opportunity to share their thoughts with us. We hope to issue an RFP after hearing comments and then move forward, enrolling potentially millions more into TSA Pre✓™ in 2015. We are a regulatory agency, so our relationship with industry stakeholders is crucial to ensuring aviation security.



I am often asked in settings such as this to offer a few thoughts on where I see the agency down the road; to describe in broad terms a medium-term vision for aviation security in general, and for TSA more specifically. Because I believe we are clearly moving in the right direction, my response to this question typically begins with the phrase "more of the same." In other words, I see an agency in which a majority of all bags are screened using RBS principles. These principles we've used in the passenger screening arena should be readily adapted to checked-baggage and cargo screening. Some of this is already underway. I expect to see a greater effort to integrated checkpoint technology that is adaptable as threats evolve, and I think we will get to a point where most liquids, aerosols, and gels will be allowed in the cabin.

A key part of getting from where we are today to where I think we can be includes a solid majority of passengers taking advantage of TSA Pre✓™. Providing expedited security screening with a high degree of confidence is the best way to ensure we are focusing resources where they are most needed.

Form an international perspective TSA should continue building international reciprocity with foreign governments. Greater collaboration and increasing our information sharing capabilities can help raise the overall effectiveness of the global aviation security system.

For the TSA workforce, my goal is to continue focusing on effective security, as efficiently as possible, and provided in a professional manner. If our officers do a good job, please thank them the next time you travel. Knowing that you appreciate the work they are doing goes a long way.

Thank you again, time permitting, I am happy to answer a few questions.

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