

# Aviation Security- Meeting the evolving threat

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Aviation remains a vulnerable and attractive target for terrorist organizations and 'lone wolf' style attackers.

While many aviation security improvements have been implemented, our nation's airports remain persistently vulnerable. In recent years there have been several domestic aviation incidents. Most notably:

- *The Los Angeles Airport (LAX) attack in 2013 which left 7 injured and one TSA screener killed.*
- *The January 2017 Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport (FLL) baggage claim attack which left five dead in January. (The Air Marshal Association has been honored to take part in congressionally led security discussions, and offered viable, cost-neutral solutions to vulnerabilities at FLL.)*
- *The May 2017 incident during which Anil Uskani was arrested by local police at LAX after he tried to access a door leading to the Air Operations Area (AOA), yet local Law Enforcement (LE) released him and he was allowed to fly. While on an aircraft, he attempted to breach the cockpit and had to be restrained.*

Federal Air Marshals (FAMs) are uniquely qualified to address current aviation vulnerabilities, improve law enforcement coordination, and better protect the flying public. To accomplish this, FAMs should be assigned to screening checkpoints and check in areas as a static federal law enforcement presence.

Positioning FAMs covertly at screening checkpoints and check in areas would enhance security operations by returning local LE to its local responsibilities and allow FAMs to detect more sophisticated and nuanced threats of federal interest. TSA's current policy is to call local LE when a suspicious item or person is encountered in the screening area. Although federal violations may exist, and federal investigations may be warranted, local LE cannot enforce federal violations and are limited to the enforcement of local statutes. Oftentimes there is no detailed record of the incident to which local LE responded, and no chance for further investigation in the federal interest.

In contrast, FAMs can take action when something is encountered at the checkpoint that may be a violation of federal law, and conduct preliminary investigations for critical issues such as security probing and artfully concealed items. As the primary LE responder, FAMs can call local LE when appropriate, or other federal agencies (such as CBP, Secret Service, or DEA) to checkpoints thereby addressing a wider range of incidents. A similar arrangement was successfully implemented at Newark Liberty (EWR) Airport in 2013 and yielded multiple federal arrests, new co-operative enforcement initiatives, FBI e-guardian leads, 2 FBI full field investigations for terrorism, and strong working relationships with local and federal agencies.

Most significantly, *FAMs are trained by default to detect and defeat active shooters* – the current evolving threat. Almost 100% of FAM recurrent training is in close quarters shooting, and the neutralization of active killers. FAMs train every two weeks, and have the highest marksmanship standards in law enforcement. FAMs are intimately familiar with the aviation environment and interact with aviation workers on a daily basis. There is simply no law enforcement officer better suited to counter the active shooter threat at airports.

The Federal Air Marshal Service is an anti-terrorism organization designed to detect and neutralize terrorism. The Air Marshal Association believes that FAMs are obligated to prevent the threat at the earliest possible moment within our area of responsibility. Repositioning FAMs at terminal check in areas and TSA checkpoints provides a necessary static federal law enforcement presence, hardens a vulnerable target against active shooter attacks, and saves taxpayers millions of dollars annually by reducing flight coverage not based on risk (see GAO-16-582).

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