

**ARE WE READY?
KEEPING LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING ON TRACK
IN AMERICA'S AIRPORTS**

by

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The Command College Futures Study Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue of relevance to law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future; rather, to project a variety of possible scenarios useful for strategic planning in anticipation of the emerging landscape facing policing organizations.

This journal article was created using the futures forecasting process of Command College and its outcomes. Defining the future differs from analyzing the past, because it has not yet happened. In this article, methodologies have been used to discern useful alternatives to enhance the success of planners and leaders in their response to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing it—creating, constraining and adapting to emerging trends and events in a way that optimizes the opportunities and minimizes the threats of relevance to the profession.

The views and conclusions expressed in the Command College Futures Project and journal article are those of the author, and are not necessarily those of the CA Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

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September 11, 2001. Three separate airports, four different planes, 19 hijackers, three iconic structures, 2998 dead Americans [1]. America was not ready seven years ago--is America ready now? Will America's law enforcement officers at our airports be equipped for the next attack? Only time will tell, but strategic planning and training in crucial areas will certainly help.

Law enforcement officers serving in commercial airports across America face increasing challenges as airports continue to grow and expand. Airports are becoming small metropolitan areas, encompassing banks, restaurants, rental car agencies, hotels, chapels, gas stations, and art galleries. North America is home to more than one third of the entire world's air traffic, with the majority of flights taking off and landing in the United States. Millions of passengers pass through US airports, embarking on more than thirty thousand domestic flights per day [2]. Just as in any small city, the sheer number of people and activity attracts a criminal element. Toss in this millennium's heightened intensity of world-wide terrorism, and America's law enforcement officers find themselves confronting enormous aviation security issues. To protect the flying public and meet their soaring expectations, airport law enforcement officers need to anticipate and train for combating the threats of the future.

Current standards and issues

Prior to the events of September 11, the Federal Aviation Administration had 30 year-old standards for airport security. Basically, law enforcement officers stood by to deter unruly passengers and make arrests, while airline personnel screened passengers and baggage for

prohibited items and “conventional” hijacking tools, such as guns, long knives, and explosive devices. In the case of an actual hijacking, the government’s policy was one of “cooperation” with the hijacker [3].

After September 11, 2001, legislation was passed to establish the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). Tasked with enhancing the safety and security of the traveling public, the TSA has since developed standards of training for officers at airports [4]. Typically, there are a number of issues with government standards. They are often too general, and usually encompass minimal thresholds to lessen the burden of federal enforcement. Current airport police training standards issued by the TSA, for example, are seen by many airport executives as nominal, vague, and unfunded directives [5]. Essentially, officers must only meet basic academy training standards, know how to use their weapon, and receive training in public courtesy [6]. The current training mandates do not come close to preparing officers to deal with the trends and events that are likely to transpire in the future [7].

Because these standards are general and imprecise, individual agencies are left to develop their own specific training policies and procedures according to the guidelines for law enforcement officers in the airport’s local jurisdiction. No two airports have the same guidelines, training standards, or policies for their law enforcement officers. Since an incursion at one airport could potentially affect the whole world’s aviation safety, security must be equally diligent at all airports. Thus, airport executives and law enforcement management must create training programs for officers which enhance aviation security and secure the entire web of air traffic. Considering these concerns, what exactly should law enforcement officers be trained to

anticipate? What type of events do experts think are likely to occur? What new technological resources are available? How can law enforcement be better prepared in the future?

History of Incursions

Since history has a way of repeating itself, critical incidents of the past can provide hints in the direction of threats looming in the future. Examining significant historical events, in addition to those of September 11, 2001, can also supply clues concerning key vulnerabilities in aviation security to help law enforcement administration focus on training needs. The following accounts give just a glimpse into the variety of scenarios law enforcement officers face:

- Los Angeles International Airport, CA, July 5, 2002: A 41-year-old armed gunman opened fire at the El Al ticket counter, killing two Israeli citizens and wounding four others, including two armed security guards. The gunman was armed with a .45-caliber pistol, a six-inch knife, a 9mm pistol, and additional ammunition. According to hundreds of witnesses, he began shooting from 15 feet away without saying a word. It was “a very violent exchange” which lasted only 30 seconds. The shooter was wrestled to the ground by two security guards and a bystander even as the gunman was still firing and wielding a knife. Both security guards received multiple stab wounds, and the gunman was fatally shot by one of the guards in the struggle [8].
- Miami International Airport, FL, December 7, 2005: While on a stopover during a flight from Colombia to Orlando, a passenger, Roberto Alpizar, claimed that he had a bomb in his carry-on backpack. The plane was surrounded by more than a dozen police vehicles and an armed SWAT team while the passenger was confronted by federal air marshals. He was asked to exit the plane, where he was ordered to the ground. When he began to

reach into his backpack, he was shot and wounded. Department of Homeland Security officials stated that the shooting was consistent with the air marshals' training, adding that an investigation showed there was no bomb in the backpack. The passenger's wife stated her husband suffered from bipolar disorder, and had not taken his medication. He later died of his wounds. The killing marks the first time a federal air marshal fired his duty weapon at a passenger since the program was reinforced after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 [9].

- Oakland International Airport, CA, February 15, 2007: Boarding gates were evacuated after a man set off a security checkpoint metal detector. The man was not detained or held for secondary screening, somehow avoiding the normal security protocol as he proceeded unobserved into the boarding gate area. Authorities from four law enforcement agencies searched for the man, but could not find anyone matching his description. For public safety, the decision was made to evacuate the terminals, conduct a thorough sweep, and send thousands of frustrated passengers back through security for re-screening [10].
- San Diego International Airport, CA, October 25, 2005: A child's toy and a cookie were mistakenly believed by luggage screeners to be bomb components. The airport was evacuated and the bomb squad was called in to investigate. Bomb threats had been called in earlier in the day to Long Beach and Orange County airports, triggering intensive searches of both airports, but turning up no explosive devices [11].
- Pittsburgh Airport, PA, April 24, 2007: A man scaled a fence into a secured cargo area of the airport, eluding the TSA, the Allegheny County Police, and airport security. Surveillance cameras captured the person climbing over the fence, but a 14-minute delay

in calling the police in to search the area may have aided the man in his escape, according to police reports. A five-hour search of the airport and runway area turned up nothing. Allegheny County officials stated they were considering disciplinary action against the airport operations staff, and would institute a change in policy to ensure a faster response in the future [12].

Terrorist attacks, active shooters, bomb threats, terminal evacuations, and security incursions such as the ones noted above are more and more common in today's world, and law enforcement must be prepared to respond. According to Kip Hawley, Assistant Secretary of the TSA, "By 11:00 a.m. on that day [September 11, 2001], the paradigm changed and is gone forever... Americans will not sit still when threatened. This is a changed battlefield...we know it and terrorists know it" [13].

Events such as these place law enforcement officers in challenging circumstances. Large crisis situations involve a number of different governmental agencies and players, such as the FBI, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Department of Homeland Security, the US Customs and Border Protection Unit, the TSA, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), airline employees, pilots, and airport management, just to name a few. Add intense media attention and a frantic public to this tangled throng of government agencies, and law enforcement finds itself thrust into a very complicated maze-like state of affairs.

To further obscure matters, law enforcement officers often find themselves constrained by the inability to access timely, current, and accurate information due to communication barriers between agencies. As noted in the September 1, 2001, FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, "Although higher governmental levels have made efforts to share classified information with

airports, a lack of standardization, consistency, or even a designated program have hampered communications” [14]. Technological innovation and partnerships between local agencies can enhance the lines of communication and promote the effective sharing of information, all of which requires adequate training.

The emerging scope of duties

While the traditional role of airport police officers as responders to crime has expanded to include a more proactive homeland security role, they still must face a number of other crimes and circumstances unique to airports. Law enforcement officials also deal with routine airport-specific crimes, such as airline ticket fraud, narcotic smuggling, pick-pocketing, thefts in air cargo areas, issues with car-rental agencies, kidnappings, domestic disputes, and hazardous material violations [15]. They must also be trained to scrutinize numerous types of identification to ensure tight access control in secured areas of the airports. According to Robert Raffel, who served as a federal security manager with the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration in Washington, D.C., "Criminal activity in airports includes crimes that most officers would not encounter outside of an airport..." [16]. The increased demands placed on airport law enforcement officers necessitate adequate preparation.

Additionally, officers must be trained to weave through airport regulatory guidelines. These guidelines cover such topics as proper screening techniques, policies for flying while armed, access control systems, behavioral pattern recognition, dignitary protection, legal aspects of searches and enforcing regulations, and various procedures used for explosive detection [17]. Technological advances in screening procedures also present officers with new aspects of aviation security to learn. With every new type of incursion or attack, airport screening

procedures are often changed and adapted to ward off future attacks of the same nature. While there are philosophical differences between America's emphasis on protecting civil liberties and the European model of enhanced security at the expense of civil liberties, lessons can be learned from abroad [18].

In Paris, for example, suspicious baggage at the airport is immediately blown-up on the spot in movable incineration devices, and the muffled explosions can be heard periodically throughout the terminal. In Israel, the primary screening method used by law enforcement is person-to-person interaction. Passengers are routinely approached, questioned and interviewed to provide crucial data, known as "human intelligence." Both of these security tools are effective deterrents for sure, but are American citizens receptive to these types of responses from their law enforcement officers?

When it was learned that two of the hijacked planes on September 11th originated at Boston-Logan International Airport in Massachusetts, futuristic screening and security methods became reality for law enforcement officers there [19]. The Chief of Police in charge of airport law enforcement was terminated, and the airport began a sweeping transformation in security measures. Boston-Logan Airport became a state-of-the-art example of a "hardened target." The airport was remodeled with built-in security enhancements, including a high-security area for ticketing with blast-resistant windows and enhanced passenger screening technologies, such as facial recognition systems and General Electric's "puffer machines"—an enclosed chamber designed much like a phone booth that subjects passengers to at least 30 small puffs of air which can detect miniscule particles of explosive residue [20].

In addition, the Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport) installed a highly advanced perimeter security system to safeguard the airport's perimeter, which is surrounded on three sides by water. While most of the perimeter security technology was installed on a trial basis, enhancements are planned which could cover the full 360-degree circumference of the airport's boundary, and be capable of tracking 50 simultaneous threats per camera [21]. The cameras use high-tech thermal imaging and have a zoom capability allowing an extremely high level of resolution, clear enough to be used as evidence in a courtroom. The surveillance system can also integrate with closed circuit television, radar, sonar and Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) systems if required, and can send out security alerts to law enforcement officers by pager, email, PDA, or audible alarm. Through the use of object classification and pattern recognition algorithms, the system is cleverly able to distinguish real security incursions from immaterial ones such as birds, waves, or graffiti artists straying into the secure zone [22]. According to Dennis Treece, director of security for Massport, this system was "designed to save manpower, saving us from having soldiers or police line up shoulder to shoulder along the beach," adding, "Unlike humans, infrared cameras never blink, get the flu, or have to go their daughter's soccer game."

Officers at Boston-Logan Airport received specialized training in behavioral pattern recognition (BPR) and biometric technology. They were given direction to stop and question anyone of a suspicious nature. Officers were issued semi-automatic assault rifles and military-style uniforms to enhance both their effectiveness and public perception. While these steps by the Massachusetts State Police have drawn scrutiny and lawsuits from the ACLU for "racial and ethnic profiling" and the "dangerous extension of police power," the police remain steadfast in

their dedication to high-tech airport security, stating, “The Massachusetts State Police are committed to protecting the constitutional and civil rights of all citizens” [23].

The changes at Boston-Logan International Airport are just the tip of the iceberg. Technology now exists to screen passengers from head to toe using biometrics and enhanced screening technology (even under their clothing with the use of high-power X-ray machines), and law enforcement officers are riding the wave of the cutting edge [24]. What else can be done to make a difference in the future? How can all airport law enforcement officers be effectively trained in aviation security? In San Diego, California, one idea that has been pursued is the development of a flexible yet standardized airport-specific training curriculum.

Standardized Training for the Emerging Environment

At this time, a thorough standardized training program for all airport law enforcement officers does not exist [25]. In California, the Peace Officers Standards of Training (POST) has only certified one aviation security training program which is held at Los Angeles International Airport. This is not mandatory for any airport 830.1 California Penal Code law enforcement officer. Private groups, such as the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE) and the Airport Law Enforcement (ALEAN), offer classes in aviation security for law enforcement officers [26]. The topics covered in these courses are current and appropriate, but are attended on a voluntary basis as agencies find the time, money, and manpower to spare. The problem facing law enforcement administrators becomes how to make this type of training mandatory, consistent, and standardized among law enforcement agencies. Consistent training is crucial to solidify the security of the entire aviation network.

In San Diego, one group of airport security experts, TSA employees, and law enforcement administrators put their years of experience together to forecast a training plan to implement in California by 2012. What started with a brainstorming session in 2006 has now culminated in a full-fledged training program to be conducted in the fall of 2008 by the San Diego Harbor Police Department in conjunction with the San Diego International Airport. The pathway from aspiration to application beckons to be replicated by other agencies across the nation.

Systematic steps were taken by the group to look at historical, contemporary, and possible future threats. They explored the plausibility of attacks using “suitcase nukes” and man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS), as well as suicide bombings, chemical warfare, and simultaneous attacks across the US. Technology was deemed a crucial means to thwart terrorism in the US, yet it was noted that the trend in other countries is to employ BPR for one-on-one interviews by plain-clothed and uniformed officers. One TSA representative stated their employees in the US are currently being trained in BPR and will slowly begin using this method for passenger screening in the US [27].

The experts assembled noted that, while the hijacking of aircraft may be a considered a prime threat now, the targets and vectors of terrorism keep shifting as terrorists acclimatize to security upgrades. Hence, law enforcement training must keep adapting in return. The panel believed that airport terminals were still key targets for terrorism, and were unanimous in asserting that suicide bombings, active shooting incidents, car bombings, and biochemical weapons releases were imminent in the state of California within the next five years [28].

Based on the group’s analysis, a preliminary training course was professionally developed with an approximate annual training cost of \$4000 per officer [29]. The general

course outline for officers includes instruction in aviation security, airport operations, terrorism, threat assessment, governmental responsibilities, technological screening methods, incident command, behavioral recognition, communication, case studies, as well as public and media relations. Airport executives who contract for law enforcement services expect that officers will be specialists in these areas, and be thoroughly trained to respond to the unique security needs of airports [30].

The benefits of leading-edge training

Obviously, the benefits of designing and implementing an airport-specific training program for law enforcement officers are numerous. The aviation industry is constantly enhancing its safety systems with new technologies while the TSA is continually imposing new security measures in response to international terrorist actions. Meanwhile, the public keeps raising its expectations of safety. Law enforcement officers are expected to respond to all of these concerns judiciously and proficiently. Providing superior training for officers furthers the safety of both the officers and the public, stems the threat of terrorism, and creates a more secure aviation system across the world.

Clearly, there are many favorable returns for the investment of time and resources necessary to implement such a training program. Support exists on multiple levels. Funding and the availability of personnel resources are two possible hurdles, but both can be overcome with persistence and creativity. In the case of San Diego's trial training program, it is plausible that the plan will be submitted to the CA Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training (CA POST) for certification, making the training curriculum accessible to other agencies in California [31]. This foundation should also make the curriculum available for training nation-wide.

Given the will and the desire to carry effective airport law enforcement training forward to fruition, any agency can adopt a training plan for its officers. It has been said that where there's a will, there's a way. In this case, there must be a will to advance the issue of airport security, which must be conscientiously followed up by assessing past and future threats, and the need for diligent training of officers--all carving the way for intensive airport-specific training standards.

Conclusion

Airport law enforcement officers work in a dynamic and changing environment. Airports find themselves caught in the cross-hairs as terrorists plan, prepare, and prod for weaknesses in airport security. In addition to their traditional duties, law enforcement officers must be ready to combat future terrorist plots at airports, and be effectively trained experts in homeland security. Training standards must be adapted and adjusted to manage changes in security methods and technologies, and deter sophisticated terrorist plots. Airport law enforcement officers will undoubtedly be faced with even more challenges in the future. They need a training curriculum that meets these challenges; and one that prepares them for the difficult ordeals looming ahead.

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