Secretary Napolitano Announces Major Aviation Security Milestone

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DHS performs 100 percent watchlist matching for domestic flights

Washington, D.C.—Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano today announced that 100 percent of passengers traveling within the United States and its territories are now being checked against terrorist watchlists through the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) Secure Flight program—a major step in fulfilling a key 9/11 Commission recommendation.

Before Secure Flight, airlines conducted passenger watchlist checking.

"Secure Flight fulfills a key recommendation of the of the *9/11 Commission Report*, enabling TSA to screen passengers directly against government watchlists using passenger name, date of birth, and gender before a boarding pass is issued," said Secretary Napolitano. "This program is one of our many layers of security—coordinated with our partners in the airline industry and governments around the world—that we leverage to protect the traveling public against threats of terrorism."

Under Secure Flight, TSA prescreens passenger name, date of birth and gender against government watchlists for domestic and international flights. In addition to facilitating secure travel for all passengers, the program helps prevent the misidentification of passengers who have names similar to individuals on government watchlists.

"We are quite pleased to see the positive outcome from the collaborative work that ATA, its member airlines and TSA have invested in the development of the Secure Flight program," said Air Transport Association (ATA) President and CEO James C. May. "We are especially pleased that TSA phased program implementation to ensure that commercial airline travelers experience a seamless transition."

99 percent of passengers will be cleared by Secure Flight to print boarding passes at home by providing their date of birth, gender and name as it appears on the government ID they plan to use when traveling when booking airline tickets. Individuals found to match watchlist parameters will be subjected to secondary screening, a law enforcement interview or prohibition from boarding an aircraft, depending on the specific case.

The Transportation Security Administration began implementing Secure Flight in late 2009 and expects all international carriers with direct flights to the U.S. to begin using Secure Flight by the end of 2010.

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