

Remarks by Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff on Aviation Security and Traveler Screening Enhancements

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Secretary Chertoff: Good morning, everybody. I'm joined here by Kip Hawley and by a number of our Transportation Security officers at Checkpoint Evolution, and I think we've got the opportunity today to announce some very significant changes, what I would call the next generation of how we're going to be dealing with airport security.

Obviously, we've done an awful lot since September 11th in the area of airport security. All of us remember that day and the shock and horror of what 19 hijackers were able to accomplish by taking control of aircraft. That of course was the culmination of a long history of hijackings, bombs on aircraft, that have made the aviation sector a prime target for terrorism for as long as most of us can remember.

Nowadays we have dozens of layers of security that protect the traveling public, including 100 percent screening of passengers and bags, new explosives detection technology, substantial numbers of federal air marshals, armed pilots, behavioral detection, officers working as part of TSA, and a host of other measures seen and unseen.

And impressively, we've implemented these measures while managing the flow of approximately 2 million domestic air travelers every single day. That reflects our philosophy, which is to balance tough, strong security with making sure that we have efficient and free travel.

Now some people may wonder if we still have the kind of threat to aviation that we had on September 11th. If you doubt it, I suggest you follow what's being reported in the news in a trial underway in London where several individuals are being tried for their role in a plot in August 2006 to blow up multiple transatlantic aircraft bound for the United States.

I think you'll remember when that plot was disrupted about 18 months ago. We were not able to explain in great detail why we were taking the steps to reconfigure our requirement by reducing the size of liquids to be brought on airplanes and taking other measures to beef up airport security. But now we are finally able to talk about the details of that plot, and those details are chilling.

The terrorists intended to take sealed sports drink bottles, insert syringes in, drain out the liquids in the bottles and then put in the place of those liquids, liquid explosives, whereupon they would then glue the bottom of the bottle.

By all appearances, these bottles would look as if they were untouched, unopened, straight-off-the-shelf sports drinks. Instead, they would have had a lethal cocktail inside. The terrorists planned to detonate these bottles by assembling them with detonators when the aircraft were midway over the Atlantic.

A diabolical element of the scheme was that they were going to wait until it was too far away for the aircraft to begin to turn home to try to find safety. So that as each aircraft blew up over the Atlantic, the crews and perhaps even the passengers in the remaining aircraft would be left to wonder whether they would be next. I want you to reflect for a moment on how truly chilling and inhumane it is to visit this kind of terror on people.

As you will recall, to the great credit of the men and women of TSA, starting with Kip Hawley himself, and because of the great cooperation of the traveling public, we were able to quickly implement new screening protocols and restrictions to make sure that the threat that was disrupted on August 2008 -- I'm sorry, August 2006 -- could not be carried out anyplace else.

We learned a lot from the experience in August of 2006, as well as what we've learned over the past five years

plus of TSA operations. And so about five or six months ago, I said to Assistant Secretary Hawley, let's step back, let's take a look at everything we've done over the past several years in the area of aviation security, and let's see if we can reconfigure the system to take security to a new level but also to take convenience to a new level, to eliminate some of the persistent irritations that are a constant source of complaint and a constant source of hassle for the traveling public.

And so what we're going to announce today and what you're going to see here at this terminal in BWI and hopefully in other airports in the next few weeks, is the product of the study that we've undertaken over this past six months, a process that I think is going to be a dramatic improvement in the experience for travelers, and perhaps more important, a significant continued improvement in the security for those passengers as we continue to make sure that our aviation experience remains secure and as low-hassle as possible.

Let me begin by describing this process as you would experience it from the time you begin your journey going forward. Everybody knows the first step of the journey is you've got to get your boarding pass. And here we're going to take aim at what has been a major source of frustration for travelers over the last several years.

Those travelers who happen to share a name with somebody who is on a watch list, and who have for that reason been unable to get their boarding pass over the Internet or their boarding pass at kiosk, but have been forced instead to wait online in order to get clearance from the airport official and get their boarding pass so they can go to the gate.

The problem here has been that we've had a misidentification or a false positive issue when people share a name with somebody who is rightfully on a watch list as a selectee. And so by studying the problem and asking whether there would be a way to avoid the problem going forward, we have reconfigured our system for dealing with watch listed so that effective today, we're giving airlines the flexibility to verify and store some additional biographic data, namely, a person's date of birth, so that a traveler will then be able to get his or her boarding pass at the kiosk or at home even if their name matches the name of a selectee, just the same way that everybody else is.

Let me be very clear about this. The way this process is going to work is this. If you are a traveler who has had problems in the past because your name appears on a watch list or is identical to the name of somebody who is rightfully on a watch list, if you're a traveler like that, you have had the experience every time you go to the airport of being told you cannot get your boarding pass like everybody else. You've got to go to the counter. You've got to work with the airline in order to get permission to get the boarding pass.

What will happen now is, the next time you go to the airport for a particular airline and you go to the ticket counter, if the airline chooses, they will be able to offer you the opportunity to supply your date of birth. And if you supply that date of birth, they will be able to enter it into their own data fields, and from that time forth, any time you use that airline, you will be able to go straight to the kiosk or go to a home computer and get your boarding pass printed without having to go back to that counter ever again.

Now it's going to require you to do this one airline at a time. But what it will do is it will remove virtually 100 percent of the false positives that people have experienced in the past, a major hassle which I think has been frankly a major source of complaint.

To give you some idea, by the way, of the dimensions of this problem, one major air carrier has reported roughly 9,000 false positives every day. If this change is put into effect by that airline, the number of false positives will be reduced to about zero. Moreover, I want to emphasize that because of the passenger working directly with the airline and supplying the information to the airline, the government will not be acquiring the information, will not be part of the process. This is going to be a totally private arrangement which will allow people to reduce a major hassle with traveling.

All right. Now you've got your boarding pass. The next thing is you've got to go into the airport, you've got to go through the security screening process, and you've got to get to the checkpoint. And so the second change we're enacting today has to do with the kinds of documents we're going to accept at the checkpoint.

Today we're announcing identification standards for airports to give travelers greater clarity about what documents are going to be accepted at the checkpoint. Now, look. As we've said over and over again, we need to know who's getting on airplanes. That's the whole purpose of having a watch list, so that a known terrorist can't get on an airplane. And that means we have to have a high degree of confidence that the document being presented as identification accurately reflects the identity of the person who is presenting the

document. That's a matter of common sense. If you're going to ask for ID, it ought to be accurate ID.

Now, the good news is, because we've had every state do what needs to be done under the Real ID act, the kinds of identification that people commonly use will be acceptable for purposes of document checking at the airport. That means a U.S. federal or state-issued federal ID like a driver's license, passport, pass card, single type of government identification, so long as it includes a name, a date of birth, gender, expiration date and certain kinds of tamper-resistant features.

Much like our efforts to narrow the list of acceptable documents at our land, sea and airports of entry, by setting these identification standards, we're going to give our document checkers a smaller number of documents to work with, more clarity with respect to what they have to be prepared to inspect and evaluate, and it will also allow the traveling public to have a better sense of what will work efficiently at the airport.

This is ultimately going to lead to aligning all of their document requirements across all of what DHS does in a way that will make it clear, manageable and efficient for the traveler as well as for those people who have the responsibility of security. We're going to have documentation out there, is something on the website now that's going to explain exactly what kinds of documents will be required. They are documents that the very, very great majority of people ordinarily carry with them and present at the airport like a driver's license or, for example, a passport.

For those people who, you know, forget their identification or wind up with the wrong identification as we roll this out, that doesn't mean you're not going to be able get on your airplane. We'll work with you to make sure that we can identify you and make sure that we can counsel you so you understand what you need to have next time.

We're going to make this as painless an experience as possible, and as we work our way through it, I think in the end it's going to be more efficient for everybody.

Finally, we come to the checkpoint itself, and here I'm going to invite you when we're done with this, if you'll leave your cameras behind, to actually experience the checkpoint yourselves as you would as a passenger. I think what you'll see is it's a dramatic improvement in the experience.

What you probably won't see, but is even more important is, it's a dramatic benefit to the screening officers by allowing them better visibility into what you're carrying with you, what you've got on your person, and a better way to determine whether any of those items are a potential threat.

Under the old system, in fact currently at most airports, everybody who has been through the checkpoint knows it is not a relaxing experience. In fact, during peak travel periods, the checkpoint can be noisy, it can be congested, it can involve travelers with different levels of experience, some of whom are very efficient and know what they're doing, and some of whom frankly are a little bit confused and may be alarmed about the experience that they're undertaking.

There's background noise. There's a natural stress level. All of these things not only make it uncomfortable for travelers, but they make it harder for our screening officers to detect those people who are behaving in a suspicious way, not because they're just upset or nervous or anxious, but because they've got some particular bad purpose in mind that they're trying to conceal.

Additionally, our current checkpoints tend to be rigid and inflexible, which makes it difficult to upgrade and include new technology. It makes it difficult to build randomness into the process, and it also makes it hard to adjust for changes in traffic flow.

For all of these reasons, in order to calm down the area, make it easier for people to move around while maintaining a comparative degree of lower anxiety, to make it easier for all behavioral detection officers to identify those people who really are anxious and stressed because of some nefarious purpose, and to make it easier to adapt and employ new technology, we're unveiling what we call Checkpoint Evolution.

As you walk through the checkpoint, you're going to see a number of things. First, we've invested in some new cutting-edge technology that will noticeably improve our ability to identify dangerous items, specifically explosives. Our new checkpoint features multi-view X-ray, which will give our Transportation Security officers a clear, more detailed look at what's in carry-on baggage, and therefore make it quicker to go through because fewer actually manual baggage checks will be required. And those of you who choose to go through the process, we'll take you around the back. Again, no photographs. We will show you the image on the X-ray

screen, and you will see it is much better than what you will have recalled seeing under the old system, which was a little bit blurry and grainy. So that's a big step forward.

Another thing the checkpoint uses is whole body imaging, known as WBI, which includes Millimeter Wave technology. This technology allows us to detect any item concealed on a person's body, including made with plastic, hidden under clothing, and detect it quickly with minimal intrusion. To protect privacy, our officers will view the images from a remote location, and the facial features will be blurred and the images deleted from the system once they have been reviewed.

Passengers will also be offered the opportunity to opt out of this screening and go through a traditional pat down if they want, but our experience shows that a majority, a vast majority of people actually want the new technology. When we tested in Phoenix, about 90 percent chose the machine over the pat down. I went through it myself, and then I got to look at myself on the image in the back room. My face was obscured. I didn't feel my privacy was invaded. It happened to be quite accurate. So I think it works pretty well.

The second thing you notice as you go through the checkpoint is just the general ambiance of the environment. We have an automated system for scan and return, so there's a continuous flow of baggage through the X-ray instead of the current system where the line always seem to start and stop in fits. You'll see that we've provided our officers with wireless radio headsets so they can communicate without yelling over the checkpoint.

We've added lighting, music and signage, and open space that's ergonomically designed to allow people to unpack their bags or unpack their jackets at their own rate. Those who are very efficient and more experienced don't have to wait behind those who are slow, and those who are slow don't have to feel somebody breathing down their neck as they are working to comply with the requirements.

These improvements aren't merely cosmetic. They have a real security benefit, because by calming things down, we allow officers to interact with passengers in a way that lowers the general stress level. And that allows, again, those with reason to be anxious, to become more obvious to the behavioral detection officers, who are constantly monitoring to see whether there are people out there at whom we ought to take a closer look.

And that brings us to the third major area of improvement, which I've already alluded to, which is the human element of behavior detection. Transportation Security Officers here at BWI are the first in the nation to have completed a new 16-hour training module in the latest intelligence with more improvised explosive device detection skills and passenger interaction techniques.

Supplementing their efforts, we have deployed behavior detection officers who have been specially trained to look for passengers who exhibit unusual signs of stress, fear or deception, including involuntary signs. And that's why common -- the majority of travelers allows the people with something to hide to stand out a little bit more, and that makes the job for our behavior detection officers somewhat easier than it otherwise would be.

If you wonder whether this behavior detection works, let me tell you what happened on April 1st where an individual was arrested in Orlando when they attempted to check a bag filled with bomb parts. The behavior detection officer spotted this person at the ticket counter, and they were arrested before they reached the checkpoint and before their bag actually had to go through the ordinary luggage in-line screening process.

So, all these improvements, not only individually but taken together, create an integrated system that reinforces our layered security approach. I think what it's going to do is reduce a lot of the hassle. It's going to address a lot of the complaints that we've heard. It's going to do so not only without a cost to security, but actually adding a real benefit to security. It's a kind of a down payment on a principle that I think we've used in the department over the last several years, which is to be willing to always stand back, look at what we do, not assume that what we're doing is necessarily the best way to do it, but then really to revisit it, break the mold, think outside the box, and when we're persuaded there's a better way to do things, go and do things in that better way.

One of the great contributors to this process, let me say by way of conclusion, are the passengers themselves and the travelers themselves. When I heard from people about the experiences they've had at the airport, when Kip has heard from them, when the new TSA website and blog site has received this kind of input, we don't just ignore it. We don't brush it off. What we do is we take it on board and we use it as part of the process of challenging our thinking and see whether there are better ways to do things.

So I want to continue to encourage the traveling public to give us their support and cooperation, and also give us their constructive criticism. If there are things you think we can do better, we're always ready to go back and do further retooling. If there are things you like, that's good. It's important for us to know that.

In the end, we're all in it together. We all want the same thing. We want travelers to get on that plane as quickly as possible, and, you know, we don't control the whole airline experience, and there's a lot of it that's out of our hands. But the part of it that we do control, we would like to make it as pleasant as possible, and we're committed to doing it. But most important, we're committed to making sure that as far as it's in our control, you get where you're going safe and sound at the end of your trip.

With that, I'd be pleased to take some questions. Yes?

Question: When do you expect to see this kind of a setup in every airport? What's your rollout?

Secretary Chertoff: Well, Kip, I don't know, every airport, when do you think?

Question: Or talk or describe what the rollout procedure is.

Administrator Hawley: Sure. The rollout is going to be with the different pieces, like the employee training, the 16 hours the Secretary mentioned, that will be rolled out across the country this year. The AT X-Ray will also be rolled out. We'll have 600 of the units deployed by the end of the year. And then some of the other things which are shared costs with the airport will be done on a case-by-case basis. But the principles the Secretary mentioned will be across the country this year.

Secretary Chertoff: Yes?

Question: Which airlines are currently participating in the watch list revisions?

Secretary Chertoff: We have just really in the last day opened this opportunity, so I think every -- all the airlines are going to obviously want to understand exactly how it works. They're going to have to evaluate their internal data management system. Some of them may use their Frequent Flyer systems as the platform. So I believe we're going to have to wait for a few weeks to be able to let you know.

Question: What kind of response have you gotten from the airlines?

Administrator Hawley: Well, very supportive, because the airlines, they're their passengers as well, and this is a major pain point. So working together with them, we expect this to work well and quickly.

Secretary Chertoff: Yeah?

Question: The total cost and how much does each cost?

Administrator Hawley: The equipment breaks down for the AT X-ray and the Millimeter Wave are costs that the government takes. The stuff you see in terms of the lights and the cue arrangements are typically footed by the airport itself. So, roughly for this one I'd say in the \$300,000 range.

Question: For everything -- it's the total?

Administrator Hawley: For the total.

Secretary Chertoff: Yeah?

Question: Why did you choose this airport?

Secretary Chertoff: It's close. It was easy to be involved in the process and have kind of hands-on monitoring to make sure it worked very well. It's a nice terminal.

Administrator Hawley: They've been a great partner.

Secretary Chertoff: And they've been a great partner. I mean, they've really stepped up. I mean, as Kip said, they -- obviously, it's not something we alone do. We have to do it in partnership with the airport, and the airport authority here was very, very helpful.

Question: This is not something that obviously travelers will see -- this will take years for checkpoints like this,

to see this lighting and all that stuff. And the Millimeter and all that, that'll take years.

Administrator Hawley: You'll have to wait for the mood lighting. You won't have to wait for the security that comes with the officers' training and the technology that will be deployed across the country.

Moderator: Any other questions?

Question: You had the automatic explosive detection scanner tested here in October with much fanfare, and I understand that's not being rolled out now. It had -- tested here. How are we to know that this isn't just another, you know, dog and pony show and then later on we find out in a few months it's not going to pan out?

Secretary Chertoff: Well, first of all, you know, let me say, I really take issue with dog and pony show.

Question: Sorry.

Secretary Chertoff: You know, we do test various things, and sometimes they work and sometimes they don't work. We have tested this in Phoenix and it worked very well. As far as the other system, I'll let Kip answer.

Administrator Hawley: Sure. The auto EDS is a great system and we're using it in some places. It is considerably more expensive, so in order to hit 600 lanes across the country by the end of the year, the AT technology has a very high performance level and is significantly cheaper. But we are still interested in EDS going forward.

Question: Okay. What's the cost difference with the AT technology versus EDS?

Administrator Hawley: We'll have to get back to you, but it's I would say in the range of three to one.

Moderator: Any final questions?

Question: Yes. The body imaging. Will we be able to see that? Will we be able to see what the officer sees?

Secretary Chertoff: Yeah. No cameras. You can't film it, but you'll be able to see yourself. It will be really thrilling, I'm sure. You'll be able to see yourself as the officer behind would see you.

Moderator: Take a final question here, please.

Question: When you tested it -- or was it 100 percent?

Administrator Hawley: For the Millimeter Wave, we have our own team that goes through and tests the tolerances of it. So we're very, very satisfied that it is highly effective, which is why we've deployed it here.

Question: (Inaudible.)

Administrator Hawley: We don't get into the exact statistics, but it is highly effective, and we've tested it every way you can imagine.

Moderator: Thanks very much, everyone.

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