

CONSUMERS UNION/CONSUMER REPORTS TRAVEL LETTER AIRLINE-SECURITY PROPOSALS

In an effort to address the need to implement stricter security procedures for all U.S. airlines and all U.S. airports in the wake of the recent tragic events, Consumers Union and Consumer Reports Travel Letter have developed a set of 14 proposals. These proposals require new efforts on the part of the government, the airline industry, and the American traveling public. We believe that all Americans have a fundamental right to travel freely. We also believe that commercial airline travel is a privilege that must be balanced with the rights of other consumers, as well as concerns about airline safety and national security, for people in the air as well as on the ground. We're convinced that consumers are willing to budget more time and money in order to ensure that commercial aviation becomes more secure against terrorist acts. The procedures we are recommending apply to all U.S. airlines, as well as international airlines operating to and from the U.S., and all commercial airports throughout the U.S. and its territories. Since September 11th, some of these proposals had already been approved or were nearing approval as Consumer Reports Travel Letter went to press.

Congress, Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration

1. Establish a federal airport security force, responsible for developing, implementing, and administering new standards for security procedures and passenger screening at all airports. The federal airport security force should be created under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and its agency, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). These new procedures should be standardized at all airports, regardless of the facility's passenger volume.

2. Expand the Federal Air Marshal Program, administered by the FAA's office of Civil Aviation Security, to provide more armed and undercover federal air marshals on both domestic and international flights.

3. Increase timely communication—in both directions—between federal law enforcement and intelligence agencies and airport authorities, airlines, travel agents, and online ticket sellers. Federal agencies should quickly alert airports and ticket sellers to the status and movements of suspected terrorists, and in turn they should be enabled to quickly alert federal agencies of such movements.

4. Exercise more rigorous and effective passenger screening procedures. This issue raises the delicate balance between enhanced security and personal freedom. All passengers should be screened more thoroughly than before. Additional screening should be triggered by a pattern of factors that suggest higher risk—not by racial or ethnic profiling. All security measures should be consistent with upholding the passenger's constitutional rights.

5. Impose stricter security restrictions on all airport employees, including but not limited to those employed by airlines, subcontracted service companies, vendors, hotels, freight forwarders, and airport authorities. These restrictions should include but not be limited to full background checks and a ban on hiring convicted or probationary criminals, immigration violators, and those on "watch lists." Assist airport authorities to ensure that these restrictions are properly administered.

6. Examine carefully, through a series of ongoing reviews, the many new airport, airfield, and inflight security measures being proposed and considered by government agencies, the airline industry, and the private sector. Policies and procedures that warrant further examination include but are not limited to:

- ▶ Expanding distribution of sophisticated explosive-detection equipment to additional airports.

- ▶ Modifying, enhancing, or redesigning aircraft cabins and interiors (including access to cockpits) on all aircraft operated by U.S. airlines, in accordance with applicable safety regulations.

- ▶ Implementing increased restrictions on carry-on baggage.

- ▶ Increasing "pre-clearance" passenger screening by working with other governments to position U.S. federal authorities in airports outside the U.S. to conduct customs, immigration, quarantine, and security screening on passengers bound for the U.S.

- ▶ Updating and enhancing training for cockpit and cabin crew to effectively react to hijackings, air piracy, and other acts of terrorism, and developing new defensive weapons and strategies for inflight use.

7. Provide funding for these federal security measures by sharing the costs among airline passengers and the federal government, since airline security is clearly a national security issue. The passengers' fees should be levied by the DOT and collected by the airlines. The DOT should develop and implement an appropriate and fair fee schedule for all passengers, for both domestic and international travel (such as per-flight or per-flight leg) based on what the DOT deems to be relevant criteria.

Airport Authorities, Airlines, Aviation Trade Organizations, Aviation Labor Organizations

8. Develop a standardized format for confirmation letters for electronically ticketed (ticketless) passengers. This should ensure that only properly ticketed and screened passengers enter secure terminal areas. Self-service ticketing kiosks in all airports should comply with all relevant security policies and procedures.

9. Eliminate check-in procedures at airport curbsides and at off-site locations, such as downtown areas, hotels, rail stations, etc. Ensure that all check-in procedures are conducted inside passenger terminal areas, under the supervision of the federal airport security force.

10. Strengthen security policies and procedures for passengers connecting at airports after previously clearing security at another airport inside or outside the U.S. Security procedures in all such "sterile" passenger terminal areas (particularly in international terminals) should be examined and enhanced.

11. Reexamine vehicle standing, parking, and delivery procedures at all airports, both in public areas and in secure airfield areas. If necessary, impose permanent new restrictions.

12. Require that all of a passenger's checked baggage be removed from the airplane if for any reason the passenger does not board the flight. Increase and enhance security measures for mail and cargo carried on all passenger and cargo flights, both domestically and internationally.

Passengers

13. Understand and accept that these new policies will require additional expenditures of both time and money, and budget both accordingly. During all phases of commercial air travel, exercise caution, restraint, patience, and good judgment. Accept that there will be inconveniences and limits on what can be carried. Be mindful of your surroundings at all times, and be alert to suspicious behavior or packages. Do not violate the civil rights or personal freedoms of fellow passengers, crewmembers, airline employees, or airport employees.

14. Understand and accept that there will be absolutely no tolerance of threats or acts of violence or any manner of "air rage" against crewmembers or fellow passengers aboard all flights. Enforcement should be increased, and federal fines and penalties for such violations should be increased.