



Landscapes of Suspicion: The Transformation of American Commercial Airports

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Commercial passenger airports in the United States underwent a transformation from transparent landscapes welcoming all people without suspicion to become landscapes where everyone was suspected of potentially seeking to bring harm. A series of bombings and hijackings in the 1950s and 1960s shattered the innocence of air travel. The implementation of security measures fundamentally changed the level of suspicion as transparency was demanded of passengers. The architectural style of airports reflected this change as the soaring designs of Yamasaki and Saarinen gave way to bulky, defensive architectural motifs. Intensified security measures implemented in reaction to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, brought a new level of suspicion to the airport landscape. Today there is not a single place in America that the general public frequents where the level of suspicion is more intense than at commercial airports.

Age of Airport Transparency

There is not a single place in America that the general public frequents where the level of suspicion is more intense than at the airport. This was not the case in the first half of the twentieth century. The American commercial air passenger industry worked hard to build interest and trust from its early decades. Airlines sought to make the public more “air minded” since many people associated flying with danger and the exotic. Other than wealthy individuals and business persons with expense accounts, relatively few people could afford to fly on the airlines until the introduction of air coach after the Second World War. Until the jet age, many individuals experienced the air age vicariously by watching airplanes and activities at airports as entertainment. The air industry sought to attract the observing public who initially were

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permitted to wander airport terminals and gate areas. The airport was transparent, with the public welcome to come see the wonders of air transportation.¹

Airports were popular places of entertainment. American commercial airports attracted large numbers of spectators to vicariously experience the wonder of air travel. For example, on summer weekends in the early 1930s nearly 25,000 onlookers congregated at Dallas' Love Field. The Kansas City Airport recorded a similar number of spectators in the early 1930s.² At Lambert-St. Louis Municipal Airport 10,000 spectators jammed the airport on Sundays, and more than 3,000 visitors milled about the airport on pleasant summer weekday evenings during the late 1930s. These spectators hampered airline operations and overtaxed the terminal restaurants and restrooms. The situation did not improve after the Second World War. On an average day in the early 1950s, the airport hosted three spectators for every one air passenger passing through the terminal. And weekend crowds of 10,000 spectators were still commonplace.³ But the swelling crowds of onlookers became a safety hazard so airport designers sought a better way to facilitate the multitudes without affecting the operational safety and efficiency of airport and airline personnel.

In New York, from the day LaGuardia Airport opened for business in late 1939, the terminal accommodated onlookers with a raised observation deck over the apron where aircraft parked to unload and load passengers and mail. For ten cents, anyone could pass through the turnstiles and observe close-up the hustle and bustle of one of the nation's busiest airports. In just the first year of its existence, the observation deck raked in \$123,382 one dime at a time. Including children under fourteen years of age and students of all ages who enjoyed free admission, more than two million people experienced the observation deck in the airport's first year.⁴

¹ Carl Solberg, *Conquest of the Skies: A History of Commercial Aviation in America* (Boston, 1979), 100-121, 206-224, 376-384; Daniel L. Rust, *Flying Across America: the Airline Passenger Experience* (Norman, Oklahoma, 2009), 91-93; R. E. Johnson, "How Safe Is Air Travel?" *Scientific American* 160 (May 1939), 279.

² Rust, *Flying Across America*, 117-118; Thomas Petzinger, Jr., *Hard Landing: The Epic Contest for Power and Profits that Plunged the Airlines into Chaos* (New York, 1995), 3-17; R. E. G. Davies, *Airlines of the United States* (Washington, D.C., 1972), 336-338.

³ Charles Clifton Bonwell, "Technology and the Terminal: St. Louis's Lambert Field, 1925-1974" (Ph.D. diss, Kansas State University, 1974), 104-105.

⁴ "Visitors to pay 10c at Queens Airport," *New York Times*, 22 December 1939, 17; "\$285,133 Airport Fees," *New York Times*, 19 November 1941, 26.

Figure 1

In this 1948 photograph, visitors lining the LaGuardia Airport observation deck intently gaze upon the sleek airliners and bustle of activity on the ramp below.

Source: John Proctor Collection

Opening shortly after LaGuardia, National Airport near Washington, D.C. also invited passengers and visitors to enjoy outstanding views of the airfield from a large lobby with tall windows and long observation decks outside.⁵ Following the Second World War, Chicago's O'Hare Airport also sported a popular observation deck. For a dime, anyone could get up close and personal with airliners and all of the activity surrounding them. Deck occupants had access to coin-operated binoculars for better views of distant aircraft. For another dime, a loud-speaker would broadcast conversations between pilots and air traffic controllers. In the first year of commercial flights at Chicago's O'Hare International, approximately 3,100 passengers passed through the airport daily. Interestingly, an equal number of sightseers occupied the observation deck per day on weekends when the weather was pleasant. Observation decks signaled to passenger and spectator alike that everyone was welcome at the airport.⁶

Another way to attract more people to the new mode of transportation in the 1920s and 1930s was making air travel more like an existing mode of transportation, i.e., railroads. Aircraft interiors of the age mimicked the décor and color schemes of Pullman cars. And municipal commercial airports designed during this era closely resembled train depots. Since railroads

⁵ John Crider, "A National Airport," *New York Times*, 15 June 1941, SM9.

⁶ Jane Kertz, "Year Flies by—Flights Climb at O'Hare Field," *Chicago Tribune*, 4 October 1956, Section 7 Page 3; Ridgely Hunt, "O'Hare's Wondrous Show," *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, 12 November 1967, 26-39.

carried the majority of intercity passengers (other than those traveling in personal automobiles), airports sported the familiar features of railway station architecture, thereby providing comforting visual cues to anxious passengers. But by the Second World War, architects sought to break out of the railway station mold and create spaces designed to mimic the grandeur of the air age. One of those architects was a young Japanese-American named Minoru Yamasaki. His path-breaking design for the terminal at Lambert-St. Louis Municipal Airport featured a “great space concept” made possible by using thin-shell, reinforced-concrete structures with open and airy interior spaces providing occupants with panoramic views of the runways and aprons. Moreover, Yamasaki’s design included a forty-foot-wide spectator deck extending 565 feet strait out from the terminal toward the runways atop a central concourse. The general public and airplane enthusiasts alike enjoyed being close to the airline operations without the danger of interfering with operating personnel.⁷

Figure 2



Minoru Yamasaki’s design for Lambert-St. Louis International Airport’s innovative terminal featured a large public observation deck.

Source: http://globaldyn.ipnstock.com/dyn_images/1260/180/1239900026.JPG

Yamasaki’s Lambert design inspired architect Eero Saarinen in creating his designs for the TWA terminal at New York’s Kennedy and Washington’s Dulles airports. Both airport terminals seemed to soar with large expanses of glass windows evocative of the air age, inviting people to come experience the wonders of flight. The iconic terminals of Yamasaki and Saarinen not only permitted great views from the inside looking out, but from the outside looking in. The airport landscape envisioned by these architects epitomized optimism and openness, welcoming passengers and a general public (often skeptical of commercial aviation) to wonder at the marvel

⁷ Daniel L. Rust, *The Aerial Crossroads of America: St. Louis’s Lambert Airport* (St. Louis, 2016), 134-137; Bonwell, “Technology and the Terminal,” 110; Janet R. Bednarek, *Airports, Cities, and the Jet Age* (New York, 2016), 127-129.

of air travel and the adventures waiting beyond in a wider world the airlines now brought within reach.⁸

Figure 3



The soaring lines of the thin-shell concrete TWA terminal at JFK International Airport reflected an optimistic air age before the implementation of security measures.

Source: Saarinen, Eero, Architect, Korab, Balthazar, photographer. *Trans World Airlines Terminal, John F. Kennedy originally Idlewild Airport, New York, New York, 1956-62. Exterior.* New York. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/krb2008000596/>.

Age of Transition

Until the later 1960s, security was commonly synonymous with “safety” in commercial passenger aviation. Passengers, mostly comprised of well-heeled leisure travelers or businessmen with expense accounts, boarded flights without passing through any security measures such as metal detectors or baggage screening or anyone suspecting them of seeking to bring harm to aircraft, crew or fellow passengers. The initial security threat to airline flights was individuals who sought personal gain through extortion. The earliest examples occurred in the 1950s when the perpetrator placed a bomb in the checked luggage of a “dupe” who boarded a flight. Set to detonate in flight, the exploding bomb brought down the airliner and killed all aboard. The

⁸ Rust, *The Aerial Crossroads of America*, 139.

extortionist then attempted to collect life insurance for the policy taken out in the name of the “dupe.”⁹

The first example of this occurred on November 1, 1955. A twenty-three-year old man named John Gilbert Graham watched his mother board United Air Lines Flight 629 at Denver’s Stapleton Airport bound for Portland, Oregon. Graham had placed a bomb fashioned from twenty-five sticks of dynamite in his mother’s suitcase, set to detonate soon after the Douglas DC-6B departed. Ten minutes after takeoff, an explosion shattered the airliner. All forty-four people aboard died in the fiery crash. During a criminal investigation, Graham confessed that he had purchased six life insurance policies (worth a total \$37,500) in his mother’s name at the airport, but he discovered the documents were void without her signature. Convicted of the crime, Graham remained unrepentant as the State of Colorado executed him in 1957.¹⁰

Extortionists changed tactics, opting to plant bombs or just make threats to detonate a bomb in an airport or aboard a passenger airliner. Such perpetrators would place a call demanding money in exchange for revealing the location of the bomb—which often did not exist.

Preventing the diversion, not the destruction, of aircraft would lead to the first passenger security measures at U.S. airports. Aircraft hijackings had occurred in North Africa and South America as early as the 1920s. On May 1, 1961, a Cuban identifying himself as ‘Elpirata Cofrisi’ used a pistol and knife to force the pilot of National Airlines Flight 337 to divert to Havana, Cuba soon after departing from Miami, Florida. Taking his name from an eighteenth-century Caribbean pirate, Cofrisi carried out the first successful U.S. domestic hijacking. Leaving the mentally unstable hijacker in Havana, the flight safety returned to U.S. airspace and landed in Key West.¹¹

At least 150 other hijackers would follow in Cofrisi’s footsteps. Over the coming decade, the majority of the hijackers of flights in America were homesick Cuban refugees, often in trouble with the law in the United States or mentally unstable. A travel ban between the United States and Fidel Castro’s Cuba denied them opportunity to travel back legally to Cuba, and hijacking an airliner meant fast transportation home. After news of a few hijackers’ successes, many others attempted the same feat.¹²

The American public demanded that the government take action to stop the hijackings. Months after the initial incident, federal authorities reacted with passage of Public Law 87-197—the Hijacking Act of 1961. For the first time in history the federal government could prosecute in criminal court any passengers who hijacked an aircraft, interfered with members of the flight crew, or brought weapons aboard an airliner. The law also stated that “any air carrier is authorized to refuse transportation to a passenger or to refuse to transport property when, in the opinion of the air carrier, such transportation would or might be inimical to safety of flight.”¹³

⁹ Robert M. Hardaway, *Airport Regulation, Law and Public Policy: the Management and Growth of Infrastructure* (New York, 1991), 134.

¹⁰ Andrew J Field, *Mainliner Denver: The Bombing of Flight 629* (Boulder, Colorado, 2005), 1-27, 212-227; David Gero, *Flights of Terror: Aerial Hijack and Sabotage since 1930* (Newbury Park, California, 1997), 94-95; Rust, *Flying Across America*, 206.

¹¹ Gero, *Flights of Terror*, 18; Rust, *Flying Across America*, 206.

¹² William M. Landes, “An Economic Study of U.S. Aircraft Hijacking, 1961-1976,” *Journal of Law & Economics* 21 (April 1978): 1-31.

¹³ 49 U.S.C. § 1472 (1961).

The law's passage and rapid enforcement seemed to stem the tide of skyjackings until suddenly twelve commercial flights were diverted to Cuba in 1968. The year 1969 witnessed the greatest number of hijackings, with thirty-three of forty attempts successful. Hijacking of airliners became almost routine. When hijacked, U.S. airline flight crews did not resist. The Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) primary concern was to protect passengers and crews of hijacked airliners. The FAA established a communication link among air traffic control centers between Miami and Havana so that hijacked airliners could be easily transferred. Landing charts to Havana's José Martí Airport became standard issue for U.S. commercial pilots.¹⁴

Figure 4

RAYTHEON AT WORK

New Raytheon radar-TV helps FAA give added security to air travelers

Every time you or your loved ones travel in the U.S. by commercial plane, that flight comes under the watchful radar eye of the Federal Aviation Agency's air traffic control system. Now the FAA can look after you even more effectively, thanks to new "bright display" equipment developed by Raytheon.

The FAA's air traffic control system—which has long included Raytheon enroute radars—guards the safety of air travelers by keeping a close check and accurate record of the speed, course and altitude of planes in flight. And this new "bright display"—first of 60 installations—gives the radar operator a valuable new tool for monitoring your flight.

Conventional radar pictures, for example, show each aircraft as a single recurring blip on the screen. In the new system, a Raytheon storage tube collects these individual blips and presents them in a series as a clearly visible "tattle trail" of each plane's exact progress and position. The picture is sharper and brighter than home television.

When the FAA completes this network of "bright display" control stations, it will make air travel safer than ever... another example of Raytheon electronics skills at work on behalf of business, industry, science, and defense. Raytheon Company, Lexington, Massachusetts.

RAYTHEON



From a more innocent era, this 1963 advertisement for Raytheon's air traffic control hardware used the term "security" to mean safety—not the prevention of intentional harm.

Source: *Aviation Week* 78 (25 March 1963), 79.

¹⁴ Landes, "An Economic Study of U.S. Aircraft Hijackings," 1-4.

Reacting to public pressure, President Nixon directed the FAA to establish the Task Force on Deterrence of Air Piracy on February 17, 1969, to coordinate with airlines the development of an anti-hijacking system. The American public deluged the FAA with suggestions for how to stop aerial hijackings. The suggestions ranged from pumping sleeping gas into the aircraft cabin during a hijacking, to putting armed guards aboard airliners, to arming flight attendants, to issuing a photo-identification credential to each frequent flyer, to requiring each passenger to undress in an airport dressing room and put on overalls for the flight, to making the cockpit bulletproof. Only the suggestion of placing armed guards aboard flights gained traction. U.S. marshals and customs agents soon appeared at major airports to seek out and stop potential hijackers.¹⁵

Airline employees (typically ticket agents) voluntarily checked passenger lists against a government-developed profile of approximately thirty characteristics possessed by a typical hijacker and secretly indicated such on the ticket of any suspicious passenger, labelled a “selectee.” The passenger who fit the profile was then subjected to a six-stage security process of increasing levels of intrusiveness—the sixth resulting in the selectee’s arrest for attempted air piracy if not cleared at an earlier stage in the process.¹⁶

One of the key steps was requiring the selectee to walk through a metal detector to determine the presence of a metal weapon. The FAA began testing experimental metal detectors at Washington National Airport in March 1969. The detectors were not solely for detecting weapons. According to an FAA spokesman, quoted in *Aviation Week* magazine, the “detectors are at least as much a deterrent as a means of detecting weapons” with large signs posted near them warning of the severe penalties for hijacking flights (ranging from twenty years imprisonment to the death penalty).¹⁷

The posters also carried messages for all passengers including a prohibition of jokes about weapons, bombs and hijacking, as well as a notice that passengers and their baggage could be subject to search before boarding. Practices varied among airports, but typically passengers walked through a metal detector that alerted security if they carried metal objects such as knives or pistols. Some passengers who triggered a metal detector underwent identification checks, possibly a body frisk, and a hand search of any carry-on items. American and TWA became the first domestic airlines to search the carry-on luggage of all passengers, even as the airlines’ leaders expressed reluctance to search passengers and their baggage because they feared that such actions might drive away some customers. According to the airlines, air passenger security should be the responsibility of federal and local authorities, not the airlines.¹⁸

These voluntary measures became mandatory in 1972 (effective in early 1973) when the FAA demanded that airlines or contractors working for airlines should ensure that each and every passenger undergo a three-stage screening process: hijacker profile, search of carry-on

¹⁵ Kenneth C. Moore, *Airport, Aircraft & Airline Security* (Los Angeles, 1976), 5-10.

¹⁶ Federal Aviation Administration. U. S. Department of Transportation. *Final Report of the Task Force on Deterrence of Air Piracy* (1973); John T. Daily, “Development of a Behavioral Profile for Air Pirates,” *Villanova Law Review* 18 (1973): 1008-1011; Hardaway, *Airport Regulation*, 136-137; Temple B. Ingram, Jr., “Air Airport Searches Still Reasonable,” *Journal of Air Law & Commerce* 44 (1978): 133-135.

¹⁷ “Hijacking Spurs Detector Tests,” *Aviation Week* 90 (March 31, 1969), 31.

¹⁸ “100% Carry-On Baggage Search Begun by American, Trans World,” *Aviation Week* 97 (September 4, 1972), 28.

items, and metal detector screening. Expecting the FAA's security mandate to be temporary, the air carriers hired third-party security firms to perform passenger and baggage screening at airports. The use of contractors for air passenger screening would persist until the creation of the Transportation Security Administration federalized this function in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.¹⁹

The occurrence of hijacking in the United States declined dramatically, in spite of further highly publicized hijackings such as the November 1971 hijacking of Northwest Airlines Flight 305. A man boarded the flight in Portland, Oregon for the flight's final leg to Seattle, Washington using the alias D.B. Cooper. Claiming to have a bomb aboard the jetliner, Mr. Cooper demanded \$200,000 in cash and four parachutes. On the ground in Seattle, Mr. Cooper received the requested items as he allowed all passengers and two of the three flight attendants to deplane. Back in the air, the Boeing 727 headed south toward Reno, Nevada. Somewhere over the Cascade Mountains, Cooper jumped from the rear of the jetliner with the money and a parachute, never to be seen again. In the wake of highly-publicized hijackings, the rear doors of Boeing 727 jetliners were modified so that they could not be deployed in flight, authorities limited access to airliner cockpits during flight, and an army of specially trained and equipped sky marshals occupied seats on selected flights.²⁰

Of necessity, aircraft security focused upon the airport, the place where passengers boarded flights. Three entities shared overlapping security responsibilities: the Federal Aviation Administration set security requirements, airport operators secured the physical perimeter of airport property, and the airlines were responsible for passenger screening. Together they established "sterile concourses"—areas in the airport between the main airport lobby and the boarding gates where only individuals who had successfully passed through security measures could enter.²¹

Starting in the early 1970s, airport security measures became a permanent feature of the air travel experience. In the span of just over a decade, airports transformed from places where no one was under suspicion into a landscape where everyone wishing to board a flight or gain access to concourse areas were subjected to security measures including a hijacker profile and metal detectors. Additionally, their hand-held belongings were subjected to x-ray machines and hand searches.

Airport architecture also reflected this transformation. As Alastair Gordon noted: A defensive new style of architecture came along to match the anxious mood of the day. Lobbies and concourses designed to be open and flowing were now segregated into 'sterile' and 'nonsterile' zones, as prescribed by federal regulations. ... Exits were sealed, temporary partitions erected, views obscured. ... Preexisting terminals were retrofitted with windowless additions. ... Posthijacking terminals were heavy and grounded, whereas earlier ones had been light and soaring. The sleek and sexy envelopes of the 1960s gave way to blocky concrete and bunkerlike shapes: no more of the seductive curves of Saarinen or

¹⁹ 49 U.S.C § 1472(i)-(m)(1970), as amended 49 U.S.C.A. § 1572 (i)(m) (1972 Supp.); Moore, *Airport, Aircraft & Airline Security*, 52-53; Christopher Drew and Matthew L. Wald, "Security Long a Concern at United States Airports," *New York Times*, 12 September 2001, A17.

²⁰ Gero, *Flights of Terror*, 100-101; Rust, *Flying Across America*, 208.

²¹ Moore, *Airport, Aircraft & Airline Security*, 31-34.

Yamasaki. Open-style planning gave way to partitions, narrow corridors, single-entry points, and artificial lighting. Transparency had suddenly become a liability at the airport. ... There were unbroken expanses of wall space where once there had been expanses of glass.²²

This new airport architectural style accommodated the new security measures, as well as the ever-increasing numbers of passengers (doubling every decade from the late 1950s to the late 1980s) transiting airports to and from flights. Cast concrete slabs, lack of natural light, and limited points of passenger entry characterized the airports of an era noted for poor economic conditions and fewer monetary resources available for grand public edifices. In the late 1970s the existing terminal at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta was demolished to make room for a much larger terminal complex. Instead of multiple passenger entry points into the complex, a single throat with more than a dozen metal detectors provided passenger access to the “sterile zone” of the four concourse areas. The terminal complex at Hartfield-Jackson featured “megalthic concrete slabs—vaguely sacrificial in character—were relieved only by occasional monitor skylight or venting duct.” A bland, bunker-like interior filled with passengers forced to undergo multiple screening measures had replaced the soaring, open architecture filled with trusted passengers of a more innocent time.²³

²² Alastair Gordon, *Naked Airport: A Cultural History of the World's Most Revolutionary Structure* (New York, 2004), 235-236.

²³ Gordon, *Naked Airport*, 236, 238, 246-247; Bednarek, *Airports, Cities, and the Jet Age*, 136-138; Mark Gottdiener, *Life in the Air: Surviving the New Culture of Air Travel* (Lanham, Maryland, 2001), 62-74; Mark B. Salter, “The Global Airport: Managing Space, Speed, and Security,” in *Politics at the Airport*, ed. Mark B. Salter, (Minneapolis, 2008), 1-28.

Figure 5

One of the largest airports in the world, the architecture of Atlanta's Hartsfield Jackson International Airport reflected a utilitarian design that facilitated the security screening and boarding/deplaning of ever-increasing masses of passengers.

Source: <http://www.sunshineskies.com/uploads/4/3/7/6/43764233/902669134.jpg>

The transformation extended to details as subtle as the removal of lockers for passenger use. This change resulted directly from the December 1975 detonation of a bomb in a locker at LaGuardia which killed twelve people. Beside the danger of such a bomb inside an airport, authorities feared that a similar device could be placed aboard an aircraft. Many airports nationwide, including Lambert-St. Louis, removed banks of lockers as a precautionary measure. In April 1976, the FAA implemented new guidelines directing airlines to inspect any suspicious luggage destined for the cargo hold of passenger airliners. The FAA considered requiring the screening of all checked luggage, but the thought of forcing passengers to arrive up to three hours before their scheduled departure caused the FAA to adopt the less stringent rule.²⁴

While some security measures changed in the 1980s and 1990s with the increased use of closed-circuit television and greater enforcement of identification badges for airport and airline employees, the passenger screening experience changed relatively little. Passengers and the public could enter concourses

²⁴ "Tightening Airport Security," *Chicago Tribune*, 22 April 1976, Section 2 Page 2.

after passing through metal detectors and subjecting any hand-held items to x-ray machines, all operated by employees of private firms under contract with airlines. As the level of suspicion at airports became routine and predictable, a transformation was coming.²⁵

Age of Air Passenger Transparency

On September 11, 2001, nineteen terrorists used transcontinental jetliners to strike targets in New York City and Washington, DC. Five terrorists boarded American Airlines Flight 11, leaving Boston for Los Angeles. The seized control of the airliner soon after takeoff, flew south to New York City, and crashed the fully loaded Boeing 767 into the North Tower of the World Trade Center. Five more terrorists took over United Airlines Flight 175 from Boston to Los Angeles and rammed it into the World Trade Center's South Tower. Less than two hours after the first tower shuddered with the impact of Flight 11, both towers collapsed to the ground.²⁶

As part of the coordinated attack, five terrorists seized American Airlines Flight 77 after it departed Washington's Dulles International Airport and crashed it into the Pentagon. Four other terrorists boarded United Airlines Flight 93 at Newark International Airport, bound for San Francisco. Although they gained control of the airplane, passengers bravely confronted them, and the Boeing 757 crashed into the Pennsylvania countryside, short of the terrorists' intended target (likely the Capital or the White House in Washington, D.C.). The attacks cost the lives of nearly 3,300 Americans—the greatest loss of life on U.S. soil in a single day since the Civil War.²⁷

In response to the attacks, the FAA grounded all flights in the United States on September 11 and did not reopen American airspace until forty-eight hours later. The gradual restarting of commercial air travel came with new security restrictions and procedures such as more rigorous and intrusive screening of air passengers and baggage, not allowing non-ticket passengers to pass through security screening areas, and keeping all motor vehicles a greater distance from airport terminals.²⁸

Air travel in the United States would never be the same. In the coming months and years, the federal government assumed more responsibility for passenger screening under the Aviation and Transportation Security Act of 2001 which granted the newly created Transportation Security Administration (TSA) the responsibility for security in all modes of transportation.²⁹

Even before arriving at the airport, air passengers became subject to scrutiny as they were required to provide legal names and birthdates when purchasing airline tickets. Governmental

²⁵ Admiral Cathal "Irish" Flynn and Art Kasatka, "Civil Aviation in the United States: Security Before and After 9/11," in *The McGraw-Hill Homeland Security Handbook*, ed. David G. Kamien (New York, 2006), 613-630; Rust, *The Aerial Crossroads of America*, 264-265; Bednarek, *Airports, Cities, and the Jet Age*, 227-238.

²⁶ Decades after designing the Lambert terminal (a landmark design of air-age optimism), Minoru Yamasaki designed the World Trade Center twin towers in New York City. It is no small irony that terrorists destroyed the twin towers using loaded commercial jetliners on September 11, 2001.

²⁷ 9-11 Commission, *Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States*. (New York, 2004); "U.S. Airlines Face Financial Armageddon," *Air Transport World* 38 (October 2001): 9; Rust, *Flying Across America*, 226.

²⁸ Philip Shenon, "At the Airport, Nothing Remains the Same," *New York Times*, 23 December 2001, TR5.

²⁹ Pub. L. 107-71, November 19, 2001, 115 Stat. 597.

officials used this data to check against names on a no-fly list of those prohibited from traveling via air because the government believed they posed a high-level of risk.

Figure 6



A clearly-posted warning informed motor vehicle drivers to remain with their motor vehicles when waiting to pick up airline passengers at the curb of Terminal 1 at Lambert-St. Louis International Airport.

Source: Author

At the airport, no unattended motor vehicles could be parked at the terminal curb because of the threat of terrorists detonating an improvised explosive device (IED) in a car or truck. Closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems maintained visual surveillance of the airport inside and out. Soon after 9/11 many airports upgraded and expanded their CCTV systems. For instance, Los Angeles International Airport added 1,200 cameras to its existing security system after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.³⁰

Now all checked baggage was subjected to x-ray scanning, similar to the pre-9/11 procedures for carry-on luggage. The TSA located very large x-ray machines near airline passenger check-in counters, another visible reminder of the increase of suspicion.

Figure 7

³⁰ Jennifer Oldham, "LAX to Add 1,200 Surveillance Cameras for Increased Security," *Los Angeles Times*, 2 August 2002, Section A Page 1.



This large scanner for checked baggage at Lambert Airport in St. Louis was yet another security measure which demanded heightened passenger transparency post-9/11.

Source: Author

Passing through the terminal, passengers were subjected to a new form of behavioral profiling. In 2007 the TSA initiated the Screening of Passengers by Observation Techniques (SPOT) program (with roots in the hijacker profile from decades earlier) that equipped specially trained Behavior Detection Officers (BDOs) with a means of identifying persons who might pose a transportation risk by focusing on behaviors indicative of high levels of stress, fear, or deception. BDOs collected information about observed behaviors and entered it into a TSA SPOT database. If observed behaviors exceeded certain thresholds, then another category of information was collected including the physical characteristics of passengers, home and business addresses and phone numbers, employer information, identification numbers, date and place of birth, purpose for travel, et cetera.³¹

In a significant shift of practice from before the 9/11 attacks, only passengers and flight crews were permitted to undergo security screening and enter the airport gate area. Movable barriers guided passengers to form lines as they approached security screening with government-issued ID (usually a state driver's license) and boarding pass in hand. A TSA agent examined the

³¹ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "Privacy Impact Assessment for the Screening of Passengers by Observation Techniques (SPOT) Program," 5 August 2008, Department of Homeland Security; viewed 22 February 2017, URL: https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/privacy/privacy_pia_tsa_spot.pdf.

documents for discrepancies and looked the passenger in the face before directing him or her to advance to the next state of screening. The passenger next removed any jewelry, objects from pockets, or any other metal objects and put them with all carryon items on a moving conveyor belt destined to undergo x-ray screening while the passenger underwent a full-body scan. If the scan revealed that the passenger might have an object on his or her person, that passenger was subjected to a pat-down search. If the passenger refused to undergo the full-body scan, the passenger could request a security pat-down instead. The full-body scanners and pat-downs elicited a public outcry as many people believed they were an invasion of privacy. Early versions of the body scanners produced a graphic, realistic image of the person undergoing the scan. Questions surrounding who had access to these images prompted a modification so that scanners produced the outline of a generic human form and indicated on that outline where an anomaly might be located.³²

After Richard Reid attempted to detonate explosives concealed in his footwear while aboard American Airlines Flight 63 from Paris to Miami on December 22, 2001, the TSA began requiring passengers remove their shoes when passing through security screening. Five years later, British authorities arrested two dozen men allegedly plotting to down airliners by detonating homemade bombs filled with liquid explosives. The TSA reacted to this possible threat with enhanced screening procedures banning liquids in containers of more than three ounces. Nine years later Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab attempted to detonate an explosive device located around his groin during Northwest Airlines Flight 253 on Christmas Day 2009, leading to still more security screening changes. Such changes continued to evolve as the TSA reacted to perceived threats in this “new normal” environment of perpetual vulnerability to terrorists.³³

No longer was the airport transparent. Rather, in the name of ensuring the security of air transportation, all air passengers underwent passive and active security measures that forced their transparency—emotional, physical, and identity transparency. Suspicion now was the defining feature of the airport, epitomized by the full-body scanner that seemed to simultaneously both threaten and protect passenger freedoms. Passengers obviously wished to travel safely to their destinations, which was the intended purpose of the entire airport security system that suspected everyone as potentially intending harm. But each passenger gave up a measure of privacy and convenience to achieve that security in an intense environment of suspicion.³⁴

Figure 8

³² Matthew Tiessen, “Being Watched Watching Watchers Watch,” *Surveillance & Society* 9 (1/2), 167-169; Peter Adey, “Facing Airport Security: Affect, Biopolitics, and the Preemptive Secularisation of the Mobile Body,” *Environment and Planning* 27 (2009), 274-295.

³³ Eric Lipton, “U.S. Eases Rules on Gels and Liquids in Carry-Ons,” *New York Times*, 26 September 2006, Section A Page 14; Matthew L. Wald, “Plot’s Legacy for Air Travel, Measured in Fluid Ounces,” *New York Times*, 8 September 2009, Section A Page 10; Bednarek, *Airports, Cities, and the Jet Age*, 238-240.

³⁴ Scott McCartney, “Subtle Signs that May Mark You an Airport Security Risk,” *Wall Street Journal*, 22 January 2014, D1; Gordon, *Naked Airport*, 235-236; Kaima Negishi, “From Surveillant Test to Surveilling Device: The Face in Urban Transit Spaces,” *Surveillance & Society* 11 (2013): 324-333.



Multiple signs direct passengers to comply with various security procedures at Lambert-St. Louis International Airport, circa 2008.

Source: Author

Suspicion extended far beyond the airport. In fact, the entire nation became enveloped in a “culture of suspicion” in the months following September 11, 2001. The Department of Homeland Security urged all people to be vigilant about security. The “see something, say something” campaign encouraged people to speak out if they saw something amiss—especially at airports and other transportation facilities. And the level of suspicion at the airport was not equal for people of all races or religions. Sometimes personal prejudice played a role when someone who appeared to be from the Middle East perhaps behaved or dressed in ways out of the norm while in an airport or aboard a flight.³⁵

After the attacks of 9/11, remaining airport observation decks closed for security reasons. One official at Akron-Canton Airport reminisced about the airport’s closed observation deck, “You could throw a snowball and hit an airplane from there. It’s just today’s world,

³⁵ David Lyon, *Surveillance after September 11* (Oxford, 2003), 40-61; Elaine Glusac, Department of Homeland Security, “If You See Something, Say Something,” viewed 28 February 2017. URL: <https://www.dhs.gov/see-something-say-something>. “When ‘Suspicious’ Activity on Flights Really Isn’t,” 10 May 2016, *New York Times on the Web*; viewed 5 March 2017. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/11/travel/when-suspicious-activity-on-flights-really-isnt.html>.

unfortunately. And, quite frankly, it's taken all the fun out of the place." The official's sentiment reflects the reality that there is not a single place in America that the general public frequents where the level of suspicion is more intense than at the airport. Passengers willingly, if reluctantly, participated in this landscape of suspicion that will likely not become any less suspicious of its occupants any time soon.³⁶

Figure 9



The view from the Lambert-St. Louis International Airport's Yamasaki-designed Terminal 1 in 2015 overlooking the former location of the public observation deck serves as a symbol of how American airports transformed into landscapes of suspicion.

Source: Author

³⁶ Bob Dyer, "The Magic of Flight," 1 February 2017, *Akron Beacon Journal*; viewed 16 March 2017. URL: <https://www.ohio.com/akron/news/bob-dyer-the-magic-of-flight>.