

**Efficient Aviation Security: Strengthening the Analytic Foundation for Making Air Transportation Security Decisions. By Brian A. Jackson, Tom LaTourrette, Edward W. Chan, Russell Lundberg, Andrew R. Morral, David R. Frelinger. Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, 2012.**

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***Efficient Aviation Security: Strengthening the Analytic Foundation for Making Air Transportation Security Decisions.* By Brian A. Jackson, Tom LaTourrette, Edward W. Chan, Russell Lundberg, Andrew R. Morral, David R. Frelinger. Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, 2012. ISBN 978-0-8330-7652-6. Tables. Graphs. Figures. Sources cited. Bibliography. Pp. xxv, 155. \$31.95.**

The RAND Corporation is known for its meticulous—at times painstaking—research on numerous national security topics. *Efficient Aviation Security* is no exception. A collection of tightly-woven essays written by knowledgeable research analysts, the book offers a diverse range of viewpoints. While well written and packed with solid, useful information, it ploughs ground already furrowed many times over; there are no new or innovative insights that national security decision makers might use to forge a new and better way to secure air transportation networks. Conclusions offered, although solid and well-grounded, have been offered many times over in the years since the September 11, 2001 (9/11) terrorist attacks. While the book doesn't offer any lasting conclusions, it at least asks the right questions to frame substantive debate of the issue at hand. Given this context, the potential reader is best served by a review of the Preface, Summary, and Conclusion as they will provide the most meaningful data points the book has to offer.

The role of commercial air travel in the U.S. economy and the lifestyle to which we've become accustomed depends upon a stable, dependable aviation security network. Many years after 9/11, al-Qa'ida is still very intent on attacking the U.S. civil aviation system. With the myriad changes to our aviation security system, terrorists have continued to adapt and evolve, devising ever ingenious and innovative ways to attack aircraft. These measures include shoe bombs, underwear bombs, package bombs, and countless other violent attack methods.

Useful insights come from the discussion of Threat-Vulnerability-Consequence (TVC). This delves into issues regarding the probability an event will occur and the resultant damage if the attack is even moderately successful. *Threat* is based upon adversary intent and capability. *Vulnerability* is based upon the target's susceptibility to attack. *Consequence* is the scale of damage resulting from a successful attack. The TVC model is the one currently in use for aviation security decision making and provides a solid beginning framework to examine how to proceed into future policies and strategies. With that foundation established, the potential targets – aircraft (in flight or on the ground), airports, and infrastructure sites (such as fuel farms) are briefly discussed.

The central question of how to break away from designing future security models based on past terrorist threats is asked, but left hanging. Employing numerous empirical and quantitative studies, the book proceeds to swarm the reader with a vortex of graphs and data tables sprinkled with tiny bits of context.

The book undertakes a necessary examination of the cumulative costs of security. This includes the tangible (higher ticket costs, screening, removal of shoes, laptops in the bin, baggage fees, confiscated water bottles) and the intangible (missed or delayed flights, long lines, short tempers). The whole then becomes greater than the sum of its parts, leading to societal weariness with the entire aviation security process. The multi-layered security approach utilized over the past few years is generally praised as conceptually sound. Multi-layered security provides redundant measures to ensure there is no single point of failure. For an attack to succeed, there would have to be multiple, systemic points of failure. Multi-layered security also serves as a deterrent, both physical and psychological, to the would-be attacker. If the target is too difficult, the terrorist will look elsewhere for lower hanging fruit.

Amid the endless policy and political debates on how to move aviation security into the future, the quest for a more effective, more efficient, system remains a constant, if ever elusive goal. The enduring criticism of these efforts over the years is that governmental security policies consistently tend to be reactive and backward looking, more attuned to political currents and past practices rather than truly addressing the root cause (in this case transnational terrorist networks that want to blow up aircraft). In these politically expedient, crushingly administrative, overtly self-serving, and at times toxically dogmatic debates, the real issue of securing the aviation system from the real threat is obscured in the ebb and flow of endless news coverage and partisan squabbling.

The continuing burden of pursuing effective and efficient aviation security in the face of dwindling funds and other resource constraints has led to a collective sense of burn out on the part of both government and private sectors. These factors, coupled with public weariness over long lines at the airports and security measures increasingly seen as “intrusive” by all sides of the political spectrum, indicate that the same thinking that led to our present dilemmas will not move us forward. Regarding the politically charged topic of terrorism (raging debates about what now constitutes a terrorist aside) there is no precise, scientific method for accurately and consistently predicting terrorist attacks—or their tactics, techniques, and procedures. The raging debates seem to cognitively elude the fact that terrorists learn in an evolutionary style, adapting and changing their focus as needed. Our collective public and private sectors continue to demand a linear, formulaic method of dealing with terrorism. In so doing, we ignore the truth that each terrorist group and indeed each terrorist attack are in fact *sui generis* and must be considered and analyzed as such.

Given that the threats to aviation are “the new normal,” both government and private sectors must labor collaboratively to reduce the risk by implementing countermeasures and closing vulnerability gaps to the aviation system. This includes a series of cost-benefit analyses, which in turn must take into account that money spent to secure the aviation system is money that cannot be spent elsewhere. RAND concludes that although many studies have been written, more studies are necessary to gain a clear understanding of security policies needed (a conclusion reminiscent of the so-called “self-licking ice cream cone”). Save your money, read this study on the web (or download the .pdf) and harvest the useful nuggets within.

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