

 **VIEWPOINT**

# Are we all safer, or just brand targets?

BY J. RONALD CAREY

Do you feel safer knowing that an airline terminal was evacuated after the sensor detected explosive material on a piece of baggage? Is there an added sense of security knowing that helicopter gun ships flew over Times Square New Years Eve? Do the armed guards at airport check-ins give you solace? Are you glad that no one can park within 300 feet of the terminal — thereby eliminating the best spaces? Do the people who love to blow their whistles at drivers who temporarily leave their cars to check-in or pick up arriving passengers make you feel protected?

If you answered yes to any of the above, you have been marketed to successfully by the Department of Homeland Security.

The truth is: none of the above improves security.

First let's look at the threat. Today's group of terrorists believes that the best delivery method is a person who is willing to trade a dreary current life for a promised glorious eternity.

What that means for the defenders: A terrorist with a car loaded with explosives will not exit it. That individual will stay in the vehicle and aim it at the target. Therefore, the safest cars at the airport are those the driver leaves. An empty car parked near the terminal or a car that is left temporarily near the gates is not now a threat.

Now to what happens on an aircraft. The current crop of terrorists is not interested in blowing up a plane. They want to use it as a weapon. And the only way to do that is to get into the cockpit. If the door is totally secured, and never opened in the air, the craft can not be used for their purposes.

Far too often the cockpit door is open during flight. This creates the opening the bad guys seek. One would think that pilots who are paid \$200k a year, and have a retirement package that would make a senator jealous, would be able to get by without the free meal delivered to them enroute — or hit the head before takeoff. But they often can't, so security is compromised.

The cockpit door should never be opened from gate to gate. Never. And it should be impenetrable.

Yet rather than insisting on that rule, our "protectors" waste their time on meaningless regulations.

Taking away metal knives for the meal service and replacing them with plastic ones does nothing. For starters, the still available metal fork is fully as dangerous as the knife, but the main point is that it doesn't matter what weapons the passengers may have. If they can't take over the plane, their mission fails. Nor will

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## **VIEWPOINT:** Marketing campaign of homeland security is exposed

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explosives in the baggage do them any good.

Then there are the gun ships flying over crowds of people. If you have ever fired machine guns you know how inaccurate they are. Add to that, they would be fired from a moving platform. The gunner cannot take the chance of hitting an innocent victim. Those helicopters, which cost hundreds of dollars an hour to fly, are ineffective when used near a large group of people.

Speaking of guns, how about the armed guards at airport security? What are they going to fire at? Terrorists don't storm the gates with weapons blazing. They try to get on the plane surreptitiously. Besides that, a guard could not fire without being

sure the bullets would hit only the perpetrator. In a crowded terminal that is difficult.

It was even unnecessary to have a Department of Homeland Security. We already had a cabinet level group in existence to protect U.S. citizens from a foreign threat: the Department of Defense. The only real good done by the new agency is removing the Coast Guard from the Department of Transportation (DoT) where it was mistreated. (For example, a few years ago the DoT took money from the U.S. Coast Guard in order to help fund Amtrak.)

Why then do we have restricted convenient parking, officious parking whistlers, armed guards, choppers, plastic utensils and

a new bureaucracy? To make you feel better.

The marketing even applies to the language used on citizens. If you set off the metal alarm at security, the agent doesn't say you have to be searched. Instead the agent says, "Passenger assist." Brilliant. Phony, but brilliant.

None of those measures does anything to increase your security. They are intended to give you the feeling the government is doing something for you. But you aren't being protected; rather, these ineffective measures are simply being marketed.

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