Negative: TSA Screeners - good

By “Coach Vance” Trefethen

***Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially reform its transportation policy.***

The Affirmative case removes TSA from the airport screening business and makes someone else (Blue Book’s case has airports, but others may make it the airlines) responsible for screening passengers and baggage. AFF will argue that TSA is incompetent and inefficient and that private contractors or airport employees could do a better job.

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NEGATIVE BRIEF: TSA Screeners - good

OPENING QUOTES

What will you do when the Muslim Brotherhood has its members working for private airport security?

Mark Hewitt 2016 (former general manager of private airport security company pre-9/11) “So You Want to Privatize the TSA? 8 March 2016 AMERICAN THINKER <http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2016/03/so_you_want_to_privatize_the_tsa.html>

In this day of international terrorism, where a terroristic or militant group seeks to find and exploit the weakest link in a security setting, the next time you go through an airport and think the TSA is horrible, instead, imagine that the Muslim Brotherhood or the Black Panthers have weaseled their way "inside the wire" and are manning the airport security checkpoint. I'll drive or a take the train.

HARMS / SIGNIFICANCE

1. TSA works fine

TSA is effective at detecting threats. Their only weakness is budget cuts

J. David Cox Sr. 2016 (National President, American Federation of Government Employees) 4 Aug 2016 “Privatizing TSA Places Profits Over Passengers” <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/j-david-cox-sr/privatizing-tsa-places-pr_b_11306466.html>

Despite a perpetually-understaffed workforce and increased workload, TSA Officers discovered a record 2,653 firearms at security checkpoints in 2015 - a 20 percent increase from 2014. And just last month, TSA Officers discovered 74 weapons, 65 of which were loaded. If the current trend keeps up, 3,000 firearms will be confiscated by the end of 2016. And that doesn’t even include the thousands of knives and other dangerous weapons that were removed from passengers’ luggage. The results are clear: TSA works. Their decade and a half of good work cannot be swept aside because they’ve been starved of the resources they need to get the job done right.

INHERENCY

1. New policies will solve wait times

New agents and new management rules now in place will reduce wait times

Prof. Juliette Kayyem 2016 (professor at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government; former assistant secretary of Homeland Security) CNN 18 May 2016 “TSA woes: Privatize airport security?” <http://www.cnn.com/2016/05/18/opinions/privatize-airport-security-a-bad-idea-opinion-kayyem/index.html>

These immediate changes to TSA planning -- requesting and receiving the budget from Congress to hire 1,600 more agents; increasing overtime opportunities for TSA employees; reprogramming DHS funds to support TSA hiring; giving airport officials an easier capacity to shift employee placements around so that security personnel are not being utilized for mundane tasks like announcements or putting baggage bins away; and better aligning security resources with the most popular airline flights -- are likely to reduce wait times.

1. Airports can opt out

Airports can already opt out of TSA and privatize security if they want, and 22 of them do

Matt Vasilogambros 2016 (journalist) 27 May 2016 “Should Airports Privatize Security to Avoid Long Lines?” <http://www.govexec.com/management/2016/05/should-airports-privatize-security-avoid-long-lines/128654/>

Before 9/11, it was up to airlines to hire private contractors for terminal security. After the attacks, the federal government created the TSA to streamline the security process and took over most airport security nationwide. Airports had the option to use private contractors, but only through the approval and with the funding of the TSA. Many airports took the TSA up on its offer. In the years since, the TSA has faced criticism for what some describe as aggressive pat downs and oversights that have allowed banned items to make it through security. [A 2015 investigation](http://abcnews.go.com/US/exclusive-undercover-dhs-tests-find-widespread-security-failures/story?id=31434881) by the Department of Homeland Security Inspector General showed that TSA agents missed 95 percent of mock explosives and banned weapons that undercover investigators brought through security. One TSA agent even missed a fake explosive device taped to the back of one of the undercover investigators. Already, 22 airports across the country use private contractors instead of the TSA for airport security, including in Kansas City and San Francisco, which kept its private security even after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

MINOR REPAIR

1. Better funding of TSA

Quit cutting TSA’s budget and give them the money they need to hire enough officers

Matt Vasilogambros 2016 (journalist) 27 May 2016 “Should Airports Privatize Security to Avoid Long Lines?” <http://www.govexec.com/management/2016/05/should-airports-privatize-security-avoid-long-lines/128654/>

The TSA [says it is understaffed](http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2016/05/chicago-airport-lines/483222/) because of budget cuts and a higher volume of travelers. The union that represents security officers says the TSA needs to add at least 6,000 more officers to the TSA’s 42,000-member workforce to meet airports’ demand. But to hire new officers would mean an injection of tens of millions of dollars in a budget of $7.4 billion—an unlikely sell for a fiscally conservative Congress. As complaints grow against the TSA, the administration is attempting to do what it can with the resources it has. Officials say they will hire an additional 800 security officers nationwide by the end of the month to ease some of the demand.

Instead of privatizing: Quit cutting the TSA budget and instead pay for them to hire more staff

Sam Harnett 2016 (journalist) 11 Aug 2016 “The pros and cons of privatizing airport security” <https://www.marketplace.org/2016/08/04/business/pros-and-cons-privatizing-airport-security>

The TSA said it has found no difference in performance between federal workers and contractors. What would really help long lines is if Congress stopped siphoning off money from the TSA, said Christopher Bidwell, vice president of security for Airports Council International North America, an advocacy group for airports. “Because TSA is underfunded, basically,” Bidwell said, “the void has been filled on a voluntary and temporary basis by airports and airlines as well.” Every passenger pays an $11.20 round-trip security fee. Bidwell said since 2014, Congress has been redirecting a third of that money, which adds up to over a billion dollars a year. And since 2013, TSA has laid off around 10 percent of its staff. Bidwell said there just aren’t enough workers, public or private. Until that changes he said, many long lines await.

SOLVENCY

1. Airports & Airlines not competent to manage security

Airports & airlines only care about money – they won’t spend what it takes to have real security

**Mary Schiavo 2015 (**former U.S. Dept of Transportation Inspector General and lawyer for victims of aviation mishaps) quoted by journalist Jon Schuppe with NBC News 9 June 2015 “How To Fix the TSA? Experts Weigh In” <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/how-fix-tsa-experts-weigh-n372441> (ellipses in original)

I spent 11 years investigating and litigating on behalf of families after 9/11 and through it all ... the weakest link was the airports and airlines. The reason is money. It costs a lot of money to do a full background check (on employees). Not that the TSA isn't responsible, but Congress has tied its hands and the airlines and airports are allowed to do their own background checks and provide them to the TSA. We're right back to where we were on Sept. 10, 2001, because we're relying on airports and airlines who have the shareholders and bottom line to look after.

Before 9/11 when we had private security, they hired unskilled minimum wage staffers with lackadaisical standards

**Justin Berrier, Eric Schroeck & Melody Johnson 2010 (journalists) “**Right-wing media promote call for private security at airports” 17 Nov 2010 <https://www.mediamatters.org/research/2010/11/17/right-wing-media-promote-call-for-private-secur/173442> **(Brackets in original)**

In a September 12, 2001, article (accessed via Nexis), the *Miami Herald* reported that "[t]he companies that staff airport security gates are hired by the airlines themselves, not by any law-enforcement agency, or even airport managers. Security contracts usually go to the lowest bidders, meaning that more experienced security firms that can attract trained workers are often underbid by mom-and-pop companies." The *Herald* further reported:  
The result: Passenger checkpoints around the U.S. are staffed by an army of minimum-wage workers, probably the lowest-paid security workers in the nation, experts say. The jobs are prone to high turnover and plagued by sometimes lackadaisical standards, aviation experts said. "Basically, we are entrusting our front-line security to to an employee that is being paid the same as an employee that is making a hamburger at McDonald's," said Charlie LeBlanc, managing director of Air Security International, a Houston firm that advises travelers.

Pre-9/11 airport security contractor hired low-paid, unqualified and unverified employees

**Justin Berrier, Eric Schroeck & Melody Johnson 2010 (journalists) “**Right-wing media promote call for private security at airports” 17 Nov 2010 <https://www.mediamatters.org/research/2010/11/17/right-wing-media-promote-call-for-private-secur/173442> **(Brackets in original)**

A September 14, 2005, New York Times [article](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/14/politics/14terror.html?pagewanted=print) reported the 9-11 Commission found "that a quarter of the security screeners used in 2001 by Argenbright Security for United Airlines flights at Dulles Airport had not completed required criminal background checks." **Former FAA security chief: Argenbright "violat[ed] every security principle."** The Washington Post reported in April 200**2** that Argenbright would "be pushed out of virtually all U.S. airports" and that "Argenbright came to symbolize the national problem of low-paid, undertrained security screeners after a series of high-profile blunders following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks." The article reported that "Last fall, government investigators reported that seven of 20 Argenbright screeners at Dulles failed a basic skills test and several more could not speak adequate English."

Private airport screeners are short-term, incompetent and underpaid

Mark Hewitt 2016 (former general manager of private airport security company pre-9/11) “So You Want to Privatize the TSA? 8 March 2016 AMERICAN THINKER <http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2016/03/so_you_want_to_privatize_the_tsa.html>

There are many reasons why pre-September 11 airport screening was less invasive and comprehensive than what we experience with today's TSA. My 200 employees were paid the minimum wage; supervisors received a little more. Employee turnover (during some months) approached 300%. The contract was a losing proposition financially, month over month. My company had to provide uniforms, conduct mandatory ten-year FAA background investigations, and schedule and pay for mandatory FAA drug tests. For every ten applicants, one would be able to pass the background investigation and drug test – then, a week later, I'd lose him when he took a job at the McDonalds on the concourse. Minimum wage plus a nickel. It was a revolving door – for every five employees who came in, five employees headed out. Employees missed some of the easiest operational test pieces – pistols look only like pistols, not hair curlers – that passed through the X-ray machine.

1. Private contractors wouldn’t improve things

“Private” doesn’t mean “better”: They’d face the same issues TSA does and wouldn’t solve any problems

CHICAGO TRIBUNE 2016 (journalist Mary Wisniewski) Long airport TSA lines cause pain, but privatization may not be cure 23 May 2016 <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/columnists/ct-tsa-privatization-getting-around-20160522-column.html>

Outside of San Francisco and Kansas City, Mo., airports that use private security are small — such as the facility in Jackson Hole, Wyo. It is not clear that having multiple airports privatize would fix TSA-related issues, since the TSA still runs the system, approves the contractors, makes the rules, and writes the checks from the same limited pot of federal money. "There's this weird belief that if a corporation does something, it's good, but if the government does something it's bad," said security expert Bruce Schneier, a fellow at Harvard University's Berkman Center. "There's a lot of things the TSA could do differently, but putting it in private hands will not solve any of the problems." The problems, private or public, include inadequate funding and a tricky mission — trying to stop something horrible but unlikely, said Schneier, who comments frequently on airport security and terrorism.

****Private screeners hire convicted felons for airport security****

**Justin Berrier, Eric Schroeck & Melody Johnson 2010 (journalists) “**Right-wing media promote call for private security at airports” 17 Nov 2010 <https://www.mediamatters.org/research/2010/11/17/right-wing-media-promote-call-for-private-secur/173442> **(Brackets in original)**

**In 2000, nation's largest provider of airport security personnel paid $1.2 million in fines for hiring convicted felons as bag screeners.** In April 2000, The New York Times [reported](http://www.nytimes.com/2000/04/18/us/us-charges-impropriety-in-security-at-airport.html) that Argenbright Holdings, the corporate parent of Argenbright Security - then the nation's largest provider of airport security personnel, "pleaded guilty to two felonies and agreed to pay $1.2 million in fines and costs" after Argenbright hired 14 people to screen carry-on bags who been convicted of felonies. The Times reported that "[t]hree former managers for the company were also charged with felonies." In addition, "[a]ccording to court documents, two dozen screeners either never took the written test for their jobs or passed the test because the company falsified their results or provided them with the answers."

Orlando: Private screeners failed

J. David Cox Sr. 2016 (National President, American Federation of Government Employees) 4 Aug 2016 “Privatizing TSA Places Profits Over Passengers” <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/j-david-cox-sr/privatizing-tsa-places-pr_b_11306466.html>

In September 2014, Orlando’s Sanford International Airport transitioned to private screeners. Just days later, there was a serious security breach when inattentive, untrained screeners allowed a civilian to enter the terminal unscreened. Just two weeks after that, Sanford screeners failed to confiscate a steak knife in a passenger’s carryon baggage, allowing it to pass through to the secure area of the terminal. Thankfully neither incident resulted in catastrophe, but both could have been easily prevented by a federally-trained TSA officer.

Private screeners can’t meet the requirements

J. David Cox Sr. 2016 (National President, American Federation of Government Employees) 4 Aug 2016 “Privatizing TSA Places Profits Over Passengers” <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/j-david-cox-sr/privatizing-tsa-places-pr_b_11306466.html>

Late last year, four Montana airports cancelled their agreements with private screeners when it was found they were “not able to meet requirements that were set forth in the contract,” according to TSA. This breakdown came not long after Sacramento County’s Board of Supervisors voted against a pre-existing agreement to privatize Sacramento International Airport, opting instead to keep security in the hands of federally-trained TSA Officers.

1. Many other factors cause delays

Lots of other factors besides TSA performance causing airport delays. Privatizing security isn’t the answer

Prof. Juliette Kayyem 2016 (professor at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government; former assistant secretary of Homeland Security) CNN 18 May 2016 “TSA woes: Privatize airport security?” <http://www.cnn.com/2016/05/18/opinions/privatize-airport-security-a-bad-idea-opinion-kayyem/index.html>

Calls for privatizing airport security were heard throughout the airline industry. Take a deep breath. It's a horrible, destructive idea. Let's begin with the obvious. The blame for the airport delays isn't solely on the TSA. Sure, we can all complain about some security officers standing in a corner joking around while we take our shoes off. But the challenges for airport delays have been building up for months and represent a perfect storm of inconvenience. The blame can be shared, so the solution has to be as well. Since airlines are charging for checked luggage, more people are taking bags through security lines, slowing the process. As a result of lower oil prices, airline travel is cheaper. A stronger economy has led to increased air travel.

Long lines have nothing to do with TSA competency: It’s about passenger volume increase + TSA budget cuts

J. David Cox Sr. 2016 (National President, American Federation of Government Employees) 4 Aug 2016 “Privatizing TSA Places Profits Over Passengers” <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/j-david-cox-sr/privatizing-tsa-places-pr_b_11306466.html>

What often gets lost in the privatization discussion is that the long lines have nothing to do with TSA’s ability to do the job; rather, it has everything to do with a growing imbalance of passengers and screeners. Over the last seven years, passenger volumes have ballooned to new highs while TSA employment has continued to fall. Making matters worse, Congress is pillaging TSA’s cash flow by diverting $1.2 billion each year to pay down the federal deficit. Congress is starving TSA to the bone, and the public won’t stand for it any more.

Privatizing security causes unintended problems and even if it worked would only solve 1 of many causes of wait times

Prof. Juliette Kayyem 2016 (professor at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government; former assistant secretary of Homeland Security) CNN 18 May 2016 “TSA woes: Privatize airport security?” <http://www.cnn.com/2016/05/18/opinions/privatize-airport-security-a-bad-idea-opinion-kayyem/index.html>

The notion of privatizing airline security -- in the middle of a security challenge that is being addressed by the government -- is a solution in search of a problem. The issue isn't whether private sector employees could get the job done; maybe they could. But shifting mid-stream is surely going to impact airline travel in ways we can't imagine (for example, who trains these employees and who certifies that they are qualified?) and only solves one of a multitude of challenges that has led to the increased wait time. It also will undermine the important public union rights that are an integral part of why people become first responders.

1. Failing in Europe [turns around AFF’s claim that other countries privatize and works great]

German airport private security: All they care about is cutting costs, not getting trained in security

Kathleen Schuster 2016 (journalist) 18 Apr 2016 “Cologne airport security failure raises questions about privatization” <http://www.dw.com/en/cologne-airport-security-failure-raises-questions-about-privatization/a-19196589>

According to TÜV, one of Germany's many firms that offer security training, the courses for training to work in passenger and freight inspection last up to two months. Participants are trained, for example, how to use x-ray scanners, how to detect dangerous objects and chemicals, and conflict management. But Germany's federal police union questions how effective private sector training is. "Too much attention is paid to speed and reducing costs - and much too little to security," Police Union representative Ernst Walter told public broadcaster, WDR. Of the nearly 10,000 security workers across German airports, the union says only 600 are police.

European Union inspectors found German security failed to detect dangerous objects at Cologne-Bonn airport

Kathleen Schuster 2016 (journalist) 18 Apr 2016 “Cologne airport security failure raises questions about privatization” <http://www.dw.com/en/cologne-airport-security-failure-raises-questions-about-privatization/a-19196589>

Despite the high priority for safety, a report by German broadcaster WDR has shown that the Cologne-Bonn Airport's security failed to detect dangerous objects in carry-ons during a recent inspection. These revelations have revived old questions about aviation safety and who should work in security in Germany.  
Cologne not the first  
According to their findings, EU inspectors conducted 24 tests between February 8 and February 11 at the airport, which handles over 9 million passengers a year. Of the secret attempts to smuggle weapons and bombing-building materials, they only detected the illegal items six out of 12 times. When forewarned, the rate actually worsened: they failed to find nine out of 12 dangerous objects.

German security failed inspections at Frankfurt, Dusseldorf and several others

Kathleen Schuster 2016 (journalist) 18 Apr 2016 “Cologne airport security failure raises questions about privatization” <http://www.dw.com/en/cologne-airport-security-failure-raises-questions-about-privatization/a-19196589>

In December 2014, security at Frankfurt Airport - a major international hub with more than 60 million passengers a year - failed every other attempt to detect weapons or improvised explosive devices. Its rate had worsened from 2006, when it only failed roughly a third of the time during a test by German federal police. Frankfurt officials responded by retraining 2,500 of its employees. During the same week, Düsseldorf Airport also underwent a similar police inspection and, also, had a low success rate, according to news magazine Spiegel-Online. By May of 2015, the European Commission filed a suit against Germany at the Court of Justice of the European Union for insufficient security at a number of airports, whose names weren't disclosed, and for failing to improve conditions after a previous warning.

DISADVANTAGES

1. Masking DA: Worrying about privatization distracts us from better solutions

We should be focusing on better technology instead of privatization

CHICAGO TRIBUNE 2016 (journalist Mary Wisniewski) Long airport TSA lines cause pain, but privatization may not be cure 23 May 2016 <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/columnists/ct-tsa-privatization-getting-around-20160522-column.html> (brackets added)

[Chicago] Department of Aviation Commissioner Ginger Evans said that the benefits of privatization are "very marginal and there's a huge cost in time associated with the transition." "We're not closing the door," she said. "We'll evaluate it along with other things for the long term. But there's a lot of other technology improvements that deserve more focus than that."

Money should be diverted to intelligence and investigation of terrorism

Bruce Schneier 2015 (Chief Technology Officer of [IBM Resilient](https://www.resilientsystems.com/) ; a fellow at Harvard University's Berkman Center) 11 June 2015 “Reassessing Airport Security” <https://www.schneier.com/blog/archives/2015/06/reassessing_air.html>

We should demand better results out of the TSA, but we should also recognize that the actual risk doesn't justify their $7 billion budget. I'd rather see that money spent on intelligence and investigation -- security that doesn't require us to guess the next terrorist tactic and target, and works regardless of what the terrorists are planning next.

1. More dangerous airline travel

Reverting to pre-9/11 security means we get low-rent inexperienced amateurs, and air travel becomes more dangerous

J. David Cox Sr. 2016 (National President, American Federation of Government Employees) 4 Aug 2016 “Privatizing TSA Places Profits Over Passengers” <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/j-david-cox-sr/privatizing-tsa-places-pr_b_11306466.html>

But as lines have swollen and passenger anger grows, privatization has become a cause celebre for small government politicians and pundits. Unfortunately for this short-memoried crowd, replacing skilled Transportation Security Officers with untrained amateurs will do nothing to shorten the lines. Instead, it will just make air travel more dangerous. Prior to 9/11, all U.S. airports had privatized screeners guarding our airports. They were, for the most part, low-rent, inexperienced amateurs with no background in security operations.

Safety will go out the window if we privatize TSA screeners

Mark Hewitt 2016 (former general manager of private airport security company pre-9/11) “So You Want to Privatize the TSA? 8 March 2016 AMERICAN THINKER <http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2016/03/so_you_want_to_privatize_the_tsa.html>

In my world, any private airport security provider would be worse than the heavily regulated TSA. The problem with the TSA is one of political correctness. Profiling is a bad word. Everyone has to be punished equally. This isn't an issue of the government compelling a security company to establish minimum standards and criteria for airport security; the airlines and the FAA had a long track record of doing just that, from 1973. The aviation world is a much nastier place than it was in 1973. If we cannot break the moratorium on profiling terrorists in favor of safer air travel instead of strip-searching, harassing, or molesting children, little old ladies, and beauty queens, then let me leave you with this image. Private airport security providers would return to the days of half-hearted FAA background investigations and minimum-wage employees. And with that, I can assure you, you'll trade a little convenience as your safety gets tossed out the window.

Do the Minor Repair and fund TSA adequately, or else we return to the failed pre-9/11 security system

J. David Cox Sr. 2016 (National President, American Federation of Government Employees) 4 Aug 2016 “Privatizing TSA Places Profits Over Passengers” <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/j-david-cox-sr/privatizing-tsa-places-pr_b_11306466.html>

The results are clear: TSA works. Their decade and a half of good work cannot be swept aside because they’ve been starved of the resources they need to get the job done right. Instead, TSA Officers should be given the resources needed to screen passengers safely and quickly. We simply cannot risk a return to the non-professional pre-9/11 security system that failed us 15 years ago.

Weak private security directly led to 9/11

**Justin Berrier, Eric Schroeck & Melody Johnson 2010 (journalists) “**Right-wing media promote call for private security at airports” 17 Nov 2010 <https://www.mediamatters.org/research/2010/11/17/right-wing-media-promote-call-for-private-secur/173442> **(Brackets in original)**

In a September 13, 2001, article (accessed via Nexis), *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reported that the 9-11 hijackers "exploited a problem experts have long raised about airport security: that private firms and near-minimum wage workers are responsible for keeping guns and knives off U.S. airplanes." From the *AJC*:  
Terrorists who hijacked two of the four planes apparently sneaked through airport security checkpoints guarded by an Atlanta company that has been fined for security lapses in the past. Atlanta-based Argenbright Security provided passenger screening security at airports in Washington and Newark, N.J. The hijacked flight out of Washington's Dulles International Airport slammed into the Pentagon, while the Newark plane crashed in western Pennsylvania.

Pre-TSA private airport security was bad

**Justin Berrier, Eric Schroeck & Melody Johnson 2010 (journalists) “**Right-wing media promote call for private security at airports” 17 Nov 2010 <https://www.mediamatters.org/research/2010/11/17/right-wing-media-promote-call-for-private-secur/173442> **(Brackets in original)**

**Prior to TSA's takeover of airport security, government agencies repeatedly raised questions about security workers.** The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported in September 2001 (accessed via Nexis) that "[i]n 1998, the FAA Inspector General's Office made 173 attempts to improperly enter secure areas at eight airports. They were successful 117 times, records show." The AJC further reported that in a 2000 [report](http://www.gao.gov/archive/2000/rc00075.pdf), the General Accounting Office (GAO) "noted an unusually high turnover rate of airport security screeners -- averaging 126 percent annually for the nation's 20 busiest airports" and that "[s]creeners are being placed on the job without having the abilities or knowledge to perform the work effectively." From the AJC:  
Government agencies have regularly raised questions about airport security workers. In 1998, the FAA Inspector General's Office made 173 attempts to improperly enter secure areas at eight airports. They were successful 117 times, records show. In a report last year, the General Accounting Office, the federal watchdog agency, noted an unusually high turnover rate of airport security screeners averaging 126 percent annually for the nation's 20 busiest airports.

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