Negative: Air Marshals - GOOD

By Katherine Baker

Air Marshals are trained to stop the high jacking of a plane by riding on planes armed and undercover, appearing as ordinary passengers. They are considered the last line of defense in case of an attack, and our government spends millions on them.

AFF abolishes or scales back most of the air marshal program under the belief that air marshals are incompetent and of little or no value at reducing hijacking risk.

NEG argues that minor repairs could solve for any deficiencies in the air marshal program and that the problems identified with the program are not significant and do not justify abolishing the program.

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MINOR REPAIRS

Minor Repair: better incorporate risk in deployment strategy

GAO, 2016. (Government Accountability Office (GAO) is an independent, nonpartisan agency that works for Congress. Often called the "congressional watchdog," GAO investigates how the federal government spends taxpayer dollars.) “FEDERAL AIR MARSHAL SERVICE: Actions Needed to Better Incorporate Risk in Deployment Strategy” May 31, 2016. <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-582>

The U.S. Federal Air Marshal Service (FAMS) deploys air marshals in part based on assessed risk, but could better incorporate risk in its deployment strategy. FAMS may deploy air marshals on flights with known risk—meaning certain higher risk flights where the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) or FAMS knows of an increase in the threat or consequence of a terrorist attack—as well as on other international and domestic flights of U.S. air carriers. However, GAO identified three ways FAMS could better incorporate risk into its deployment decisions, in accordance with Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and TSA risk management policy and guidance.

Account for risk when dividing annual resources

GAO, 2016. (The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) is an independent, nonpartisan agency that works for Congress. Often called the "congressional watchdog," GAO investigates how the federal government spends taxpayer dollars.) “FEDERAL AIR MARSHAL SERVICE: Actions Needed to Better Incorporate Risk in Deployment Strategy” May 31, 2016. <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-582>

FAMS considers its travel budget and number of personnel, but not risk when initially dividing its annual resources between domestic and international flights. With this approach, FAMS attempts to maximize the total number of flights it can cover, but because this model does not account for risk, FAMS cannot ensure it is devoting its resources to the highest risk flights overall.

Better risk assessment for deployment strategy

GAO, 2016. (The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) is an independent, nonpartisan agency that works for Congress. Often called the "congressional watchdog," GAO investigates how the federal government spends taxpayer dollars.) “FEDERAL AIR MARSHAL SERVICE: Actions Needed to Better Incorporate Risk in Deployment Strategy” May 31, 2016. <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-582>

FAMS officials report that when FAMS revised its domestic deployment strategy in 2014, their choice of geographic focus areas and resource allocation levels were based on subject matter experts' professional judgment, not a risk assessment. FAMS officials stated this approach was appropriate because they were updating the strategy, not conducting a study. While providing perceptions of risk, the experts' input was not systematically collected and assigned risk values. Doing so would better position FAMS to ensure its resources are targeted using a risk-based approach.

Document rationales for international deployment decisions

GAO, 2016. (The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) is an independent, nonpartisan agency that works for Congress. Often called the "congressional watchdog," GAO investigates how the federal government spends taxpayer dollars.) “FEDERAL AIR MARSHAL SERVICE: Actions Needed to Better Incorporate Risk in Deployment Strategy” May 31, 2016. <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-582>

FAMS does not document rationales for its international deployment decisions because it has not identified a need to do so. Without documentation of the basis for these decisions, neither FAMS nor an external party can effectively oversee these decisions.

INHERENCY

Trump plans to cut $27 million from Air Marshals’ budget

Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, 2017. (Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian is a contributing reporter at Foreign Policy, where she covers international affairs, trade, and DC's foreign policy machine.) “Trump Administration Seeks to Slash Counterterrorism Funding” DECEMBER 13, 2017. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/12/13/trump-administration-seeks-to-slash-counterterrorism-funding/>

The Office of Management and Budget document also indicated the administration would take $27 million from the budget of the Federal Air Marshals, who protect commercial flights, and $11 million from the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office, which responds to nuclear and radiological threats, including at U.S. entry ports.

White House demands Air Marshals cuts

Nicole Rodriguez, 2017. (Nicole Rodriguez is a political reporter covering the Trump Administration and immigration for Newsweek. She specializes in government, breaking news and investigative reporting. She studied journalism at St. John's University in New York City and is a graduate of Florida International University in Miami.) “TRUMP IS SO DESPERATE TO GET HIS BORDER WALL HE WANTS TO CUT COUNTERTERRORISM FUNDING TO PAY FOR IT: REPORT” 12/13/17. <http://www.newsweek.com/trump-slash-counterterrorism-funding-border-wall-report-747628>

A report released Tuesday by Democratic staffers of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee details demands by the White House to eliminate Homeland Security’s Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response teams—groups of security officers deployed to various locations to prevent and deter acts of terrorism—and cut $27 million in funding for federal Air Marshals.

Staff Report: OMB wants $27 million cut

Joe Davidson, 2017. (Columnist for the Washington Post, a news source.) “Democrats say Trump to seek federal pay freeze and cuts to domestic security” December 14, 2017. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/wp/2017/12/14/democrats-say-trump-to-seek-federal-pay-freeze-and-cuts-to-domestic-security/?utm_term=.9f88e08ffd80>

According to the staff report, OMB wants to eliminate Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response teams, which “are multidisciplinary groups of security officers deployed to various locations to prevent and deter acts of terrorism” and cut $27 million from Federal Air Marshals.

HARMS / SIGNIFICANCE

GAO does not recommend abolishing air marshals. They recommend improvements to risk assessment, not abolition

GAO, 2016. (The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) is an independent, nonpartisan agency that works for Congress. Often called the "congressional watchdog," GAO investigates how the federal government spends taxpayer dollars.) “FEDERAL AIR MARSHAL SERVICE: Actions Needed to Better Incorporate Risk in Deployment Strategy” May 31, 2016. <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-582>

GAO recommends that FAMS (1) further incorporate risk into FAMS's method for dividing resources between international and domestic flights, (2) conduct a risk assessment to support certain domestic deployment decisions, (3) document the rationale for FAMS's selection of international deployment destinations, (4) adopt a consistent name and definition for the TSA coverage score, and (5) report performance results for all categories that comprise the score. DHS concurred with all of the recommendations.

“GAO says Screening is more effective” Response: Not enough data. The conclusion in some cases was only reached because there’s no data on air marshals

Graham Lanktree, 2017. (Staff writer for Newsweek, a news magazine.) “TSA’S $800M AIR MARSHAL PROGRAM MAY NOT DETER TERRORISM, SAYS AUDIT” September 12, 2017. <https://www-newsweek-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/www.newsweek.com/tsas-800m-air-marshal-program-may-not-deter-terrorism-says-audit-663374?amp=1>

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) said it looked at the TSA’s programs because there are continuing terrorist threats to air travel in other countries, citing attacks on aircraft in Egypt, Somalia, Belgium, and Turkey, and the “need for an effective aviation security program” that doesn’t waste money. Despite some large problems, screening is more effective, the report found, in some cases simply because data actually exists on whether or not it’s working. “TSA officials explained that it is very difficult to empirically measure the effectiveness of federal air marshals, and the program has no efforts underway to collect such data,” auditors said.

More study needed before we can actually asses the program’s effectiveness

Graham Lanktree, 2017. (Staff writer for Newsweek, a news magazine.) “TSA’S $800M AIR MARSHAL PROGRAM MAY NOT DETER TERRORISM, SAYS AUDIT” September 12, 2017. <https://www-newsweek-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/www.newsweek.com/tsas-800m-air-marshal-program-may-not-deter-terrorism-says-audit-663374?amp=1>

But the GAO noted that there are several methods to measure the deterrent effect, and that the TSA hasn’t even tried to launch a study. They suggest the TSA develop “theoretical game scenarios and have testers simulate would-be attackers’ decisions when attempting to carry out an attack on the aviation system.” Without a method to measure the TSA’s deterrent value, auditors argued, government officials are relying “on theories of causality and limited evidence available from U.S. intelligence sources.”

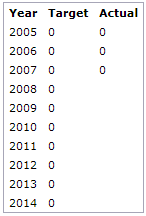
Benefits beyond deterrence and protection

Graham Lanktree, 2017. (Staff writer for Newsweek, a news magazine.) “TSA’S $800M AIR MARSHAL PROGRAM MAY NOT DETER TERRORISM, SAYS AUDIT” September 12, 2017. <https://www-newsweek-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/www.newsweek.com/tsas-800m-air-marshal-program-may-not-deter-terrorism-says-audit-663374?amp=1>

Air marshals provide “dedicated protection for high-risk flights,” argued Jim Crumpacker, a director at DHS, in a letter responding to the GAO’s findings. Their presence alone offers “resilience and reassurance to the traveling public,” Crumpacker said. “These benefits do not fall into the deterrence category but are no less real, despite also being difficult to quantify.”

Air Marshal’s success: no successful terrorist/criminal attack

US Office of Management & Budget, Contextually dated to 2008. (The content on ExpectMore.gov is developed by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Federal agencies. OMB is an agency of the executive branch of the federal government) “DETAILED INFORMATION ON THE TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION: FEDERAL AIR MARSHAL SERVICE ASSESSMENT” No date given, but references numbers from 2008. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/omb/expectmore/detail/10001070.2008.html>

Measure: Number of successful terrorist and other criminal attacks initiated from commercial passenger aircraft cabins on flights in identified risk categories. Explanation: The measure captures the number of successful terrorist and other criminal attacks that affect control of the aircraft as a whole. Hostile control of an aircraft may be sought for terrorist purposes (e.g., use of an aircraft as a weapon of mass destruction against a target on the ground, or mid-air detonation with an IED) or criminal purposes (e.g., to exact ransom or other demands). Whether attackers' motivations are terrorist or criminal, it is expected that on 100% of covered flights, FAMs will detect and defeat them to prevent hostile control of the aircraft. By virtue of meeting this measure's targets, the program also deters onboard attacks.  


Well Trained

Lori Aratani, 2017. (Lori Aratani writes for the Washington Post’s Transportation and Development team.) “Transportation In Atlantic City, federal air marshals train to thwart terrorists” April 9, 2017. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/in-atlantic-city-federal-air-marshals-train-to-thwart-terrorists/2017/04/09/39159f4c-194b-11e7-9887-1a5314b56a08_story.html?sw_bypass=true&utm_term=.c4371c478bfe>

Air marshal trainees will go through a 16-week course designed to teach them how to spot – and thrwart – potential threats on the thousands of commercial air flights that crisscross the globe each day. This group is among the first new recruit classes since 2011. They’ll spend eight weeks in New Mexico learning basic police techniques before coming to this special Transportation Security Administration school in Atlantic City where their training takes into account their role as armed, undercover agents who spend the bulk of their time aboard commercial planes. Shooting — and shooting with precision — is a big part of that, but so is being able to blend in and quietly size up passengers to determine who might be a threat. The Federal Air Marshal Service’s motto? Invisus, Inauditus, Impavidus (Unseen, Unheard, Unafraid). Their charge is straight­forward. “Our focus in life is to make sure another 9/11 never happens,” said Michael LaFrance, assistant supervisory air marshal in charge at the Transportation Security Administration’s Atlantic City training center.

Air Marshal program working to incorporate GAO suggestions

Lori Aratani, 2017. (Lori Aratani writes for the Washington Post’s Transportation and Development team.) “Transportation In Atlantic City, federal air marshals train to thwart terrorists” April 9, 2017. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/in-atlantic-city-federal-air-marshals-train-to-thwart-terrorists/2017/04/09/39159f4c-194b-11e7-9887-1a5314b56a08_story.html?sw_bypass=true&utm_term=.c4371c478bfe>

The 2016 GAO report offered recommendations on how the TSA could improve its deployment strategy, and officials at the agency have moved to incorporate those suggestions. There have also been concerns about employee morale among marshals given the rigors of the job and relative low pay; the median base starting salary is $44,000. About 7 percent of the marshals are women. Thomas Kelly, a spokesman for the service, said every effort is made to help air marshals manage the pressures of the job and the stress that comes with the rigors of their travel schedules.

Training continues after graduation

Lori Aratani, 2017. (Lori Aratani writes for the Washington Post’s Transportation and Development team.) “Transportation In Atlantic City, federal air marshals train to thwart terrorists” April 9, 2017. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/in-atlantic-city-federal-air-marshals-train-to-thwart-terrorists/2017/04/09/39159f4c-194b-11e7-9887-1a5314b56a08_story.html?sw_bypass=true&utm_term=.c4371c478bfe>

The training doesn’t end once the air marshals graduate. Every marshal is required to do 20 hours a year of follow-up training. Others may return to Atlantic City to train as instructors.

Boredom doesn’t make the job unnecessary

CBS News, 2015. (News station. Division of American television and radio service CBS.) “Does the U.S. need federal air marshals?” OCT 31, 2015.(ellipses in original) <https://www-cbsnews-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/www.cbsnews.com/amp/news/does-the-u-s-need-federal-air-marshals/>

Gilliam acknowledges the agency has been plagued by low morale and high turnover. A 2014 report ranked the TSA near the bottom of the list for worker morale, but he says the fact the job may include hours of boredom doesn't mean it's unnecessary. "We saw in 9/11, you can take that plane and kill thousands. So, you know, we can't base whether or not that small moment in time where that door is open is worth billions," Gilliam says. "I think we have to look at it as, how do we secure that moment in time.... You do not know how many people did not try to take over a plane."

“Air marshals on fewer than 1% of flights” RESPONSE: Faulty and misleading information

TSA, 2008. (The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is a government agency whose job is to protect the nation's transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce. The purpose of this blog is to communicate with the public about all things TSA related.) “Rumor Alert- Shortage Of Federal Air Marshals?” March 25, 2008. <https://www.tsa.gov/blog/2008/03/25/rumor-alert-shortage-federal-air-marshals>

While the exact number of flights that air marshals protect is classified because we don't want terrorists to play a mathematical guessing game based on percentages, the actual number of air marshals employed by the agency is in the thousands. Beyond the number of flights that air marshals physically cover, the more important question to ask is which flights are air marshals flying on. Using our intelligence-driven, risk-based approach, we deploy marshals on the highest risk flights. That means a team of air marshals might be on one flight based on intel and none may be on the next. Simply parroting a sound bite from an anonymous expert or a pilot that flies to New York once a day with no knowledge of scheduling or intel isn't accurately portraying the situation. Random "experts" hardly encompass a qualified opinion on air marshal deployments. The bottom line is that there are thousands of hard-working, dedicated marshals flying day in and day out to protect the traveling public both domestically and abroad. We clearly told CNN their numbers were inaccurate and they chose to report these numbers anyway.

“Air Marshals troubled by lack of coverage” RESPONSE: They wouldn’t know.

TSA, 2008. (The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is a government agency whose job is to protect the nation's transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce. The purpose of this blog is to communicate with the public about all things TSA related.) “Rumor Alert- Shortage Of Federal Air Marshals?” March 25, 2008. <https://www.tsa.gov/blog/2008/03/25/rumor-alert-shortage-federal-air-marshals>

Flying air marshals speaking on condition of anonymity simply do not have access to global scheduling information. Every single day of the year, air marshal schedules are altered to cover specific, high-threat flights. That means on one day, many flights into and out of New York and D.C. may be covered and on other days, less flights may be covered. The role of not releasing specific numbers of marshals or flights carrying marshals is an important one. We should not tip our hand to terrorists and let them know the mathematical probability of air marshals being on flights they may be interested in taking over or otherwise disrupting. We fully desire terrorists to not know for sure if marshals will be on board their flight so that they will have to factor them into any plots involving aircraft.

“Unable to stem high attrition rate” RESPONSE: No Exodus. Numbers are comparable to other federal law enforcement agencies.

TSA, 2008. (The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is a government agency whose job is to protect the nation's transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce. The purpose of this blog is to communicate with the public about all things TSA related.) “Rumor Alert- Shortage Of Federal Air Marshals?” March 25, 2008. <https://www.tsa.gov/blog/2008/03/25/rumor-alert-shortage-federal-air-marshals>

Federal air marshal service attrition rates have been approximately 6.5 percent since the program expanded after 9/11. This isn't an exodus by any means and is comparable to other federal law enforcement agencies. The job does require extensive travel, a high level of alertness for hours on end and one of the highest firearms qualifications standards in government. Being an air marshal isn't for everyone but that should not detract from the thousands of dedicated public servants out flying today and every day to protect the traveling public.

Air Marshals deployed based on “known risk”

Tom O'Connor, 2017. (Defense and International Conflicts Reporter at Newsweek, formerly International Business Times, New York Post, The Daily Star (Lebanon) and Staten Island Advance.) “ARMED AIR MARSHALS TRAIN FIRST NEW RECRUITS IN YEARS” April 10, 2017. <https://www-newsweek-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/www.newsweek.com/tsa-train-flight-secret-agent-airport-security-581755?amp=1>

The air marshal program was established by President John F. Kennedy in 1961 and was later expanded after 9/11. Because the TSA has not had the resources to cover the more than 76,000 flights arriving in and departing from the U.S. each day, the agency has placed air marshals on flights based on "known risk," according to a 2016 report by the Government Accountability Office, which urged the TSA to "better incorporate risk in its deployment strategy."

“Locations that lost a lot of agents” RESPONSE: agents shifted to other offices

TSA, 2008. (The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is a government agency whose job is to protect the nation's transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce. The purpose of this blog is to communicate with the public about all things TSA related.) “Rumor Alert- Shortage Of Federal Air Marshals?” March 25, 2008. <https://www.tsa.gov/blog/2008/03/25/rumor-alert-shortage-federal-air-marshals>

Myth: "CNN was told staffing in Dallas, Texas for instance is down 44 percent from its high, while Seattle, Washington, has 40 percent fewer agents. Las Vegas, Nevada, which had as many as 245 air marshals, this past February had only 47." Buster: Staffing in specific offices like Dallas, Seattle and Las Vegas has changed over the six years of the program BUT these air marshals have been shifted to other offices, not eliminated and not replaced.

DISADVANTAGE

1. Hijacking

Link: Air Marshal focus is to prevent next 9/11

Tom O'Connor, 2017. (Defense and International Conflicts Reporter at Newsweek, formerly International Business Times, New York Post, The Daily Star (Lebanon) and Staten Island Advance.) “ARMED AIR MARSHALS TRAIN FIRST NEW RECRUITS IN YEARS” April 10, 2017. <https://www-newsweek-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/www.newsweek.com/tsa-train-flight-secret-agent-airport-security-581755?amp=1>

“Our focus in life is to make sure another 9/11 never happens,” Michael LaFrance, the assistant supervisory air marshal in charge at the TSA's training center in Atlantic City, told The Washington Post in an article published Sunday.

Link: OMB Study finds Air Marshals are critical to stopping hijackings

US Office of Management & Budget, Contextually dated to 2008. (The content on ExpectMore.gov is developed by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Federal agencies. OMB is an agency of the executive branch of the federal government) “DETAILED INFORMATION ON THE TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION: FEDERAL AIR MARSHAL SERVICE ASSESSMENT” No date given, but references numbers from 2008. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/omb/expectmore/detail/10001070.2008.html>

As a critical layer of aviation security, the Federal Air Marshal Service fills a critical role detecting, deterring, and defeating criminal terrorist activities on the aircraft. For international flights, only the FAMS are authorized to fly armed. Although the presence of other armed law enforcement officers (armed LEOs) and Federal Flight Deck Officers (FFDOs) on domestic flights may at times augment the FAMS, the distinctive differences inherent in the FAMS program prevents redundancy or excessive overlap. These characteristics detailed in the accompanying evidence begin with the process of flight scheduling and extend through tactical positioning on the flight, training, equipping, and focusing during flight to defeat in-flight attacks. FFDOs' primary responsibility is flying aircraft, and their jurisdiction is limited to the cockpit, therefore FFDOs do not protect passengers in any situation that occurs within the cabin's confines. Even if all pilots were FFDOs (which is not the case) or FFDOs were assigned their flights on a risk basis (which is not the case), the need for risk-based armed LEOs (FAMs) with the unique positioning within the cabin would remain. In addition, while internal aircraft security has been increased by hardened cockpit doors, this enhancement does not mitigate that threat posed by IEDs and liquid explosives which can be used to attack an aircraft from the cabin without breaching the cockpit door. The FAMS will continue to be a vital force promoting public confidence in aviation, and protecting passengers in a range of scenarios outside the cockpit (e.g. IEDs, hostage situations) in which a FAM team can discover, surveil, and intercept suspicious activities, as well as contain or defeat perpetrators present in the cabin.

Brink: New air marshals are being added due to likely increase of inflight threats

Tom O'Connor, 2017. (Defense and International Conflicts Reporter at Newsweek, formerly International Business Times, New York Post, The Daily Star (Lebanon) and Staten Island Advance.) “ARMED AIR MARSHALS TRAIN FIRST NEW RECRUITS IN YEARS” April 10, 2017. <https://www-newsweek-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/www.newsweek.com/tsa-train-flight-secret-agent-airport-security-581755?amp=1>

The reason as to why the service has begun training again after years of reductions was unclear. Jeff Price, an aerospace science professor at Metropolitan State University of Denver and owner of Leading Edge Strategies, an airport management training company, said the recent decision to take in new recruits may very likely have been based on intelligence that suggested a credible inflight threat. He cited decisions taken last month to increase restrictions on electronics for passengers traveling from certain majority-Muslim nations deemed by the administration to present a greater risk to U.S. travelers. "They might be seeing more evidence that there could be a threat on the flight," Price told Newsweek. "That seems to be the only rationale."

Link: Expansion because of 9/11

Lori Aratani, 2017. (Lori Aratani writes for the Washington Post’s Transportation and Development team.) “Transportation In Atlantic City, federal air marshals train to thwart terrorists” April 9, 2017. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/in-atlantic-city-federal-air-marshals-train-to-thwart-terrorists/2017/04/09/39159f4c-194b-11e7-9887-1a5314b56a08_story.html?sw_bypass=true&utm_term=.c4371c478bfe>

President John F. Kennedy created the air marshal program in 1961, after international hijackings raised concerns about the safety of commercial air travel. But it remained relatively small. At the time of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, there were 33 air marshals. The program’s total budget: $4 million. But after 9/11, everything changed. The Air Marshal Service underwent a massive expansion, adding thousands of new officers.

Brink: Not any safer than when 9/11 happened, air marshal program is still justified

CBS News, 2015. (News station. Division of American television and radio service CBS.) “Does the U.S. need federal air marshals?” OCT 31, 2015. <https://www-cbsnews-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/www.cbsnews.com/amp/news/does-the-u-s-need-federal-air-marshals/>

"There have been threats to the airline industry from ISIS and al Qaeda and other Islamic fundamental groups since 9/11. So I can't say that we're any safer, therefore the program is just as valid as it was then," says Jonathan Gilliam, a former air marshal.

Brink: Protection against potentially lower security standards

Melanie Zanona, 2016. (Writer for The Hill. The Hill is an American political newspaper) August 10, 2016. “Federal air marshals will be aboard Cuban flights” <https://thehill-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/thehill.com/policy/transportation/290976-federal-air-marshals-will-be-aboard-cuban-flights?amp>

Federal air marshals will be aboard U.S. flights to and from Cuba when they begin taking off later this month, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has announced. With regular air service scheduled to resume between the two countries for the first time in 50 years, lawmakers and officials have been pushing to ensure that Cuban airports are up to U.S. security standards. Whether air marshals would be traveling on the flights was one of the flashpoints in the debate. But the TSA signaled this week that it reached an agreement with Cuba for the legal framework that will permit federal air marshals to be on commercial planes traveling to and from the island, though the agency declined to identify which flights for security reasons. "This agreement will strengthen both parties' aviation security efforts by furnishing a security presence on board certain passenger flights between the United States and The Republic of Cuba," the TSA said in a Tuesday statement.

Impact: Death. 9/11 killed nearly 3,000.

Tom O'Connor, 2017. (Defense and International Conflicts Reporter at Newsweek, formerly International Business Times, New York Post, The Daily Star (Lebanon) and Staten Island Advance.) “ARMED AIR MARSHALS TRAIN FIRST NEW RECRUITS IN YEARS” April 10, 2017. <https://www-newsweek-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/www.newsweek.com/tsa-train-flight-secret-agent-airport-security-581755?amp=1>

While the TSA has not released the total number of air marshals on duty, this year's class is approximately the same size as the last one in 2011, according to Thomas Kelly, the assistant supervisory air marshal in charge at the TSA's public affairs office. He told Newsweek that the program received clearance to start hiring again last fiscal year. The number of recruits reportedly increased from around 33 to the thousands after 9/11, when 19 militants associated with al-Qaeda were able to kill nearly 3,000 people by hijacking four domestic U.S. flights and crashing them in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania.

Impact: 2,975 deaths due to 9/11

Kimberly Amadeo, Updated 2017. (president of WorldMoneyWatch.com. She has 20 years senior-level experience in economic analysis and business strategy working for major international corporations.) “How the 9/11 Attacks Still Affect the Economy Today” Updated September 11, 2017. <https://www.thebalance.com/how-the-9-11-attacks-still-affect-the-economy-today-3305536>

The total death toll of 2,975 surpassed that at Pearl Harbor in December 1941. The death toll included 2,600 people at the World Trade Center, 125 at the Pentagon and 256 on the four planes. (Source: "9/11 Commission Report," National Commission on Terrorists Attacks Upon the United States. "Official 9/11 Death Toll Climbs by One," CBS News, September 10, 2009.)

Impact: Billions of dollars lost

CNN, written in 2013, last updated 2017. (American based news channel.)“September 11th Terror Attacks Fast Facts” written in 2013, last updated August 24, 2017 <http://www.cnn.com/2013/07/27/us/september-11-anniversary-fast-facts/index.html>

$500,000 - Estimated amount of money it cost to plan and execute the 9/11 attacks. $123 billion - Estimated economic loss during the first 2-4 weeks after the World Trade Center towers collapsed in New York City, as well as decline in airline travel over next few years $60 billion - Estimated cost of the WTC site damage, including damage to surrounding buildings, infrastructure and subway facilities. $40 billion - Value of the emergency anti-terrorism package approved by the US Congress on September 14, 2001. $15 billion - Aid package passed by Congress to bail out the airlines. $9.3 billion - Insurance claims arising from the 9/11 attacks.

Impact: Recession. 9/11 aggravated the recession

Kimberly Amadeo, Updated 2017. (Kimberly is president of WorldMoneyWatch.com. She has 20 years senior-level experience in economic analysis and business strategy working for major international corporations.) “How the 9/11 Attacks Still Affect the Economy Today” Updated September 11, 2017. <https://www.thebalance.com/how-the-9-11-attacks-still-affect-the-economy-today-3305536>

The 9/11 attacks aggravated the 2001 recession, which had begun in March 2001. The economy had contracted 1.1 percent in the first quarter but had bounced up 2.1 percent in the second quarter. The attacks made the economy contract 1.3 percent in the third quarter, extending the recession. The 2001 recession was caused by the Y2K scare. It created a boom and subsequent bust in internet businesses. Although the recession ended in November 2001, the threats of war drove the Dow down for another year. It hit bottom October 9, 2002, when it closed at 7,286.27. That was a 37.8 percent decline from its peak. No one knew for sure if the bull market had resumed until the Dow hit a higher low March 11, 2003, closing at 7,524.06. Unemployment continued to climb until June 2003, when it reached 6 percent. That was the peak of that recession.

Impact: War. 9/11 cost thousands of lives and billions of dollars.

Kimberly Amadeo, Updated 2017. (Kimberly is president of WorldMoneyWatch.com. She has 20 years senior-level experience in economic analysis and business strategy working for major international corporations.) “How the 9/11 Attacks Still Affect the Economy Today” Updated September 11, 2017. <https://www.thebalance.com/how-the-9-11-attacks-still-affect-the-economy-today-3305536>

Bush launched the War in Afghanistan to find and bring to justice Osama bin Laden. He was the head of the al-Qaida organization that launched the 9/11 attacks. In its first year, Congress appropriated $29.3 billion in emergency funding for the war. (Source: "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan and Other War on Terror Operations Since 9/11," Congressional Research Service, December 8, 2014.) On March 21, 2003, President Bush sent troops into Iraq. He said the CIA had found weapons of mass destruction. He added that Iraq's leader, Saddam Hussein, was aiding al-Qaida operatives. Congress appropriated $36.7 billion in emergency funding for the War in Iraq in its first year. The costs for both wars kept mounting. By the end of Bush's two terms in office, the War on Terror cost $1.164 trillion. That was added to increased spending for the Defense Department and Homeland Security. President Obama spent $807 billion during his two terms. President Trump budgeted $156 billion. That brought the cost of the War on Terror to $2.126 trillion.

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