



Aviation Under Pressure

Security versus freedom

Tom Poberezny, President

Recently I went through a Transportation Security Administration (TSA) security line before boarding a flight to Washington, D.C. I removed my shoes, belt, and watch, and I still set off alarms. Finally, I was allowed to pass through.

Afterward I thought—we may be winning the war on terrorism, but at what cost financially and to our freedoms? The TSA is only slightly more than 7 years old, but already the cost to maintain it and its proposed future programs is astronomical.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its TSA division crossed the cost-versus-benefit threshold in proposing debilitating security measures applying to all aircraft exceeding 12,500 pounds with its Large Aircraft Security Program (LASP). During the TSA's public comment period, EAAers and others in the aviation community objected to its proposals. Requiring separate review and authority for *every single flight* that included passengers, the LASP would impose governmental review and authority before U.S. citizens could operate their own personal vehicles. These proposals raise serious questions about personal liberty, privacy, and freedom of movement.

EAA also warned that the high cost of complying with the LASP would significantly curtail or eliminate numerous historic aircraft operations that bring valuable inspirational and educational benefits. This includes aircraft ranging from TBMs and P-47s to Grumman Albatrosses. Furthermore, we contended that the proposed measures are both cumbersome and unnecessary. They would misappropriate

TSA's attention and focus, applying disproportionately vast resources and onerous oversight to a comparatively limited area of risk.

The DHS has shown an inclination to apply these types of restrictions to all aircraft, not just those defined as "large." The U.S. Customs and Border Protection, another division of the DHS, has already imposed enhanced security requirements on *all* aircraft crossing our nation's borders. The phrasing of those rules made clear the belief that all aircraft, regardless of weight, are dangerous.

We must seize the right opportunities to be heard and, ultimately, to influence the outcome.

For decades, EAA has dealt successfully with the Federal Aviation Administration and elected officials on your behalf. Now we must adapt to a new challenge. The TSA wields considerable power and influence on aviation—while having little general aviation expertise. Its directive is one-dimensional: *security*. We must foster a better understanding of general aviation and the ill effects of costly restrictions. We must seize the right opportunities to be heard and, ultimately, to influence the outcome.

This isn't the only area where aviation is coming under pressure...public perception of business aircraft has become a political "football." Congress is considering sanctions against companies that own business aircraft, attempting to make their divestiture a condition of any financial stimulus package.

The negative perception of business aircraft ignores their utility and importance within the general aviation aircraft manufacturing industry. This perception has been a factor in the sharp drop in business aircraft sales over the past few months, resulting in thousands of skilled jobs being lost, either temporarily or indefinitely. A viable general aviation community requires an infrastructure of airports, fixed base operators, maintenance shops, parts suppliers, and manufacturers that are financially stable. Maintaining or increasing current levels of activity in all segments of general aviation is critical and needed to maintain profitability. When one aspect of our community deteriorates, the impact is felt by all.

But there is good news! The entire aviation community can take pride in the amazing effort of the crew of U.S. Airways Flight 1549. They were truly heroic in saving all 155 lives aboard the A320 forced to ditch in the Hudson River. Their success came at a time when we needed heroes—ordinary people who accomplished extraordinary things under stressful conditions.

Their success reminds us of the resiliency and resourcefulness of the aviation community. We're hardwired to overcome adversity. That's why the upcoming EAA convention in Oshkosh is so important. The worldwide aviation community comes together annually in Oshkosh to share innovations, outstanding programs, and an irrepressible can-do attitude.

Aviation needs a shot in the arm, and Oshkosh is the prescription. Be sure to join us July 27 to August 2. 