

STATEMENT OF WENDY THOMSON
TO THE AVIATION SECURITY COUNCIL

MAY 21, 2012

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to address this council.

My name is Wendy Thomson and I live in Bloomfield Hills Michigan. I am co-founder of Freedom to Travel USA and I wish to state unequivocally that I – we – believe that the current TSA procedures and processes are seriously misguided and fatally flawed.

TSA's approach is not based upon proven mathematical principles of risk and probability nor is it supported by any rigorous cost/benefit analysis. It is based upon emotion, fear and personal greed.

In retrospect, it is clearly evident that the threat assessment that spawned the TSA was overestimated by a magnitude of order. Why do I say that? Because the TSA has caught not one terrorist. The argument that the TSA has been effective because there have been no attacks is a tautological argument, and is therefore specious. It is the same flawed logic that caused the Hopi Indians to conclude that if it did not rain after a rain dance then the dancers did not perform the rain dance properly. A better analysis would use a control group against a test group and then compare the results. I submit that such an analysis can be easily constructed by looking at the experience over the past ten-plus years in domestic protected vs. unprotected venues. In the unprotected group I would include domestic venues that have been proven to be attractive to terrorists by attacks that have happened elsewhere in the world – hotels, shopping markets, police stations, recruiting stations, airports themselves, trains and busses. The domestic experience between our protected venues – airplanes – and our unprotected venues is exactly equal: zero attacks. The conclusion from such an analysis is that the TSA makes no difference: we have vastly overestimated the probability of a terrorist attack.

The current TSA approach is based upon possibility, not probability. It is entirely possible that a semi would lose control and come barreling into this building. Possible, but totally improbable. We as a nation have limited resources. We need to engage in Pareto analysis and align our resources based upon dispassionate logic and assessment. That has, to date, been woefully absent. Ladies and gentlemen, your current approach is beyond the pale when ~~tested by~~ any rigorous mathematical or analytical logic test.

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A relevant analogy is as follows: If we used the current TSA approach to fight salmonella and e-coli, which kill any more people a year than terrorists do, every single grocery bag leaving every grocery store would be searched for fresh produce and meat, having said produce and meat confiscated from the shopper before said shopper would be allowed to go on their way. Why would we as a nation ever decide that was intelligent?

Current TSA procedures are an affront to this nation. The TSA has become this nation's auto-immune disease, viciously attacking the very people it was intended to protect. It targets anyone with medical assistive devices to degrading, invasive and never-ending assault. It invades everyone's basic human right to decide who touches them where, and who sees them naked. It was poorly conceived and even more poorly executed. Your processes are an affront to humanity. Your screeners are poorly trained, poorly vetted and poorly

supervised. Examples of egregious conduct are not one-offs: they are legion. If you do not believe that, then you are either quite unaware of the actions of your Agency – and therefore are inept – or you are perfectly aware – and you are morally bankrupt.

As for me, I am not impressed with your confiscation of screwdrivers, wrenches, numchuks, unloaded guns or most of what you trumpet as successes. None of those can bring down an aircraft. I am quite certain that I have been in shopping centers, movie theaters and restaurants with people carrying loaded weapons. I am not afraid. I do not expect a greater level of security on an airplane than I do in any of those other venues. So, ladies and gentlemen, as to your efforts to protect me: please cease and desist. I do not want your protection – at least, not in the current form. I will not subject myself to assault by your minions. As to my personal protection, you are quite simply fired.