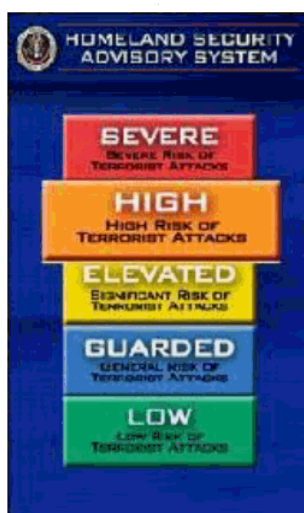




The current Homeland Security Advisory System threat level is **ORANGE**.

7 September 2006



Government

Bush ordered plans for air travel safety - Protection from terror attacks needed for skies

A little-known directive issued by President Bush two months ago requires federal agencies to produce a comprehensive plan to protect the nation's airspace from terrorist attacks.

The order, confirmed to *The Chronicle* by officials with knowledge of its contents, focuses on threats to aircraft from passenger baggage and air cargo -- including detection of conventional, nuclear, radiological and chemical devices -- securing the airspace over the continental United States, and developing technologies to detect and prevent missile attacks on aircraft.

The directive, known as both National Security Presidential Directive 47 and Homeland Security Presidential Directive 16, also orders the agencies to implement a plan to check airline passenger lists against the government's watch lists and to assume the costs of conducting the database searches. The cost of checking passenger lists currently falls to the airlines.

The security plan is due on the president's desk in the middle of October, according to officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the directive has not been publicly disclosed.

The White House would not comment for the record on the presidential order.

Larry Orluskie, senior spokesman for the Department of Homeland Security, said: "As a matter of policy, the department doesn't comment on pending legislation or presidential directives. However, when a directive is issued by the president, we take it very seriously and will work to meet the requirements within the edict."

The directive, issued in June, comes amid heightened fears of aviation terrorism, prompted by allegations of a plot by British-based Islamic militants to down U.S.-bound commercial planes.

Earlier last week, approximately 100 officials gathered for a "tabletop exercise" at the U.S. Northern Command headquarters in Colorado Springs intended to counteract possible terrorist missile attacks on commercial airliners, and how various agencies would coordinate their responses in the event of such an attack.

The Northern Command was established in 2002 to provide command and control of the Defense Department's homeland defense efforts and to coordinate military assistance to civil authorities.

Participants at the exercise determined that the nation's airspace would have to be shut down -- meaning no civilian flights would be allowed -- but did not reach agreement on when commercial flights would resume after a missile attack, according to members present, who requested anonymity because they are not authorized to speak publicly. There was also disagreement as to whether passengers would be willing to fly on unprotected aircraft after a missile attack, said some of the members present.

Currently the Department of Homeland Security is overseeing a program to assess the feasibility of adapting military anti-missile systems for use on commercial airliners.

"There is next to no defined plan to deal with a localized MANPADS (Man Portable Air Defense Systems) attack," Capt. Bob Hesselbein, chairman of the National Security Committee of the Airline Pilots Association, which had a representative at the tabletop exercise.

Asked about plans for reopening the nation's airspace were it to be shut down after a missile attack, Hesselbein said, "The (Federal Aviation Administration) has nothing on paper. It's time to come up with a process to deal with any such attack."

--SFGate.com

EU moves to air security crackdown

Aviation experts from EU member states met to debate the Europe's approach to air security following a recent bomb threat to transatlantic flights.

The European commission's regulatory committee for civil aviation security to "have an exchange of experiences and views with member states, based on a debriefing by the UK authorities".

Results will inform a further meeting of this meeting in Brussels on Sept. 6 and 7, talks expected to lead to new regulations.

On the top of the agenda will be standard rules for the screening of air travelers and their hand luggage across the EU 25 member states.

Some national and EU authorities are seeking tougher checks along the lines of new screening procedures introduced by the UK and others following police action to halt a bombing plot on Aug. 10.

Other EU countries have not followed the UK lead to a controversial crackdown on air security, to the dismay of officials.

Some airports and airlines are concerned at the cost and proportionality of EU measures expected in the pipeline after talks between EU anti-terrorism officials the UK, Finland, Germany, France and others.

Proposals are set to include the tightening of hand-luggage checks in airports, greater information exchange and surveillance of air passengers.

--*TheParliament.com*

MANPADS

High-power microwave weapons - full power ahead?

Despite an enormous degree of hype, and considerable investment for more than a decade, the deployment of a tactical high-power microwave (HPM) weapon - a re-usable mobile transmitter capable of damaging a range of targets - is some way off.

Another HPM weapon that is close to fielding, according to Raytheon, is the Vigilant Eagle anti-missile defense system. Based on a classified precursor, Vigilant Eagle is intended to defend aircraft against man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS). It could be either an alternative or a complement to installing infra-red countermeasures on the aircraft themselves.

"We have tested high-power microwave countermeasures in real environments, versus real missiles and it has proven effective," said Mike Booen, vice-president of directed energy programs at Raytheon's Missile Systems business. The background to Vigilant Eagle is shrouded in secrecy, but Booen states that Raytheon HPM weapons "have operated in the field, against real threats" and that the company has been working on Pentagon HPM programs for more than 10 years.

Neither ADS nor Vigilant Eagle, however, is the long-range, tactically mobile electronic lobotomiser that has been either promised or threatened by the HPM community for many years. In that regime, neither the technology nor the military demand appears to be there as yet.

--*Jane's*

Screening

Inside the TSA: screening for nervous fliers

The government has been quietly testing new airport screening tactics in the hopes of preventing terror attacks.

Since December, security officials have deployed uniform and undercover agents at airports across the country to watch the behavior of airline passengers.

A dozen airports, including those in Washington, Miami and Minneapolis, have been using a technique the Transportation Safety Administration calls "screening passengers by observation."

"One of the things that we would be looking for is a person who was profusely sweating," TSA security supervisor Waverly Cousin said.

Behavior deemed suspicious would also include incessant blinking of the eyes, fidgeting excessively with clothes or acting in an evasive manner.

Cousin said screeners "definitely are looking for anyone who would be a suicide bomber." The idea is that a simple conversation with a person acting suspiciously could possibly foil malicious plans.

"You may in fact be impeding them from getting to a certain location, perhaps to meet another person.... You are now changing field and inducing anxiety, and that's where you want to be," former FBI agent Jack Cloonan said.

Boosting Screener Staff

With the nation's airports on high alert, government screeners are under more pressure than ever to find potential terrorists.

Against the backdrop of the London terror plot, screeners in training at Reagan National Airport in Washington were particularly preoccupied with learning how to detect if a passenger might be trying to smuggle explosives onboard.

TSA instructor Kristine Norton told the trainees that as security screeners, they are the "key" to the process.

"We need your keen eye and expert analysis to see the threat," she said.

The training the security screeners undergo has changed to include the detection of improvised explosive devices. In the last six months, the government has increased the number of screeners who can recognize such mechanisms from 18,000 to 31,000.

--ABC News

Israeli security specialists

Israeli security specialists maintain that the most important thing in preventing terrorism attacks on civil aircraft is to interview the passengers. "That's the only possibility of direct contact with the source to define his level of suspiciousness and danger. This is the basis of all human intelligence work," says Leo Glesser, president of the Israeli security consultancy ISDS Ltd. Glesser was one of the first sky marshals to work on Israeli airline aircraft, and he notes he was trained by Americans many years ago. Glesser acknowledges that technical means of detecting explosives can be helpful but insists human intelligence is primary.

--Aviation Week & Space Technology

Guardian Technologies enters into R&D agreement with Federal Transportation Security Laboratory

Guardian Technologies International, Inc. a leading provider of high-performance security

and healthcare solutions based on "Intelligent Imaging Informatics" (TM), today announced it has entered into a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRDA) with the federal Transportation Security Laboratory (TSL) to test its PinPoint(TM) threat-detection technology.

Under the terms of the agreement, the TSL will perform an independent assessment of PinPoint, which has been developed to improve the detection of explosives, guns, knives, and ammunition concealed in parcels, boxes, baggage or cargo containers. The PinPoint software is designed to facilitate seamless integration with commercial X-ray equipment and enable security teams to screen more people and baggage with greater accuracy.

"We are excited by the opportunity to work with the U.S. government's premier facility for testing and validating cutting-edge transportation security technologies," said Guardian Technologies Director of Business Development John McDaid. "The timing of this opportunity fits well with the DHS Transportation Security Administration recently making explosives detection at the passenger checkpoint one of the agency's top priorities. We are already in discussions with hardware providers and system integrators about getting this technology into deployment as soon as possible, and the TSL program is a critical step in the testing and evaluation process."

--Genetic Engineering News

DHS seeks liquid explosive screening tech

The Department of Homeland Security is seeking information from the makers of technology that could detect liquid explosives at airport screening checkpoints.

"It is (the department's) goal to investigate any and all potential detection technologies that may assist in the identification of explosive and flammable liquids," a homeland security solicitation notice read.

The department's Science and Technology Directorate said it needed equipment which could work on "full or partially full bottles of any shape and color made from glass, plastic, paper or other materials which are typically found in the marketplace and passenger stream of commerce," and could handle at least 200 bottles an hour.

The notice said applicants had to be able to offer equipment for testing within 30 days, and would be entitled to expedited designation under the Safety Act, which protects the producers of qualified anti-terrorism technologies from being sued if they do not work. Officials have said the ban will likely have to remain in force until some way of effectively screening liquids is found.

--United Press International