

# Tyler Morning Telegraph

## It's time to privatize the Transportation Security Administration

September 1, 2016

Labor Day weekend marks the end of the summer travel season. And for many travelers who dealt with the Transportation Security Administration, that comes as a relief.

So when Congress reconvenes, perhaps it should consider doing something about the TSA - privatizing that service. That would save travelers' time and taxpayers' money, while at the same time actually improving transportation safety.

Look at this report from last summer.

"The acting head of the Transportation Security Administration was reassigned after an internal investigation by the Department of Homeland Security found security failures at dozens of the nation's busiest airports," NBC News reported. "The breaches allowed undercover investigators to smuggle weapons, fake explosives and other contraband through numerous checkpoints."

The results of the tests are deeply disturbing.

"In all, so-called 'Red Teams' of Homeland Security agents posing as passengers were able get weapons past TSA agents in 67 out of 70 tests - a 95 percent failure rate, according to agency officials," NBC News said. "This isn't the first time TSA officers have failed to detect fake terrorists and their weapons. Red Teams have been probing TSA checkpoints for 13 years, oftentimes successfully getting weapons past airport screeners. However, this time, TSA agents failed to detect almost every single test bomb and gun, aviation experts said."

A better system, one that's working elsewhere, is to privatize the duties of the TSA.

"The solution is to dismantle TSA and move responsibility for screening operations to the nation's airports, said the Cato Institute's Chris Edwards. "The government would continue to oversee aviation safety, but airports would be free to contract out screening to expert aviation security firms."

There s plenty of evidence that private screeners do a better job.

"All major airports in Canada use private screening firms, as do about three quarters of Europe's major airports," Edwards said. "That practice creates a more efficient security structure, and allows governments to focus on aviation intelligence and oversight."

Of course, the gold standard for transportation security is Israel and the El Al airline. As The New York Times pointed out, "No El Al plane has been attacked by terrorists in more than three decades, and no flight leaving Ben Gurion [Airport] has ever been hijacked. Security is handled by the airline itself - a private company."

“Over a decade of experience has shown that the nationalization of airport screening under the Bush administration was a mistake,” Edwards said.

There’s already a model for privatizing the TSA: the Screening Partnership Program.

“The SPP was created by Congress so airports could take advantage of private sector efficiency in the screening lines while still remaining under TSA oversight and security rules,” explains David Inserra of the Heritage Foundation. “One estimate by the House Transportation Committee found that switching the largest 35 airports to the program would save \$1 billion over five years. It should come as no surprise that the private sector is better able to manage a workforce at lower cost, which means better staffing at airports.”

Privatizing the TSA makes sense - and could save lives.