

# Los Angeles Times

## Study suggests too much is being spent on airport security

By Hugo Martin

March 16, 2014

Months after an airport screener was killed in a shooting rampage at Los Angeles International Airport, a new report concludes that adding more security measures at the nation's airports may not be worth the cost.

The study goes on to suggest that it might even make sense to relax some of the existing security tactics.

"It may be time to reduce security," said John Mueller, a professor of political science at Ohio State University who co-authored the report with Mark G. Stewart, a civil engineering professor at the University of Newcastle in Australia.

Mueller and Stewart conclude that airports are not good targets for terrorists and the odds of being killed in an airport attack are extremely long. Their study, titled "Cost-benefit analysis of airport security: Are airports too safe?" appeared in the March edition of *Journal of Air Transport Management*.

The study relied on cost and risk reduction numbers for LAX but were calculated before the Nov. 1 shooting rampage by a gunman who killed Transportation Security Administration agent Gerardo Hernandez, 39, and wounded several others. Mueller said the shooting did not change his cost analysis.

The Mueller-Stewart study looked at several potential threats, including a gunman, a suitcase bomb, a truck bomb and a bomb strapped to a person. The professors also looked at the cost and effectiveness of such security measures as adding more bomb-sniffing dogs, installing permanent vehicle search checkpoints and shatterproof glass and blast deflection walls at the airports.

Using cost-analysis computations, the study concluded that the cost of such measures would not be justified, considering they will not completely eliminate the threat.

"Moreover, if the analysis suggests that enhancement of airport security is highly questionable, it may well be time to consider if many of the security arrangements already in place to protect airports are excessive," according to the report.

LAX police decline to discuss future security measures at the airport.

Jan Brueckner, a UC Irvine economics professor and airline industry expert, agreed that airports are not a priority target for terrorists “but some level of spending on security makes sense,” he said.

While many travelers complain about airline security, Brueckner said the current level of security at airports doesn’t seem intrusive.