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Is enhanced airport security worth it?

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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 wrote 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 that the odds of being killed in an airport attack are extremely long.

The study relied on cost and risk reduction numbers for Los Angeles International Airport but were calculated before the Nov. 1 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 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, and installing permanent vehicle search checkpoints and shatterproof glass and blast deflection walls.

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