

Study on Airport Operation Management with the Balance between Airport Security and Airport Service

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Abstract

For airlines and passengers, the 9/11 attack in New York City and Washington DC in 2001 gave a great shock. Like any other foreign airports, after the attack, security alert level of airports in Japan became the highest immediately. Present airport security level is still much higher than before the 9/11 although it is laxer.

In Japan, airlines take the responsibility of the safety of flights. They are just private companies, so they have no any legal positions and authorized power. Airlines always consider of airport security for the cost which is rising for doing many extra screening measures and of airport service for survival races with other airlines.

The balance between airport security and airport service is one of the most important issues for airports and airlines. After the 9/11 attack, all people not only airport staffs but also passengers increased awareness of their concerning terrorism. They understood how airport security is important and were cooperative with security screening. This year is 2009. In short, the 9/11 was occurred 7 years ago. People's memory becomes to fade away. Security intention among people is decreasing. Then, passengers feel that strict security control is not necessary here anymore. Some passengers have begun to claim the security screening, and they sometimes use violence on security screeners.

This paper discusses what airport security and airport service are. Airport service system includes airport security control, but it is not easy to make people understand. In the paper, airport security system in Japan and recently appeared monster passengers are highlighted to call people's attention to the importance of the balance between service and security.

1. Introduction

The 9/11 attack in New York City and Washington DC in 2001 caused a great shock to the world. After the attack, security alert level at airports in Japan jumped up to the highest level immediately as all over foreign airports. Every passenger seemed to understand that security management is much more important than any other airport services. They recognized that strict security screening was for their own safety. At that time, they were very good passengers. The current level of airport security management is still higher than that of before the 9/11 though the level is laxer. Recently, however, incidents which occurred in ground transportation facilities such as a train and a bus also have begun to break out in airports and aircrafts. Aircraft passengers sometimes or often become "Monster Passengers" with unreasonable crazy complaints against cabin crews and security screeners. Today, aircrafts have come into widespread use. The passengers do not recognize airline service is different from train station service. The airline service includes security control service with

passengers' duties. This paper discusses the balance between security and service in airport management in Japan.

2. Overview of Aviation Security Management in Japan

In Japan, the aviation security management is unique (see Figure 1).

Japan Civil Aviation Bureau (JCAB) of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport is the supervisor of the aviation security management. In the management, aviation security regulations must correspond in international standards. The standards are prescribed by International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) of the United Nations. ICAO requests that "each contracting state shall establish and implement a written national civil aviation security program to safeguard civil aviation operations against acts of unlawful interference, through regulations, practices and procedures which take into account the safety, regularity and

efficiency of flights” (ICAO Annex 17, 2006).

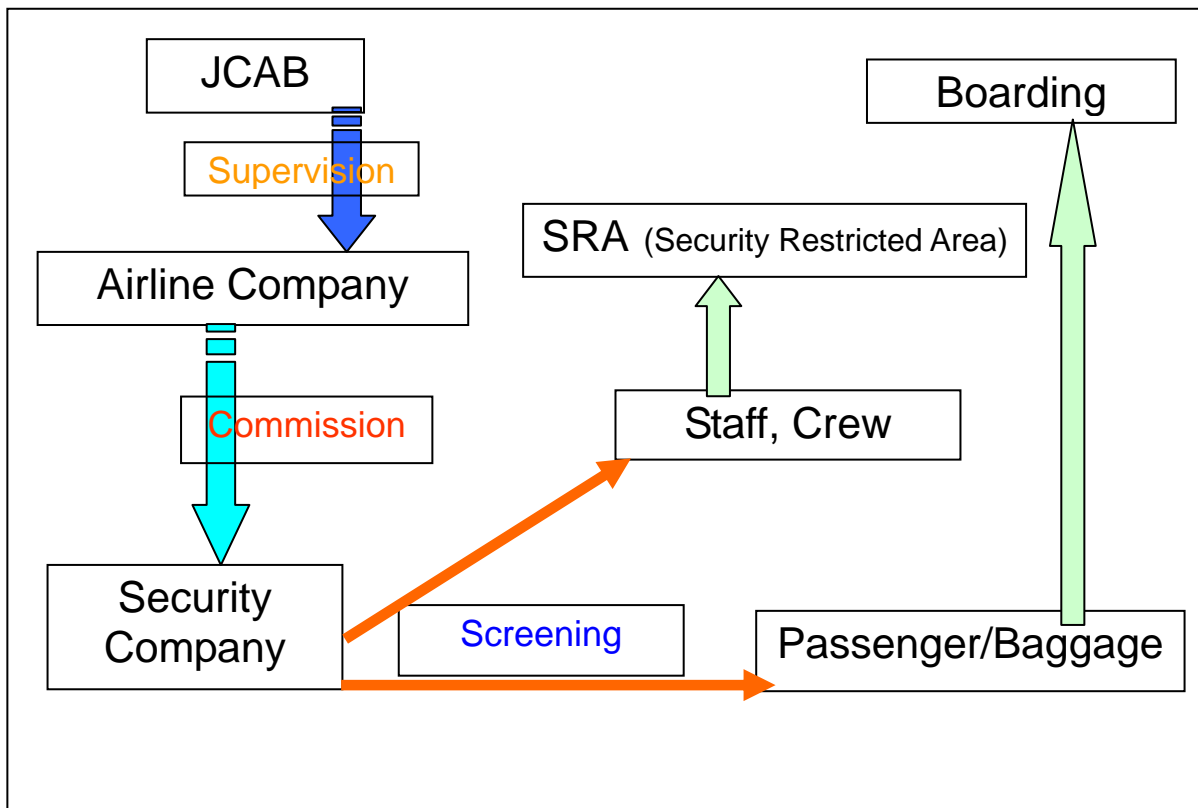


Figure 1.
Aviation Security Management in Japan

In accordance with the international standards of ICAO Annex 17, JCAB established the National Civil Aviation Security Program (NCASP) in 2004. JCAB directs this national policy to airline companies. Airlines follow the NCASP and commission security companies to implement security screening which meets to the requirements of the NCASP of Japan appropriately at security checkpoint in airports.

In the management system, it should be crucially considered that airlines and security companies are private. They have no authority and legal position for doing security screening toward all passengers and airport staff who enter the security restricted area. In Japan, however, airlines assume the responsibility of security screening. As the charge, they must implement security control which is required by JCAB toward important customers. Airlines always consider security screening from aspect of costs, which are rising due to extra security screening measures and due to improving airline service to survive in the severe competition with other airlines. The balance between security screening and passenger service is one of the most serious issues that airports and airlines face.

At airports, passengers feel that they are important and valuable customers for airlines, so passengers consider that it is natural that airlines provide good service for them. Travel by aircrafts has been popularized than ever before, people use aircrafts easily like using trains and buses. They do not recognize the difference between boarding aircrafts and riding trains. Therefore, they insist their rights as passengers not only ground transportations but also the aviation transportation. Nowadays, the people who called “Monster Passengers” in Japan have increased.

3. Monster Passengers

“Monster Passengers”.....who are they? In Longman Dictionary, the first meaning of “monster” is a strange typically imaginary animal, and the second meaning is a very evil person (Longman Dictionary). “Monster Passengers” would have these characteristics as monsters. They are unreasonable and cause serious troubles on an aircraft and in an airport. The people are known as “disruptive passengers.” ICAO (2006) defines that

“a passenger who fails to respect the rules of conduct at an airport or on board an aircraft or to follow the instructions of the airport staff or crew members and thereby disturbs the good order and discipline at an airport or on board the aircraft.” They are “Monster Passengers.” Do you imagine them?

In flight, normal people sometimes become disruptive passengers. Many cases by them are related to smoking troubles and the excessive consumptions of alcohol (Rolfe 2000). Any airline is concerned seriously about disruptive passenger incidents on board. The incidents occur almost every day, so “cabin crews are often being asked to

use physical force as either self-defense or in intervention” (Le Boutillier 2005). Even though the passengers are extremely troublesome, cabin crew cannot easily drop them off on the way. To handle them with best tactical skills, crew are trained to deal with unruly passengers and taught management techniques (Rolfe 2000, Le Boutillier 2005).

Figure 2 shows the number of safe obstruction acts by disruptive passengers in JAL’s, ANA’s and JAS’ flight. The incidents, especially verbal abuse, alcohol related, unruly and smoking, had rapidly increased in number from 1999 to 2000. The total number of the incidents raised 570 in 2000.

(the number of
safe obstruction acts)

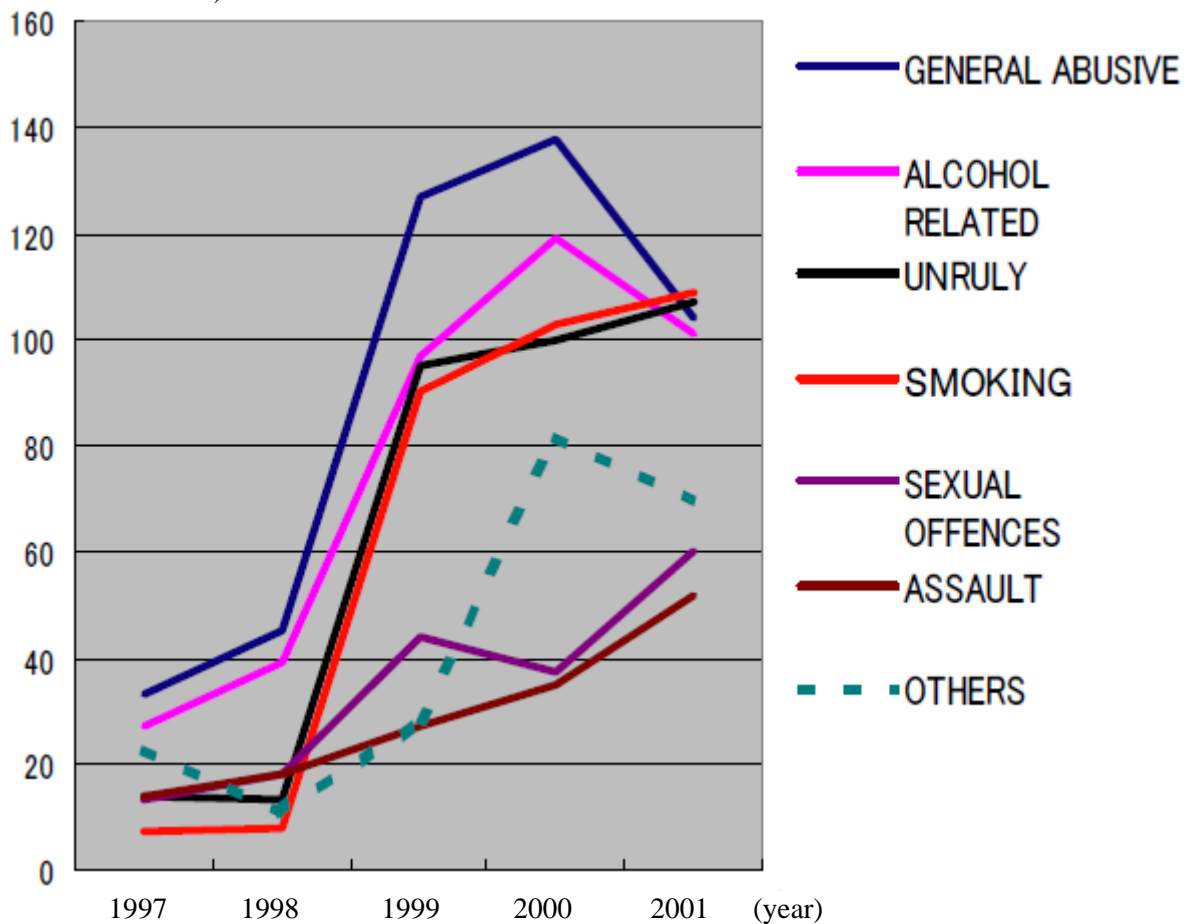


Figure 2
Safe Obstruction Acts by Disruptive Passengers in Flight (JAL, ANA, JAS)
(The Scheduled Airlines Association of Japan 2002)

Although the number of incidents decreased in 2001 because of the 9/11 attack, the number increased again. The law to disruptive passengers was enforced in 2004, but 460 incidents were reported in 2006. Twenty-five of them were serious affairs and impeded the safe flights (Public

Relations Office, 2007).

“Monster Passengers” are not only in-flight but also in airports. They also do acts which may obstacle to the safe flight operation at security checkpoints for screening. For the safe flight, security screeners are important, too. They are the

“skywall” (same as “seawall”) against “Monster Passengers” and terrorists. Security screeners are the “skywall” for our safety. They are the front and final line on air border. Their high motivation and skills are needed to do proper security screening and for our safe flight.

Figure 3 shows X-ray simulation training image. Screeners’ main tasks are to find dangerous articles and people and to have passengers to give up dangerous goods on board. This is for the protection of the aircraft against acts of unlawful interference. On the X-ray image, there is a gun on the left. Can you find the dangerous article? For screeners, the

high ability to check a bag or a person without a hesitation is necessary. They have to pay attention to all people who enter the security checkpoint. If they make a mistake in handling the passengers, it will lead to serious complications.

On the other hand, most passengers are not monsters or terrorists. They are just travelers. They are airlines’ important customers. Security screening companies are commissioned by airlines, so screeners must be courteous to airlines’ customers. They are required both security screening skills and passenger service skills.



Figure 3
X-ray Simulation Training Image
(Security Training International HP)

Recently, one monster passenger appeared at Narita International Airport and became very famous. On last December, a male passenger tried to carry face lotion over 100ml on board, but a female security screener found it and ask him to give up to bring it because of the regulation. He abruptly exploded. He spoke rudely and threw a tray, for using X-ray screening, to her. He was investigated by the Narita Airport Police immediately. Surprisingly, he was an executive-track government bureaucrat of the National Police Agency. After the investigation (only 10 minutes), he departed from Japan to Germany. Even such “Monster Passenger,” in Japan, he could board on an aircraft without any penalty.

In the US, Transport Security Administration (TSA) of the Department of Homeland Security has powerful authority toward airport security. Security screening is done by TSA staff with authority, so nobody can refuse the screening. If the monster passenger who threw the tray do same performance at an airport in the US, he would be investigated more (not only 10 minutes), and possibly he could not board on aircraft. In Japan, however, security screening is done by requirement of airlines which have no legal position and performed by security screeners who have no legal power. In short, unlike the US, security screening is done under passengers' cooperation, not under compulsion. Therefore, such “Monster Passenger” can get on an aircraft.

4. Service and Security

In Japan, because JCAB's role is just the supervisor of aviation security, airlines are the charge of security screening. Besides, they have to think of customer service and customer satisfaction for profit. Airline companies must fly aircrafts, but the fuel oil fee and security screening for a safe flight cost great deals today. The weights of the heavy burdens have devolved upon airlines. Airline staff insists that they may not be able to fly aircrafts in the near future. In addition to the financial matters, the treatment of "Monster Passengers" is a hard problem to solve. Many airlines have taken various measures against disruptive passengers for a long time, but such passengers exist still today. Under the current economic condition, airlines cannot choose only good passengers. Airlines have to provide every passenger with various services. For airlines, "Monster Passengers" are valuable customers, too, although they are nuisances. Airlines always consider airport security from the aspect of costs, which are rising due to extra security screening measures and due to improving airport services to survive in the severe competition with other airlines. They have been in dilemma of service and security.

In Rowe's report (2007), Kip Hawley, Head of the U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA), says that "a smooth, calm flow through security and good passenger service are essential to what we are trying to do, so they are not opposite ends of the spectrum." To promote mutual understanding between passengers and TSA staff for security, TSA furnishes information a lot on the web. People visit the TSA Web site and collect security information easily.

For keeping the good balance between security and service, JCAB should open AVSEC information more to the public. In Japan, the information of aviation security is too much confidential, compared with other countries. Not just training airline staff to handle "Monster Passengers" but informing passengers about the importance of security is necessary for the measure devised to deal with disruptive passengers (Rolfe 2000). To encourage Japanese people to understand the importance of security screening, it is absolutely necessary to open the detail information to the public more. Passengers wish to travel safely by aircrafts even though they are monsters. If JCAB and airlines provide security information more, passengers may understand that airlines' normal services include the security screening

service.

5. Concluding Remark

At the 9/11 attack, many people in the world watched the scene which the World Trade Center was falling down. At that time, airport staff and passengers alike developed an increased awareness of terrorism and concern for that. They began to understand the importance of security screening.

It is now 2009. The 9/11 occurred nearly 8 years ago. People's memory tends to fade over time. The sense of urgency among people has been decreasing. They often attach importance to comfortable service. Safety, convenience and scheduled flight are natural and normal for passengers. For a long time, Japan has been very safe. Many Japanese people do not feel that terrorism like the 9/11 attack is realistic in Japan. Although Japan had experienced serious terrorism, the sarin attack by AUM Shinrikyo (religious cult group) in 1995, Japanese people have almost forgotten it (Inoue 2003). At security checkpoints in an airport, however, security screeners do many extra screening such as computer screening, shoe screening and liquid screening. These new security controls make people get on their nerves.

Since airlines are private companies, they do not have any authorized power. Security companies are also private, so the screeners can screen passengers and their baggage after they obtain passengers' consent. In addition, the appearance of "Monster Passengers" and current financial difficulties put extra pressure on airlines. There are limits to security implementation only by the power of private organizations. To manage the current situation, JCAB has to have more responsible role of airport security system. If it is impossible under the current condition, JCAB should bear the security cost and provide the authority to airlines for firmer screening. JCAB has a word to say about practically everything, but it would not share part of the security expenses more. As the supervisor, JCAB has to have the firm leadership. As the regulator, JCAB has to take the responsibility of security. Aviation security management needs the government support. If JCAB does not support immediately, it may be true that airlines cannot fly aircrafts.

Why do airlines do security screening? This is for passengers' safety. Everything is for passengers.

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