

## DHS Looks to Adopt Israeli Airport Security Methods

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Less than a month after the May edition of HSToday went behind the scenes to look at the Israeli approach to airport security at Ben Gurion International Airport, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff announced Thursday he would like to adopt some of Ben Gurion's security measures - like behavior detection screening, the cornerstone of Ben Gurion security.

"That's a scenario where Israel has a lot of experience," Chertoff told Reuters, adding, "I think that it is of interest to us to see if there is any adaptation there."

While in Jerusalem for a conference attended by public and homeland security ministers from around the world, Chertoff signed an agreement with Israel to share technology and information on methods to improve homeland security.

Chertoff said not all methods and technologies in use at Ben Gurion, such as questioning every passenger, are practical at larger US airports.

And "not every technological approach is necessarily applicable, but we are always open to look for technology from whatever source," Chertoff said.

In its May report on Ben Gurion security, HSToday noted that "extrapolating Ben Gurion security to the United States is problematic on many levels. For one, to deploy the same degree of physical scanning technologies that are at Ben Gurion at every airport in America would, in today's fiscal climate, come with an unpalatable price tag

However, "as for implementing a broad, [behavior detection]-like frontline defense, well, that might just be within reach," one authority told HSToday. And every passenger wouldn't necessarily have to be questioned, others have told HSToday.us.

The bigger hurdle in implementing a substantive behavior detection program is getting over the hurdle of critics' complaints that it's nothing more than racist profiling, which it isn't.

Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Secretary Kip Hawley has strongly disagreed with those who maintain behavior detection is profiling. "If you rely on what you think a terrorist looks like, you're going to miss them

“Some argue [it’s] somehow an invasion of liberty or profiling, but actually I’m going to make the reverse argument,” Chertoff said last year. “Focusing on behavior as opposed to someone’s appearance or ethnic group is exactly what we should be doing, and the better we are at focusing on people based on their behavior, the less we have to interfere with the innocent passenger.”

As HSToday pointed out, the multi-layered security approach at Ben Gurion focuses on people’s behavior, rather than things like scissors, small pocket knives and no more than 3 ounces of nearly all personal toiletry items, which must be crammed into one quart-sized, zip-top, clear plastic bag.

Some of these procedures might be able to be eliminated altogether in the US with an effective behavior detection program, authorities said, including not having to take off your shoes. They said TSA could use Israeli pioneered technology like MagShoe.

MagShoe was initiated by the Israeli Security Agency (ISA) and executed by New York-based IDO Security in conjunction with the technical branch of ISA. It is a metal detector designed to detect concealed weapons in shoes and around ankles.

TSA is testing MagShoe and other similar devices, but says it’s yet to find an acceptable solution.

The people-focused security approach was pioneered at Ben Gurion and involves singling suspicious people out of airport crowds based on specific facial expressions, body language, behavior, speech - even attire - and then asking them questions. It’s all been methodically designed to identify suspicious conduct that even TSA acknowledges can be related to surveillance or pre-attack behavior traits.

Indeed. They are questions specially designed to identify “anything out of the ordinary, anything that does not fit,” a Ben Gurion undercover screener explained to HSToday during briefings and interviews at Ben Gurion in February with top airport security officials.

Chertoff had earlier advocated behavior detection during his 2007 address to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. He explained that “it involves looking at behavior, and training officers to be out in the actual flow at the airport and in the actual flow in some of our mass transit to watch the behavior of people; how they react as they approach the checkpoint, how they react as they’re unloading things. And that cues us that there may be some people we want to take a closer look at.

This, by the way, is a concept that we’ve used at the border for many years, which is training people to look for human behavior which is the giveaway as to whether somebody is planning something big.”

All of Ben Gurion's security personnel, overt and covert, are trained in "security profiling" or behavior pattern recognition, Nahun Liss, head of the Planning, Control and Projects Department of the Ben Gurion Security Division, explained to HSToday.

"Your TSA focuses on things and not people, and we have found that's not a very effective approach to identifying and isolating terrorists," Liss said.

Ben Gurion security authorities explained that the notion that in-flight problems can be prevented by prohibiting the most obvious problematic "things" prior to boarding is, well, ludicrous.

In contrast to attitudes in Israel, though, in the United States there's been a hue and cry over concerns that focusing on people will violate their privacy and civil rights. As a result, the United States has opted to refrain from making humans the centerpiece of airport security and does not question either passengers or anyone else roaming the airports.

"A big mistake," Liss said, unabashedly.

Raphael "Rafi" Ron, Ben Gurion's security director for five years, has said Israel's advantage is that it long ago came to terms with the human component of terrorism. In other words, terrorism is carried out by people.

Ron has said Ben Gurion's security has clearly demonstrated that miscreants can be found and stopped by an effectively robust security methodology that is focused on "people!"

Using a common sense approach, Ron said, "we assumed that before an attack could take place, there had to be a person with the intention of carrying out an attack and second, there had to be a weapon. But on Sept. 11, we learned that a weapon is not necessary. What remains is the human factor. Without a person who intends to do harm, an attack will not take place."

Consequently, Ron said TSA's obsession with "things" is "unintelligent "everybody understands - including the passengers - that the relevance of your nail file to the security of the flight is nil. It doesn't exist. "By wasting your time and attention on [such things] "you are simply not aiming in the right direction."

Liss agreed, telling HSToday that "while we comply with all international and US security regulations, we don't believe they're all based on very good common sense approaches. No offense intended, it's just we do things much differently here."

In a recent TSA blog, an official explained that "behavior analysis is based on the fear of being discovered. People who are trying to get away with something display signs of stress through involuntary physical and physiological behaviors. Whether someone's trying to sneak through that excellent stone ground mustard they bought on vacation, a knife, or a bomb, behavior detection officers like me are trained to spot certain suspicious behaviors out of the crowd. Once we make our determination, we refer these passengers for additional screening or directly to law enforcement."

"I've been arguing for years" that we need to be looking at people, USAF Col. (Ret.) Randall Larsen told HSToday.us. "I was saying this when they were first creating TSA ... base it on people, not technology - absolutely."

Larsen is founding director of the Institute for Homeland Security, the National Security Advisor to the Center for Biosecurity, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.

As a result of the effectiveness of its security approach, Ben Gurion does not impose US security screening policies, like having passengers remove laptops from their carrying cases and take off shoes, jackets, belts, etc. The need for all that, Liss and his security colleagues explained, had already been eliminated many security steps back, beginning even before passengers stepped foot through the doors of the airport.

TSA has, slowly, been ratcheting up its own behavior recognition program, which involves DHS behavior detection officers (BDOs) trained in spotting suspicious behavior based on TSA's Screening Passengers by Observation Techniques (SPOT) being deployed at certain airports.

More than 500 BDOs are expected to be trained by the end of 2008, and TSA expects to be able to roll out SPOT nationwide soon thereafter.