

Critical Need to Establish a Transportation Security Administration Academy

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Abstract

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) was created in 2001 in a feverishly and unceremonious manner, then required to go forward immediately and in mass with an uncompromising zero error tolerance directive. Generally, law enforcement organizations require time to establish themselves by building a familiar and trusted identity with traditions recognized by their customers, the industries they serve, other law enforcement agencies, the media, and from within. TSA was never afforded this opportunity. Despite its many successes and advances during the past 14-plus years, TSA has not been able to cultivate a recognized brand or marque trademark distinguishing it as the premiere law enforcement organization in aviation transportation security in the United States and not viewed instead as hired federal security guards. This backdrop has created a considerable identity crisis for TSA personnel endorsed by some customers and stakeholders, and significantly obfuscates TSA institutional development.

Keywords: Transportation Security Act, Law Enforcement, Aviation Leadership, Homeland Security

Introduction

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) was formed from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as a result of the attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11) by Al-Qaeda, and was immediately charged with the enormous operational mandate of Zero Error Tolerance in protecting the American traveler (Ellis & McDaniel, 2013). TSA reputation is faltering; it lacks a cohesive, uniformly trained workforce with professional core positions that are unfailingly recognized. Therefore, TSA must develop an institutional foundation of recognized standards and traditions that will instill employee pride in agency ownership, advance performance, retention and morale, and industry, stakeholder and customer acknowledgment.

Extensive authorization and enforcement powers were granted to the TSA Administrator, the head of the organization (Cornell University, 2015, June); however, only limited authority was extended to the uniformed airport TSA Transportation Security Officer (TSO). Although enforcement powers were granted to the TSA Administrator and generally to the agency, there still exists a necessity for local uniformed law enforcement officers to assist with TSO mission requirements. This limited authority has impacted organizational discipline and morale.

In 2001 and 2002, there was a heated debate in the U.S. Congress regarding where TSA would be placed within the federal government. Several federal agencies shared the mission of transportation safety, and some Cabinet Secretaries eyed the organization as an opportunity to gain more personnel and funding (Kirk, 2002). The effect was interference with and obscuring of TSA institutional identity.

TSA did not establish a Transportation Security Officer Academy. Training was conducted regionally and not administered uniformly within the organization. The educational requirements, physical fitness standards and overall job training were minimal during the initial massive TSO hiring wave to better facilitate this essential process in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. TSA has subsequently upgraded these requirements and standards (Government Printing Office [GPO], 2002, August).

TSA is designed to be both reactive and proactive in combating terrorism. Agency success, however, is measured largely through thwarted terrorist incidents, which must remain classified (Randol, 2010). As a result, many TSA achievements go widely unknown and cannot be publically disseminated further challenging TSA recognition and respect, and exasperating TSA institutionalization.

Currently, TSA policy and authority are being challenged by several states. The legal battle is centered on the Supremacy Clause of the U.S. Constitution. Beginning with Texas in 2011, the number of states involved grew to nine by 2013 (Ellis & McDaniel, 2013).

Literature Review

The TSA and TSA Administrator derive authority from 49 U.S.C. § 114 (Cornell, 2015, June). Transportation Security Administration Administrator authority and responsibilities are many; they include significant emergency powers such as preventing any international flight from entering the United States based on a verifiable threat or if determined that security screening procedures in the country of origin failed to meet TSA standards. The Administrator may also order the arrest of suspects by federal law enforcement personnel. Transportation Security Officers (TSO) collectively observe thousands of travelers daily, however, they can only question and detain suspicious persons pending assistance from a police officer. A TSO has limited non-arrest authority, and does not have peace officer status (J. O’Gorman, personal communication, April 8, 2015). The heads of law enforcement organizations generally have control of administrative process and enforcement policies for their respective agencies; however, ground based personnel and their first line supervisors are granted full authority for the day-to-day interactions with the public with whom the building of trust is commensurate with mission success (Jackson, Bradford, Stanko, & Hohl, 2013).

Institutions develop differently according to their relative cultures and type (Tauheed, 2013). For instance, computer companies, airlines, steel manufacturers and law enforcement organizations will each have a separate culture or social action which will emerge and evolve an agency into a stratum as members perform duties that are both assigned and understood (Tauheed, 2013). This comes about through a system of tradition that begins with a common understanding and collective studying of the organization’s shared experience, rules and identifiable characteristics most often accomplished through a prolonged classroom setting (Tauheed, 2013) as exemplified in a traditional law enforcement academy standards (United States Marshals Service [USMS], 2014). Additionally, institutions must allow their members to have the authority and freedoms to act according to their agendas, and failure to do so can lead to dysfunction (Tauheed, 2013).

According to Lord (2013), U.S. Government Accounting Office (GAO) publications indicate that during fiscal years 2010 through 2012, the TSA investigated and adjudicated approximately 9,600 misconduct cases, roughly one third of which involved abuse of leave and attendance. Tauheed (2013) might suggest this pattern represents TSA has not institutionalized, has no sense of identity, and that with over 45,000 employees TSA has become a king sized agency without a commonality of action performed in order to carry out an agenda through established and credible roles. This would suggest that at the base-line TSO level, TSA lacks the pride in ownership otherwise common within established institutions which can manifest itself in counterproductive behaviors (Tauheed, 2013).

An academy, in particular a law enforcement academy, enables the transference of organizational values (U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives [ATF], 2015).

From day one, academy students are introduced to mission and vision statements, values, and established academy objectives and organizational standards (USMS, 2014). Academies establish a level of professionalism that carries over into the field the aim of which is to both guide behavior and performance of agency employees, and to promote recognition by others in particular customers and stakeholders (ATF, 2015). Tauheed (2013) discusses the need for organizations to establish developmental levels in order to sustain performance and predictability of employee actions. Successful academy curriculums build competencies in developmental stages to attain standards (USMS, 2014).

The Aviation and Transportation Security Act was passed by the 107th Congress and signed into law on November 19, 2001 by President George W. Bush (GPO, 2001, November). Created out of the FAA, the TSA was initially placed within the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) (U.S. Department of Homeland Security [DHS], 2013).

Sound reasons existed for legislating TSA as part of the DOT (Kirk, 2002). There was a need for TSA to develop under the guidance of experienced FAA investigators and supervisors with institutional knowledge in the airline industry, aviation security and familiarity with other stakeholder infrastructure. The TSA mission had a direct tie-in to other DOT components which added a layered effect to DOT investigations. TSA was focused on the security element of transportation as its law enforcement mission, making TSA the DOT critical mission expert (Kirk, 2002).

The Transportation Security Administration's beginnings were rough; however, by mid-2002, TSA had started to settle and develop under the DOT, and TSA personnel began to identify themselves as members of the DOT (Kirk, 2002). On November 25, 2002, the 107th Congress passed Public Law 107-296, known as the Homeland Security Act, creating the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) (GPO, 2002, November). The establishment of DHS consolidated all or part of 22 different federal government agencies and organizations involved in antiterrorist and border security activities (Kirk, 2002). As part of this new act, TSA was slated for removal from DOT control and designated for transfer into the newly established DHS. There was a debate in Congress over this proposed transfer. Chief among the arguments was the fear that TSA was itself a new agency under construction, and that moving it would delay the implementation of a sound transportation safety mission, weakening TSA expertise, its sense of identity and its development with long-lasting impact (Kirk, 2002).

Kirk (2002) acknowledges there was also sound reasoning voiced in Congress in favor of transferring TSA to DHS. Based on the DHS mission and function of protecting the nation, DHS would be incomplete without TSA inclusion. Should TSA remain with the DOT it would give two U.S. Cabinet Secretaries and their departments - DHS and DOT - the responsibility for transportation security instead of consolidating these functions into a single department, which had the potential of leading to a lack of coordination and possible disputes over funding allocations (Kirk, 2002). International air transportation was viewed as a form of border security, therefore making a strong case for TSA inclusion under DHS, which also incorporates U. S. Border Patrol, Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the U.S. Coast Guard (Kirk, 2002). Additionally, according to Kirk (2002) it was feared that under the DOT, TSA would be swayed by profit concerns of transportation industries. (Kirk [2002] indicates there was no evidence of this.) It was argued that TSA was too big to remain with the DOT, and would eventually divert DOT efforts away from more traditional domestic transportation missions (Kirk, 2002). Kirk (2002) interprets this as a fight for control over the large TSA budget.

Other issues arose from these debates that would remain unresolved, and included how the TSA would fulfill its role in non-aviation transportation security, what role, if any TSA would play in border security, and the possibility of contentious labor issues surrounding salaries and job security (Kirk, 2002). This opened a discussion into whether the uncertain beginning by TSA would affect employee association, and public as well as other agency recognition (Kirk, 2002).

Based on current TSA placement within DHS, the argument for transferring TSA from the DOT into the DHS won out. However, according to Kirk (2002), a closer look at the reasons against this transfer and instead allowing TSA to have remained with DOT is revealing. Kirk (2002) argues that TSA was initially placed in the DOT following a large and well formulated policy debate in Congress, and that same 107th Congress was being asked to reexamine that which they had previously decided with overwhelming bipartisan support. Kirk (2002) discusses great concern for TSA personnel development resulting from the transfer to DHS. TSA was heavily criticized by the airline industry for not having a customer friendly mind-set, and transferring TSA out of DOT into the strictly law enforcement oriented DHS would only serve to exacerbate the situation (Kirk, 2002). The support skillset needed by TSA concerning transportation systems and infrastructure already existed in DOT (Kirk, 2002). Removing TSA from DOT and placing it in DHS would isolate this existing apparatus requiring the hiring of more and perhaps untrained staff in DHS to provide the expertise which already existed in DOT (Kirk, 2002).

It is not unusual for multiple agencies to have overlapping jurisdictional responsibilities or missions; however, having TSA remain in the DOT might have ensured an agency with better transportation security expertise with needed experienced support in place from which DHS could rely on and utilize as needed (Kirk, 2002). Throughout this debate as Kirk (2002) denotes TSA employees remained aware of their level of helplessness as the uncertainties and growing list of obstacles that might interfere with their professional development and identity were jostled between Cabinet Secretaries and Congress.

Law enforcement academies, in addition to teaching required job skills also develop and establish organizational core expectations that include ethics, conduct and performance standards, peer support, customer service and obligations of service (ATF, 2015). Educational requirements, physical fitness standards and job training were minimal when TSA was established and without an academy in order to best accelerate the process in the aftermath of 9/11; however, the TSA, although still without a full-fledged TSO Academy, has subsequently upgraded many of these requirements and standards (J. O’Gorman, personal communication, April 8, 2015). It is likely that in 2001 and 2002 this created an initial cadre of TSA employees looked upon with suspicion and skepticism by TSA stakeholders and law enforcement collaborators, and established a negative reputation-whether justified or not, that has continued to this day (J. O’Gorman, personal communication, April 8, 2015).

According to Mr. Joseph O’Gorman, Chief Special Projects Division, TSA Training, Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers, Glynco, Georgia, uniformed TSA employees are the front line of aviation security and the primary security specialists with national standards and guidelines that all airline travelers interact with in the United States. However, many TSA personnel unfortunately believe they are seen more as machine operators with limited and specific job skills who react according to protocol based on findings by technology instead of the trained professionals they are, empowered with discretionary authority to make judgments based on experience and established authority (J. O’Gorman, personal communication, April 8, 2015). This can be reflected by the levels of impatience exhibited by airline passengers at TSA screening points (J. O’Gorman, personal communication, April 8, 2015). Tauheed (2013) argues that members of an organization not properly recognized or respected may lack purposive behavior, that is, a process of doing something- however simple and repetitive- in order to achieve a purpose. Subsequently, habits of thought are developed that are applied resolutely in the practice of employment, and these can be either positive or negative as an actualization of institutional influence (Tauheed, 2013).

Lord (2013) indicates that, according to GAO reports, TSA suffers from chronic disciplinary actions. Tauheed (2013) argues that high rates of disciplinary action against company employees stem from employee disassociation. Additionally, organizational routines can determine engagement in innovation and cooperation (Grodal, Nelson, and Siino, 2015). When positive, it can produce a desire to be present for work in order to be recognized as a participant. When negative, it can contribute to acute absenteeism and other indicators of dysfunction. The annual turnover rates among full-time (uniformed) TSA employees averages 23%, with a nearly 50% rate for part-time employees (J. O’Gorman, personal communication, April 8, 2015). Absenteeism rates for uniformed TSA employees as far back as 2006 ranged from 10% to 20% (Marek and Guttman, 2006). These statistics are remarkably high, especially when considering the costly and time consuming process required when hiring a TSA employee (GPO, 2002, August).

Grodal, Nelson and Siino (2015) suggest it is nearly impossible for employees to successfully accomplish their work without help from colleagues. A failure to capitalize on the productive power of helping, in the case of TSA caused by understaffing and excessive absenteeism, can result in the neglect of a very forceful vehicle for innovation, and can be viewed as symbolic of a lack of deliberate work-place assistance or help (Grodal, et al., 2015). Internal TSO disciplinary actions are high; however, they consist of many low level infractions that are required to be reported, such as lateness by 15 minutes, or calling in on sick leave after the beginning of a work shift instead of prior to it as required under TSA regulations (J. O’Gorman, personal communication, April 8, 2015). Additionally, the aforementioned pronounced daily absenteeism creates constant personnel shortages which often necessitate unwanted extended workdays by some whom must remain on duty to meet mission requirements (J. O’Gorman, personal communication, April 8, 2015).

Focusing on interactions for positive change must encompass the entirety of the situation and not solely on one or several out of many areas of concern (Grodal, et al., 2015).

To change perceptions about one aspect of agency performance there must also be a cooperative, worker-based organizational effort to change other areas of concern such as fitness standards, appearance, and uniformity across regional locations if applicable, and improved relationships with stakeholders (Grodal, et al., 2015). Grodal, Nelson and Siino (2015) outline a top-to-bottom method of inclusion to create organizational change and improve perception both internally and by stakeholders. They include identifying and acknowledging helpers and givers, explaining issues and responding to needs, rewarding volunteerism, exhibiting excitement and engaging stakeholders and coworkers by being sympathetic and appreciative, demonstrating job skills and knowledge, and making it a training based organizational routine.

The security system of El Al Airlines Ltd of Israel, while different than the TSA security system in several ways, has one important common feature - successes against suspected hijackings or terrorists events remain classified (King, 2007). Airline security successes are measured in the negative, that is, by an accumulation in the failures of would-be terrorists and hijackers. These statistics, if published might reveal sources and methods used by TSA or El Al, and are for this reason not widely promulgated, and therefore likely to remain confidential for some time (J. O’Gorman, personal communication April 8, 2015). Despite these positives, the need for secrecy in cultures driven by information, such as in the United States, can easily create doubt and skepticism for TSA (J. O’Gorman, personal communication April 8, 2015).

Perhaps similarly unknown to the American traveling public is TSA involvement in the DHS Intelligence Component. Since 2002, DHS has had an active intelligence element in support of its mission, and since 2003 DHS has been a member of the United States Intelligence Community, (USIC) (Randol, 2010). Transportation Security Administration Intelligence Analysts are assigned to the DHS component of the USIC (Randol, 2010).

The DHS underwent a major reorganization in July 2005 under then Secretary Michael Chertoff who fought to establish and subsequently strengthen the DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) (Randol, 2010). The DHS I&A components consist of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, TSA, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the U.S. Secret Service. Some of the functions of the DHS I&A and of the TSA component not widely promulgated for public consumption include border and aviation warnings, critical infrastructure protection, and support of and information sharing with state, local and private sector partners and stakeholders (Randol, 2010). Therefore, information made available for public consumption remains limited in scope and details (J. O’Gorman, personal communication, April 8, 2015).

Similar to procedures conducted by El Al (King, 2007), TSA employs a terrorist watch-list, also known under the more common term of a “No-Fly List”. This list was the result of the failed attempt on Christmas Day 2009 to ignite an explosive device by airline passenger Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, subsequently known as the “Underwear Bomber”, on a Detroit-bound flight originating from Amsterdam (Krouse & Elias, 2010). The terror watch-listing and screening process is complex, and has some levels of published success, as well as established means or redress for persons falsely detained (Krouse & Elias, 2010).

TSA employs a multi-layered strategy, including covert steps that are built around a large infrastructure, which is continually evolving, and employs the Israeli model as a framework (King, 2007). However, the continuous public demand in the United States for information, some of which has become available in open sources reporting, can serve as a good starting point for terrorists to evaluate and attempt to defeat the TSA air transportation security system (King, 2007). According to King (2007), while TSA and Israeli security methods have similarities, the Israelis are recognized as the world leader in aviation security. TSA relies on a form of layered security heavily dependent on electronics and machinery, using it for detection of possible terrorists. Essentially, TSA is looking for the device (King, 2007) - or the bomb. El Al and the Israeli system look more closely at individuals and examine their profiles. In other words, El Al is looking for the person or persons that will carry out the act (King, 2007) - they are looking for the bomber. King (2007) defines the system used by El Al Airlines Ltd as utilizing a proactive analysis and searching for people and behaviors that create incongruence, while TSA relies on the aforementioned layered security, which is heavily dependent on electronics and machinery, using it for initial detection of possible terrorists.

TSA’s difficulties stem from several places, one of which is a lack of both the continuity and volume of training that a TSO receives, which contributes to a view of TSA as that of an evolving security organization with public relations difficulties (King, 2007).

El Al uses trained profilers, many with prior police or military experience to observe the behaviors of passengers at an airline terminal whether or not they are waiting to check in for flights. This training is incorporated by El Al into an academy like training schedule that prepares their aviation security personnel for the many and different aspects of the mission, to include passenger screening, airport security, and aircraft security (King, 2007). TSA uses similar behavior profiler techniques as El Al. However, TSA behavior profilers receive less training than the Israelis, and TSA employs fewer persons per capita in U.S. airports than does El Al (King, 2007). According to Mr. J. O’Gorman, since TSA does not have a full-fledged TSO Academy, behavior profiler or behavioral observer training is considered specialized training; however, TSA behavioral observer specialists are well trained. This has the effect of removing a TSO from other aviation security duties for specialized functions reducing an airport’s already short staffing (J. O’Gorman, personal communication April 8, 2015).

Mark (2014) suggests that TSA is continuously fighting an uphill battle for respect and public recognition, in part due to a failure by TSA to adequately market its successes, explain needed changes that enhance airport security, and some TSA senior leadership policy decisions that have brought public scrutiny and embarrassment to TSA uniformed personnel.

There are three general methods of security utilized in aviation: screen (passengers) first, which was used initially by TSA; detection first, which is the primary method used by El Al, and; a hybrid of screen and detect in use by TSA (King, 2007). Lack of public awareness concerning the sophistication of TSA structure and the level of involvement in national intelligence and international security, combined with TSA senior leadership public relations mistakes can contribute to a deficiency of confidence by stakeholders, as well as the traveling public in TSA personnel and the TSA mission (King, 2007).

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001 by Al-Qaeda, air transportation and security has been among the most important areas of homeland security, closely watched by all levels of government and monitored and reported extensively by the media (Ellis & McDaniel, 2013). Based on the size and complexity of the threat, the response necessary to defend against terrorist actions was placed on the federal government, and incorporated missions from numerous agencies to include DHS, the U.S. military, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (Ellis & McDaniel, 2013). Despite this, several states, led by Texas in 2011, have begun to challenge federal authority and TSA policies that are deemed intrusive, specifically enhanced pat down procedures routinely performed on airline passengers passing through TSA check points and at terminal gates. Ellis & McDaniel (2013) have determined, based on a legal analysis that the federal powers in the jurisdiction of aviation security granted by the Constitution’s Supremacy Clause is not as clear-cut as other more general arguments supported by the Supremacy Clause, making this attempt by the State of Texas to proclaim its authority on the matter not completely without legal merit.

Article VI, Paragraph 2 of the Constitution, referred to as the Supremacy Clause, establishes that the United States Constitution and federal law largely takes precedence over the laws of any state. This even applies to state constitutions (Cornell University, 2015, May). However, states do have a voice if argued whether the federal law in question was granted by Congress, interferes with citizen rights and the reasonable expectations under the state law, and if it is determined that the federal law is assuming authority primarily for the purpose of precedence, and that intent is not clearly stated (Monaghan, 2010).

In May and June 2011, the Texas Legislature introduced two bills, HB 1937 and HB 1938, respectively, the first state laws in the United States aimed at restricting the ability of TSA screeners to search passengers (Ellis & McDaniel, 2013). The first, HB 1937, intended to make it a crime in the State of Texas for a TSA employee to perform a search without probable cause in order to grant access to a building that is publically accessible if in the course of the search the person knowingly and or recklessly touches the sexual organs, anus, buttocks or breasts of the person being searched. The other, HB 1938 outlawed the installation of body scanning equipment in any airport in Texas (Ellis & McDaniel, 2013). The battle surrounds whether air transportation security is exclusively within the federal domain, and if states have the right to limit the powers of the federal government in this capacity. Although Texas eventually withdrew these bills, this debate has grown. The legislatures of eight other states - Alaska, Hawaii, Michigan, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Washington - have joined Texas in criticizing TSA policies and have introduced laws or passed resolutions similar to the aforementioned Texas bills (Ellis & McDaniel, 2013).

Ellis & McDaniel (2013) state that TSA is unique in the need for consistency across multiple jurisdictions since it functions in an expected zero error tolerance mission. Therefore, unlike in the realm of local law enforcement, this is not an academic challenge impacting only short term the effect on performance of duties (Ellis & McDaniel, 2013). Krouse & Elias (2011) suggest that cooperation with state and local governments was perhaps a secondary thought when TSA was empowered and deployed. However, the TSA mission is both expansive and consolidated, and has become a cooperative and interdependent mission with local uniformed law enforcement officers across the United States (Krouse & Elias, 2011).

The legitimacy of the argument notwithstanding, another immediate effect may center on TSA legitimacy (Elias & McDaniel, 2013), likely impacting TSA recognition, respect and credibility afforded by stakeholders. For instance, Texas may argue that previously foiled attempts by terrorists to cause harm (Elias & McDaniel, 2013), such as in the aforementioned attempt by Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, did not require invasive scanners and techniques in order to be prevented.

Conclusion

The Transportation Security Administration is a large and experienced federal enforcement agency in search of institutional recognition and respect. TSA is trusted with the enormity of protecting the American air (and rail) traveler with fragile zero error tolerance missions in the post 9/11 active terrorist environment. However, TSA uniformed Transportation Security Officers have limited enforcement authority, and must rely on local and other federal law enforcement officers for basic initial response assistance. Practically from inception, TSA identity was uncertain and challenged by our national leaders electing to transfer TSA from the new arm of an established and trusted mentor institution, the DOT, to becoming another measure of a brand new, unproven and speedily assembled federal department- DHS.

The understandable urgency of our response to 9/11 dictated scaled down qualifications and an abbreviated training regimen for TSA that were coordinated regionally. However, over 14 years later these actions have not been corrected, leaving a large TSO core that lacks institutional standards and cohesion commonly obtained through and developed in an academy environment.

TSA successes and collaboration with a world leading aviation security expert- El Al Ltd, are not well known due the requirement to classify results that would otherwise disclose sources and methods that, if revealed, would give terrorists an advantage for planning future attacks. In other words, TSA success is quietly measured through terrorist failures that must be kept secret. This adds to the difficulty for TSA to achieve recognition and respect in this evolving era of need-to-know information overload. Finally, despite the unconditional necessity for national standards in maintaining aviation security, TSA policies and procedures are being challenged in the courts by multiple states that can, if successful, stop or at least suspend methods currently in place that risk creating a treacherous gap in airport security.

Recommendations

It is highly recommended that TSA establish a formal National Training Academy. This recommended action is made with the expectation TSA can institute and promulgate a unified and identifiable national operational standard. TSA currently has standard procedures. However, initial training and indoctrination for TSA uniformed personnel remains largely limited to regional preparation, which likely contributes to a lack of TSA institutional recognition. An academy can construct an environment from which national standards will develop and solidify. In the case of a TSA academy, this should enable TSA to initialize needed positive change of public and stakeholder misperceptions by chipping away at the obscuration of TSA professionalism. Academies, particularly law enforcement academies, instill strong self-recognition along with building traditions of service. In addition, law enforcement academies implant employee pride in ownership with the intended consequences of heighten employee performance, steadfast ethical behaviors, and strong retention and morale. TSA is in critical need of these employee characteristics as observable behavior standards by the travelling public, stakeholders and by one another.

A TSA academy will not be a cure-all remedy, nor will it immediately remove all impediments clouding TSA professional recognition. It will, however, be a step in the right direction, aiming at enhancing TSA credibility, reputation, and levels of respect and agency self-esteem.

TSA currently has an in-service training program for uniformed TSOs and senior-level supervisors, which was inaugurated in 2013. This is not, however, a TSA academy. These one and two-week long programs run continuously, and are conducted primarily at FLETC in Glynco, Georgia. TSA students receive instruction from certified DHS and TSA instructors assigned to FLETC. The infrastructure needed to expand this training into a TSA academy is already in place at FLETC, which is a federal law enforcement training facility of nearly 1,600 acres making it among the largest of its type in the world. Classrooms, dormitories and dining hall, physical fitness facilities, medical and human resources support, and other logistical support required for and common to an academy environment are well established at FLETC. Therefore, the founding of a full-fledged TSA Academy should not be a difficult transition logistically. The challenge may lie in obtaining needed funding along with support of TSA and DHS leadership, TSO labor representatives, and the U.S. Congress. An exhaustive and detailed cost-benefit and risk analysis will likely be required. The results hopefully will favor the establishment of a TSA academy over the decision to continue the current non-unified training and operations methods, which to date, clearly have not been effective and contribute to the detriment of the TSA mission.

The limited, non-arrest authority granted to TSA uniformed personnel can be addressed through an academy. TSOs may not obtain full peace officer status as a result of the establishment of a TSA academy. Changing enforcement officer authorities and associated duties for an agency as large as TSA would be complicated. Regardless, national training standards instituted through the academy will dissolve feelings of second-class status and ratchet-up respect and response given to TSOs by the travelling public and law enforcement colleagues.

In addition to uniformity, academies help to create stability. The TSA's chaotic beginnings, in particular the rapid start up followed by the Cabinet level reshuffle within its first year, contributed to a lack of agency cohesion and identity. This has prevailed and metastasized, repressing the foundation of a TSA brand.

TSA successes often require secrecy. Consideration should be given to declassifying some of the positive results of TSA operations that would not reveal sources and methods impacting future operations and safety. The intended results would improve the public's understanding of the criticality of the TSA mission, the complex role TSA employees play in our national security, and would enhance TSA reputation.

TSA has not been afforded the same levels of respect as other DHS components, such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement, United States Border Patrol, and the U.S. Coast Guard. The establishment of recognized standards through a TSA National Academy should put TSA on par with its DHS counterparts in regards to the respect given to TSA federal authority. Once accomplished, TSA authority and policy will less likely be challenged in the courts by individual states, as their legitimacy rises to the same level given to their DHS brethren.

For multiple reasons discussed herein, TSA was not availed the opportunity to establish itself and build its trademark brand. The establishment of a TSA National Academy is perhaps the most expeditious and cost effective mechanism for correcting this drastic mistake.

The compounding and worsening of this now pervasive misperception of the TSA mission will not be corrected overnight. However, once the TSA Academy is operational, change and improvement will accelerate exponentially as TSA personnel are redeployed to perform their essential mission with renewed focus and enthusiasm born of a common recognized national standard and expectation.

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