



# Fact Sheet

August 9, 2007

## Secure Flight

### History

In response to the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 and recommendations from the 9/11 Commission, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) created Secure Flight to take over passenger prescreening from airlines. This new process will be more effective, efficient, and consistent, offering improvements in both security and customer service for the traveling public. TSA expects Secure Flight to add a vital layer of security to our nation's commercial air transportation system while maintaining the privacy of passenger information.

### Overview

Secure Flight is a passenger prescreening program that will match limited passenger information against government watch lists for domestic and international air travelers. The goal of Secure Flight is to provide enhanced watch list matching capabilities to identify individuals that may pose a known or suspected threat to aviation or national security and subject them to secondary screening, law enforcement interview, or prohibition from boarding an aircraft, as appropriate. The Secure Flight program, as envisioned in the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, intends to:

- Identify known and suspected terrorists;
- Prevent individuals on the No Fly List from entering the sterile area of an airport;
- Identify individuals on the Selectee List for enhanced screening,
- Facilitate passenger air travel; and
- Protect individuals privacy

### How Secure Flight Works

When passengers book their reservations with their airline, the airline will request a small amount of data, some required some optional (see below). This data will be transmitted to TSA via a highly-secure system so that the agency can determine if the passenger is a known or suspected terrorist or a legitimate traveler. By providing this information, TSA believes that passengers will greatly reduce their chance of being misidentified as an individual on a watch list.

### Required Information

In the Secure Flight NPRM, TSA is proposing to collect the following data elements:

- Full Name (aircraft operator must collect it and passenger must provide it)
- Itinerary (aircraft operator must provide it)
- Date of Birth (aircraft operator must request it but it is optional for passenger to provide)
- Gender (aircraft operator must request it but it is optional for passenger to provide)
- Redress Number (aircraft operator must request it but it is optional for passenger to provide, if available)

While some data elements would be optional for the passenger to provide, as proposed in the NPRM, it would be to the passenger's advantage to provide the requested data elements as doing so may prevent delays or inconveniences at the airport. Particularly for those individuals who have similar names to those on the watch lists, failure to provide the additional information will likely result in inconvenience. For example, a terrorist named John Smith with a birthday of 01/01/76 is on the no-fly list. Legitimate travelers named John Smith providing date of birth and other optional information are much less likely to be misidentified as the individual on the no-fly list.

TSA is requesting comment on the data elements through the rulemaking process to determine whether date of birth and gender should be mandatory data elements, and will consider all comments received. TSA will not collect or use commercial data to conduct Secure Flight watch list matching.

### **How the System Works Today**

Today TSA provides airlines with copies of the watch lists and dozens of airlines check reservations against those lists using unique systems and with varying degrees of efficiency. When an individual appears to be on a list, the airline calls TSA to manually determine if the individual, typically waiting at the ticket counter, is in fact the individual on the watch list. This process, while effective in keeping known and suspected terrorists off airplanes, is much less efficient and effective than Secure Flight will be when implemented.

### **Secure Flight Benefits**

As proposed, Secure Flight would streamline and simplify the watch list matching process by moving watch list matching responsibilities currently performed by dozens of air carriers to TSA. This would create consistency for the traveler and help prevent passenger misidentification. Moving the watch list matching function to TSA allows airlines to focus on their core mission and TSA to focus on ours. In addition, by assuming the watch list matching function, TSA would be able to more effectively and consistently prevent certain known or suspected terrorists from boarding aircraft where they may jeopardize the lives of passengers and others. Furthermore, TSA would be able to better focus enhanced passenger screening efforts on individuals likely to pose a threat to civil aviation. Finally, TSA would be able to facilitate the secure and efficient travel of the vast majority of the traveling public by distinguishing them from individuals on the watch list.

### **Traveler Data**

TSA will collect the minimum amount of personal information necessary to conduct effective watch list matching. Secure Flight does NOT assign a score to individuals, use commercial data, or predict behavior.

### **Secure Flight Rollout**

TSA is issuing a Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) for the Secure Flight program. TSA will test the program and consider public comments on the Secure Flight NPRM before issuing a final rule and implementing the program. TSA plans to begin implementing Secure Flight in 2008.

### **Future Milestones**

- Publish the Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA)
- Publish the System of Records Notice (SORN)
- Publish the Secure Flight Final Rule

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