

112TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 174

Expressing the sense of the Senate that effective sharing of passenger information from inbound international flight manifests is a crucial component of our national security and that the Department of Homeland Security must maintain the information sharing standards required under the 2007 Passenger Name Record Agreement between the United States and the European Union.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 9, 2011

Mr. LIEBERMAN (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, and Mrs. FEINSTEIN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

MAY 12, 2011

Reported by Mr. LIEBERMAN, without amendment

MAY 18, 2011

Considered and agreed to with an amended preamble

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Senate that effective sharing of passenger information from inbound international flight manifests is a crucial component of our national security and that the Department of Homeland Security must maintain the information sharing standards required under the 2007 Passenger Name Record Agreement between the United States and the European Union.

Whereas the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States—

(1) found that “[t]argeting travel is at least as powerful a weapon against terrorists as targeting their money”; and

(2) recommended that the United States “combine terrorist travel intelligence, operations, and law enforcement in a strategy to intercept terrorist, find terrorist travel facilitators, and constrain terrorist mobility”;

Whereas terrorists continue to target international travel to the United States, as evidenced by Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab’s attempt to detonate a bomb on board Northwest Airlines Flight 253 on December 25, 2009, en route from Amsterdam to Detroit;

Whereas Congress responded to the attacks of September 11, 2001, by mandating that all air carriers flying into the United States provide passenger name record (referred to in this resolution as “PNR”) data concerning all inbound passengers to U.S. Customs and Border Protection to assist the Department of Homeland Security in fulfilling its missions of protecting the border and enhancing border security;

Whereas there is bipartisan agreement on the need to collect and share passenger travel data, which—

(1) has served as a cornerstone for interdicting terrorists by the administrations of President Barack Obama and former President George W. Bush; and

(2) continues to fulfill the mandate for increased information sharing set by Congress in—

(A) the Aviation and Transportation Security Act (Public Law 107–71);

(B) the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (Public Law 108–458);

(C) the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007 (Public Law 110–53); and

(D) other laws requiring information sharing internationally and within the United States Government to promote greater security;

Whereas the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007 required nations to enter into information sharing agreements with the United States in order to qualify for the United States visa waiver program;

Whereas security and intelligence experts recognize that—

(1) advance information about travelers is a critical tool in identifying high-risk passengers; and

(2) the intelligence gained from the analysis of passenger travel data is critical for—

(A) protecting the United States against terrorists entering the United States; and

(B) preventing terrorists from boarding international flights bound for the United States;

Whereas the Agreement Between the United States of America and the European Union on the Processing and Transfer of Passenger Name Record (PNR) Data by Air Carriers to the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS), done at Brussels and Washington on July 23 and 26, 2007 (referred to in this resolution as the “EU-U.S. PNR Agreement”)—

(1) succeeded a series of agreements between 2002 and October 2006;

(2) was intended to remain in effect until 2014; and

(3) complied with European Union and United States privacy laws by providing assurances that the United States would use PNR data for limited purposes;

Whereas PNR data gathered pursuant to the EU-U.S. PNR Agreement has been used to identify and arrest a number of dangerous terrorists, including—

(1) David Headley, who was planning an attack on Denmark and who contributed to the tragedy in Mumbai; and

(2) Faisal Shahzad, who was attempting to flee the country after attempting to set off a car-bomb in Times Square.

Whereas PNR data has been used to prevent the travel of many other individuals considered to be national security threats or otherwise inadmissible to the United States;

Whereas the privacy protections in the current EU-U.S. PNR Agreement are robust, and a February 2010 joint review by both signatories found no privacy violations, misuse, or injury from the collection of PNR data by the Department of Homeland Security;

Whereas although the United States and the European Union have different governing mechanisms that lead to differences in how oversight is conducted, both governments have a firm commitment to the protection of data and the respect of individual privacy;

Whereas in February 2011, the European Commission proposed that the European Union create its own PNR system in order to identify potential terrorists and other dangerous criminals;

Whereas in 2010, the Washington Post—

(1) recognized the important role that PNR data plays in securing international aviation; and

(2) recommended that data sharing should not be restricted without demonstrating specific problems with the operation of current agreement: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) acknowledges the grave threat posed by ter-
3 rorists and other dangerous criminals who seek to
4 exploit international aviation to do harm to our
5 countries;

6 (2) urges the Department of Homeland Secu-
7 rity to reject any efforts by the European Union to
8 modify existing PNR data sharing mechanisms in a
9 way that would degrade the usefulness of the PNR
10 data for identifying terrorists and other dangerous
11 criminals;

12 (3) urges the Department of Homeland Secu-
13 rity to not enter into any agreement that would im-
14 pose European oversight structures on the United
15 States; and

16 (4) opposes any effort by the European Union
17 to interfere with counterterrorism cooperation and
18 information sharing between the Department of
19 Homeland Security and non-European countries.

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