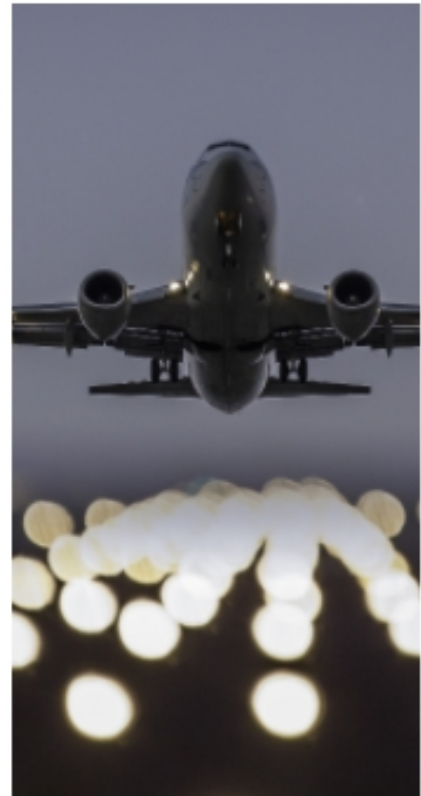




BOMB THREATS, AIR TRAFFIC DISRUPTIONS - HAVE A PLAN AND BE PREPARED - SECURITY EXPERT' ADVISES

News / Airlines, Airports / Routes



Around a hundred of airports were evacuated numerous times over a week in France. Travelers' reactions, sometimes surprising. Air traffic disruptions, flight cancellations, delays, lost connections. How to react, how to do our best to ensure safety and continue flying in complete security and confidence.

If it's a question of air travel safety, I always can get the expert' opinion reaching out to SAFESky Managing Director Frederick Reitz.

T.O. Today, Rick, I am reaching out to you as a safety expert. Due to the situation, we're living actually in France, and I guess a bit everywhere in the world. There is a new national sport in France – to call authorities and report a bomb in the airport. Even small airports lived that last week for three times, I guess... I am not talking about big airports. Behind a lot of law enforcement work to find those guys. If it's serious, if it's not, then the justice and so. But let's talk from travelers' point of view it's a panic. Even for work, I have no clue if we can travel now in France: because you never know when you can fly, will you fly... It's a total disaster for airports, for people traveling, for airlines. From your expert point of view, what do we do, how do we keep close to normal?

F.R. The unfortunate thing is that once somebody does it, other people see it. It becomes a copycat thing. So, people are calling in for a bomb threat for a couple of reasons. One - it's a psychological impact, as you said, on the customers, to put fear in people. That's what the terrorists want. They want you to be afraid of. It also affects the operation, and it scares everybody else when they don't know what to expect. What I would share with the travelers is, as you and I have talked about in the past, we must be aware that, first, there is a chance that somebody could do it to disrupt the system. We need to be cautious. The government and the airlines must react as if it's real because they must be careful. You can't just say it is not real and something will happen. But we have to mitigate the threats. There are a couple of things they will do before they even evacuate the airport. In your case in France, they've already identified that all the threats are coming from the same email. It'll be almost impossible to find the person because people can use different forwarding tasks. People need to be vigilant. When you arrive at the airport, if you see something that looks out of the ordinary, a suspicious object or suspicious people, then let somebody with the airport authority know. If everybody keeps their eyes open, the terror won't be able to do something stupid. It's only when we get too relaxed and ignore them that they can do something. We need to be listening to what's going on and pay attention. If they do say to evacuate the airport, do it in an orderly fashion because more people get hurt.

As you see, every time there's a serious incident, people panic, rush out and knock other people down. We want to leave the airport calmly and together. And I always recommend, if you're with family members or other people, say, hey, I'll see you outside, or have a meeting place. What is the plan? Where are we going to go and go out? Listen, it's going to be just an inconvenience, a delay. Everybody's going to have to go back through security. You can expect that any plane that's not pushed off the gate will have to be deplaned, and everybody go back through security.

T.O. One of first evacuations I lived waiting for my husband flying back to France. And of course, at the departure airport, it was announced that due to security issue at the destination airport, they have no idea when the plane will fly. So, it's a panic everywhere. But what I've seen, and this is something I still don't understand, people getting mad that they have to evacuate. At this moment, they don't care. They just want to fly. I have no idea why people don't understand It's not joke. Even if it is, we can't act like it's not serious. What should we do? How normal passengers should react? There are a lot of incidents like that.

F.R. The first thing, let's start with if you're on the plane and there's a bomb threat and you see something on the plane suspicious, don't pick it up. Believe it or not, people have done that. They've brought something to the front of the plane. I don't know if you remember, there was actually a shoe bomb and the flight attendants got it from the passenger back in the day and took it to the cockpit and pilots were holding it and they realized it was an explosive in a shoe. So don't touch it, don't pick it up. If you're in flight, move a couple of seats away. Six, seven seats away

from it. The flight attendants are trained to move the people away from it. If you're at the airport, also, don't pick it up. If you see something looks suspicious, call the police. Call the airport authorities and say, hey, that looks suspicious to me. But don't pick it up and carry it to them. That would be the worst thing. And I know it's an inconvenience, and I know you don't want to leave the airport but getting mad isn't going to change it. It's not the gate agent's fault, it's not the pilot's fault, it is not the flight attendant's fault. The government and local authorities must take it seriously for just that one chance that some terrorist does want to really hurt somebody.

T.O. Another side of the story, as I have a lot of friends, family working at the airport. Situations like that, it's a huge stress for all airport people. They have been trained. I guess since some decades we all were thinking that everything is OK, and this is somewhere, but not here. Now it's here. What do you suggest doing to all companies is dealing with airport staff? Should they immediately proceed with a special training or something? It is huge additional stress for airport people.

F.R. I mean, that's a good point. We talked before. Every airline employee gets annual security awareness training. But I think when things like this happen, it's like the COVID and the mask. We need to have extra training. We need to talk to them, even if it's just a briefing. Reassure them that you're there to help them. That you are going to take it seriously. Here's what we're going to do. I had a meeting about two weeks ago with the city of Atlanta Airport, and I mentioned the same thing. They had a stabbing at the airport and the employees froze. Nobody had ever seen that. And I said, you know what we need to do is whenever anything unusual like that happens at an airport, have a plan. So, what's the plan? Employees need to protect themselves and get away from the ticket counters and gates. But they also need to look out for the passengers and start getting them to get away.

Everybody wants to film the incidents. Get back. Get away. Yes. Start shouting. Get away. Don't put yourself in danger. Don't watch the incident. It is amazing. And I'll give you another example. We did an active shooter scenario one time in an office building, and people got up to look out the windows of the office building when they heard the shots fired. I tell everybody, when you hear something, when you see something, get away from it. Get away from the scene. To protect yourself and your family.

T.O. Do you think that it's the negative impact of social media? I've seen that many times, people are filming without thinking even a second about security!

F.R. Putting yourself at risk, if you're filming a violent person who's already upset, you could become the target of their anger when they see you filming them. So that's one reason I wouldn't do it. And number two, if you're filming, you're not paying attention to your surroundings. You need to be paying attention how you're going to get away from the scene and keep and keep yourself safe.

T.O. Do you think that everything what is done to break the system will have negative impact on air travel?

F.R. Some people are going to get tired of it and not fly until it slows down. But I think businesspeople and people like yourself that have places to go, we still need to travel, and I'm not afraid to travel and encourage it. All you have is to be prepared, for the potential interruptions and the delays. Eventually it's going to get old for whoever's calling it in and maybe they'll make a mistake and get caught and that would be great. But if they catch the one person, there's always going to be somebody else that's watching and thinking, I'll do that also and may call.

T.O. My last question for today – I've seen in the news- a plane coming from Israel was attacked in Dagestan airport. I was shocked. We talked so much about airport security, all

the security you must pass to get close to the airfield. And when you see something like that, the only question is how? Where the security was? How should the crew and passengers react in situations like that?

F.R. it's not the first time it's happened. It happened in Sri Lanka too. What happens? Imagine the airport in Sri Lanka. Terrorists stormed the airport, so they overwhelmed the security guards at the checkpoints. They overwhelmed all the airport staff. If there was that many people and it was a terrible incident, I saw some of the videos, you just overwhelmed security. There's nothing they can do. We're not prepared. You got to commend the crew and the airport staff that protected the passengers and hid them away from the violent protesters that were looking for them. I think that's complement to their training and preparedness. But nobody would have ever thought that was going to happen. We're always reactive in the airline business, right. So, the airports are going to react and beef up security. But I think you must also be prepared, too, because yes, a mob can overrun security checkpoints.

T.O. So we are back to square one, I guess that with everything that is happening. We must proceed with additional training for everyone, in fact, even for people traveling. Social media is great, but I guess being secure is more important than post something on Twitter or at X Now. I really admire the work people are doing at all airports and how they react. What I suggest that people responsible for that should proceed with additional now. Just because we are not sure that this situation will end in a week. If we must be prepared to live it for a while, I would be very grateful if the staff responsible for air travel and passengers as well would be prepared and not just react in the best way possible.

F.R. We can't let the terrorists win, but we must keep each other safe. That's very important.

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