
"Airport and Aviation Security: U.S. Policy and Strategy in the Age of Global Terrorism," Bartholomew Elias, (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2010)

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pp. 125-127

Recommended Citation

Roberts, Mark. "'Airport and Aviation Security: U.S. Policy and Strategy in the Age of Global Terrorism,' Bartholomew Elias, (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2010)." *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 2 (2011): : 125-127.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.4.2.10>

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jss/vol4/iss2/11>



***Airport and Aviation Security: U.S. Policy and Strategy in the Age of Global Terrorism.* By Bartholomew Elias. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2010. ISBN 978-1-4200-7029-3. Figures. Tables. Index. References Cited. Pp. xxvii, 411. \$82.95.**

Bartholomew Elias' *Airport and Aviation Security* is a welcome addition to a field crowded with quickly assembled, poorly researched textbooks. The author is an aviation policy specialist for the Congressional Research Service (CRS) and also served as an investigator on the National Transportation Safety Board and a research psychologist for the U.S. Air Force. For the layperson attempting to understand the depth and breadth of aviation security, this is the solid foundation they need to begin (as an overview, the book is spot on). However, the book's shortcomings emerge as the author attempts to flesh out details. Although a deeply flawed work, this book at present is the definitive work on its topic, standing head and shoulders above competitors.

The book is an ambitious undertaking, vast in scope but perhaps a bit more than the author should have attempted to take on. The research is thorough and at times painstaking, drawing on a wide variety of source material, much of which is solid, but some of which is biased, detracting from the book's credibility. The book's main strength lies in its outline. The author provides the history of aviation security before the events of September 11, 2001 (9/11) to present the last few years in proper context. He accurately depicts 9/11, the U.S. response, and challenges the Bush Administration had to confront. However, the author fails to mention, even in passing, political interests in the policy and strategy arenas that have more to do with personal and political gain than national security. For example, former Senate Majority Leader Thomas Daschle (D-SD) pushed aggressively for federalization of the previously airline-contracted screener workforce, stating "when you federalize, you professionalize." His wife, a former Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Deputy Administrator, was at that time a lobbyist for the airline industry, attempting to save the airlines money by bringing about a federalization of the screener workforce. An acknowledgement of this dynamic would have provided much-needed context for decisions made at the time.

Elias' treatment of the 9/11 Commission even-handedly illustrates the tests of refining policy in the face of an evolving terrorist threat whose full

capabilities were still shrouded in mystery. Changes to the aviation policy landscape emerged in the forms of the National Strategy for Aviation Security (NSAS) and the Air Domain Surveillance and Intelligence Integration (ADSII) plan. However, the author regurgitates doctrinal statements about them rather than explaining their importance, impact, and the changes they brought about in the aviation security landscape. While the author on the whole accurately describes policy and security dilemmas, he detracts from his own credibility by citing as authoritative sources numerous reports from the Government Accountability Office (GAO). GAO is the Congressional investigative arm; the outcomes and conclusions of their reports are often predetermined before the interviews and research take place.

In his discussion of risk management, the author omits (either willfully or out of ignorance) the risk management approach utilized for many years, which views transportation security as a "system of systems" to avoid a single point of failure. His out-of-date understanding of the current security dynamic describes *in the now* many recommendations for the already years-old 911 Commission report, which have been addressed and corrected well before this book went to press. Throughout the risk management section, the author gives hypothetical risk assessments devoid of reality. This ivory-towered approach decreases his credibility and that of his work. As he undertakes a crucial and much-needed discussion of intelligence and counter-terrorism information, the author speaks more from a theoretical perspective than one informed by practical experience. His descriptions of the intelligence landscape throughout the section are outdated by four or even five years and rely on information that lost its currency and relevance well before the book even went to press. He often describes in future tense something that already occurred. Once again, his reliance on politically motivated GAO reports lessens his objectivity and credibility.

In his discussion of passenger and baggage screening, the author omits mention (again, either willfully or out of ignorance) of the ongoing and very fluid dynamic of how the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) must prevent the entry of terrorists and explosives into the aviation system in spite of incessant pressure from the airlines to reduce wait times. This failure to address 1) passenger security, 2) concerns for civil rights/civil liberties, and 3) airline preoccupation with potential lost revenue due to passenger wait times indicates the author has little comprehension of the multiple, interactive dynamics of how governmental security, legal protections, and commercial profit margins all intersect in the aviation security system. His descriptions of passenger and baggage-screening employ biased GAO reports that are outdated and outline issues

that have not been current for many years and were corrected before the book went to press. The author also analyzes as current screening procedures that were already out-of-date when the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) came into being in 2003. Proceeding from his academic orientation, he fails to understand the multiple actors in an airport's operating environment by applying a "one size fits all" standard to all 450 federalized airports. While broadly stating that the TSA should be more efficient, he offers no suggestions or solutions regarding how to be less inefficient.

The book is a solid introduction to myriad topics for the beginner. However, aviation security, aviation security policy, intelligence, terrorism, cargo, general aviation, and risk are all wide-ranging categories in and of themselves. For more in-depth understanding of a given discipline, the reader would need to seek sources specializing in the particular category desired. The broad scope of the book is useful in outlining how many issues are interwoven to construct the "system of systems" that comprises the aviation security infrastructure. However, the author's second-guessing approach is less helpful in that the field is already crowded with Monday-morning quarterbacks. Many of his broad brush strokes are uninformed conjecture that only muddy an already contentious issue rather than clarify it. In addition, much of the material was dated before the book went to press, which decreases its relevance. The book is descriptive in nature, parroting broad shibboleths and worn tirades that offer little in the way of practical solutions to very real problems. For this reason, its use is to introduce the set of aviation issues to the newcomer, not resolve them for the policy and decision-maker.

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