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Center for Homeland Defense and Security

Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California

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# Fletcher Helps Steer Risk-Based Security at TSA

 [chds.us/c/item/814](http://chds.us/c/item/814)

Kenneth Fletcher may be the American air traveler's next best friend, whether they realize it or not.

The 2011 Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS) master's degree graduate was promoted in June with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to be the new Deputy Assistant Administrator in the Office of Risk Based Security.

The recently established office is a manifestation of the agency's move away from a one-size-fits-all approach to security with an emphasis on finding objects, and the negative public perception that goes with it, to a risk-based security model that gauges a traveler's risk before they get to the airport. Currently, about 1.8 million passengers are screened daily by TSA.



"The responsibility of the office, and what I will be helping the Assistant Administrator move forward, is coordinating the implementation of the agency's risk-based security strategy in aviation as well as in other transportation modes," Fletcher said from his Washington, D.C., office.

For the average traveler, the shift to a risk-based approach should mean greater airport ease through DHS trusted traveler programs including the TSA Pre-Check and Custom Border Protection Global Entry programs implemented to expedite the security process. The two programs enable passengers to clear passenger screening with less physical scrutiny by applying for and undergoing a security evaluation beforehand.

TSA has set an ambitious schedule to implement the new approach. Three years ago, before the agency began considering the risk-based tack, fewer than one in 1,000 people accessed expedited screening, most of them in law enforcement, Fletcher said. Currently, one in 10 air travelers receive expedited screening and TSA has set a goal of 25 percent of air passengers enjoying expedited screening by the end of 2013 and up to 50 percent by the end of 2014.

"It is almost back to the pre-9/11 level of physical scrutiny," Fletcher said. "We have done some prescreening and have made judgments about the risk a traveler poses. The ramp is pretty steep. It is very exciting to fundamentally change the underpinnings of aviation security in place for the last decade plus."

While Americans are likely to warmly embrace walking through airport checkpoints without removing shoes, small liquids and light jackets, sustaining the program requires cooperation with the airlines, airports, and international community.

"The vast majority of threats targeting aviation have emanated from overseas," Fletcher observed. "Not only can strengthen aviation security, we can do it in a way that improves passenger travels, that can raise international standards and that buys down risk."

Along with developing policy, Fletcher will be part of maturing the nascent Office of Risk Based Security by filling positions with qualified professionals and developing the infrastructure to sustain the office.

As he takes on the new job's challenges Fletcher can point to an abundance of CHDS concepts that will be readily applicable. Among them would be the interagency cooperation needed to accomplish TSA's goals and course work such as strategic planning, technology, critical infrastructure protection and intelligence for homeland security.

"Every aspect of the CHDS curriculum will be important in some shape or form as well as the friendships I made as I reach out to people and industry and across government to get different perspectives on topics that may be pending," Fletcher said. "I am not sure there is a course I took that I haven't applied something I learned from the program to my job."

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