

From the Cockpit  
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### **What is being done to make sure air cargo is safe on both cargo airlines & passenger carriers?**

According to the General Accounting office (GAO), 22% of cargo in the US is shipped aboard passenger aircraft. Unlike checked baggage, cargo is not physically inspected. It is processed in compliance with a "known shipper program", which prevents airlines from carrying cargo unless it comes from a known source. Packages weighing less than 16 ounces are not subject to any security measures.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is in the process of developing its first-ever air cargo strategic plan. The plan includes many recommendations made in the aftermath of the bombing of Pan Am 103 in 1988 and focuses on three key components: beefing-up the known shipper program, pre-screening of suspicious cargo combined with targeted inspections and the continued aggressive development of technology, including Explosives Detection Systems (EDS), Explosives Trace Detection (ETD), x-rays and canine detection teams.

This month, Boston's Logan became the first airport in the country to test electronic screening of bulk cargo stowed on commercial flights. Results of the initial 30-day test period will be shared with the TSA as it continues to develop methodology.

Recently, the TSA was called to task when a man shipped himself by air inside a crate from New York to Dallas. He went completely undetected by federal authorities, highlighting the need for more stringent protocols for air cargo security.

Concerns about the lack of real inspection of cargo placed in the belly of passenger aircraft were raised during a hearing held by the House Aviation Subcommittee on October 16, 2003. There is also proposed legislation, put forth by Rep. Ed Markey (D-MA) that would end the practice of allowing unscreened, un-inspected packages from being placed in the hold of passenger planes. Markey has been an outspoken advocate of universal cargo inspections. Check out his website at [www.house.gov/markey](http://www.house.gov/markey).

Captain Jay Norelius, Chairman of the Allied Pilots Association National Security Committee points out that Europe is already leading the US in cargo screening and inspection. His committee's advice to both government and air carriers is to set up an established deadline for implementation, include congressional oversight and require that "all cargo regardless of what airplane it is on must be inspected (that is, "what" is in the box), rather than merely screened by the currently inadequate TSA-embraced "unknown shipper program" which is mainly a paperwork drill which was never designed to determine what is in any box."

<http://www.house.gov/transportation/aviation/10-16-03/10-16-03memo.html>  
<http://www.capapilots.org/>

**The story in last Sunday's Register about the last flight of the Concorde on October 24 mentioned the cold-war era "race" between the US, England/France and Russia, to build a supersonic transport. So who won the race? Was Concorde the first supersonic airliner to fly?**

No. The Russian-built Tupolev-144 made its maiden flight on December 31, 1968, three months before Concorde. The TU-144 could hold 40 more passengers and was slightly faster, but had less range and used more fuel than Concorde.

Dubbed "Concordski" by the media due to the copycat nature of its design, only 17 TU-144s, including 1 prototype, were built. There were 16 production and 4 prototype Concorde's built, 14 of which went on sale to Air France and British Airways.

After several crashes and many problems, the TU-144 was grounded in 1985, although it did fly again as an airborne laboratory in the 1990s when Boeing and NASA partnered with Tupolev to research supersonic flight.

Right now, there are no plans for a supersonic successor to follow in the wake of these Mach-2-plus, delta-winged beauties.

<http://www.gizmohighway.com/pages/history/tu-144.htm>

**Why are there so many Christmas-colored lights and letter/number signs and markings on the airport? It's all pretty confusing when one looks out the window. Is there a simple way to explain what the lights mean or how they're used? Do pilots need maps to get around on the ground?**

Yes, pilots do use charts, called airport diagrams, to taxi around the surface of the airport. We usually clip the chart to a lighted holder on the control column or the side window for easy reference while taxiing the airplane.

Some airports, like John Wayne Orange County, have one primary runway and few taxiways. But others, like Chicago O'Hare, count several runways and dozens of taxiways. Years ago, taxiways actually had names, much like streets, and unless one was familiar with the airport, getting to the terminal after landing could be a very humbling experience. Busy controllers at airports like O'Hare will not hesitate to send a jet to a holding area, or "penalty box", until pilots are able to figure things out.

[http://www.ohare.com/cnrc/ohare/o\\_noise\\_airport\\_layout\\_ill.shtm](http://www.ohare.com/cnrc/ohare/o_noise_airport_layout_ill.shtm)

The square-shaped signs you see placed at ground level are actually runway and taxiway indicating signs. Airport areas are lighted for nighttime, low visibility and inclement weather operations.

Runways are numbered from the nearest compass bearing rounded off to the nearest 10 degrees. For example, a runway with a compass heading of 350 degrees is numbered 35. These signs have a red background with white inscriptions.

Taxiways are designated by letters or a combination of numbers and letters: A or A9, for instance. Taxiway signs have a yellow background with a black inscription.

Colored lights are used to identify different areas, buildings or obstructions at airports:

- Blue lights outline taxiways.
- White lights outline runways.
- Green lights identify taxiway centerlines and approach end of runways.
- Red lights mark obstructions and runway ends.
- Amber lights identify hold bars, or areas that require permission from the control tower to cross.