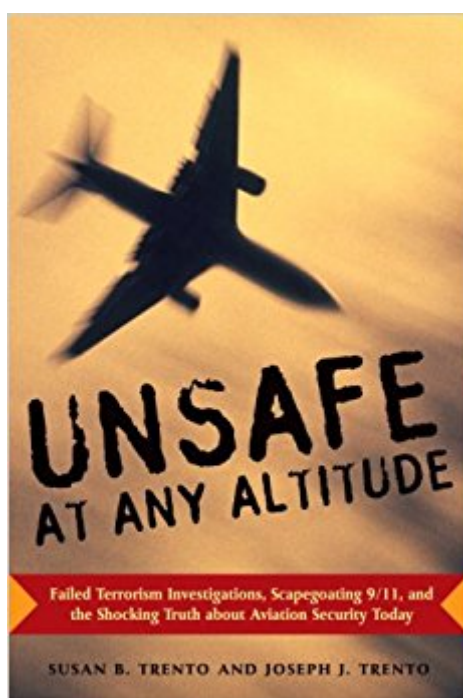


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# Unsafe At Any Altitude: Failed Terrorism Investigations, Scapegoating 9/11, And The Shocking Truth About Aviation Security Today



## Synopsis

If you think you are safe getting on a plane in the United States . . . THINK AGAIN. Unsafe at Any Altitude reveals for the first time: That Saudi intelligence, on which the United States relied for information about Al Qaeda, was penetrated by the terrorist group long before 9/11. Information provided by the Saudis lulled the president and his team into believing they had Al Qaeda under meaningful watch. What the 9/11 Commission did not share with the public, including the probability that weapons were put on planes in advance by exploiting security vulnerabilities at airports. To this day, while passengers are forced to stand in line, hundreds of thousands of airport workers remain unsearched and unscreened. How the White House and Justice Department created a diversion to place blame for the 9/11 attacks and avoid the wrath of the American people. How a partnership the United States made in the 1980s with Iran and Hezbollah terrorists who killed and kidnapped hundreds of Americans and hijacked our planes contributed to a sequence of events that made 9/11 possible. That the FBI, CIA, NSA, and Department of Homeland Security refuse to give the airlines an accurate no-fly list, thereby allowing the world's most threatening terrorists to continue to fly. Unsafe at Any Altitude will help readers tell the difference between the eye candy of sharp uniforms on federal officers and what would amount to effective security at our airports. We may be less safe flying today than we were before 9/11, and we have spent billions of dollars in tax money going backward. Unsafe at Any Altitude goes behind the scenes at our nation's airports and penetrates the government to paint a picture of a Transportation Security Administration that is remarkably inept, and reveals the great lengths that U.S. carriers and their lobbyists have gone in order to make certain that serious airline security has not been instituted in this country. Susan and Joseph Trento also trace the evolution of security failures along a continuum that led directly to 9/11: the hijackings of passenger jets to Cuba decades ago, Iran- Contra, Hezbollah's bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, its hijacking of TWA flight 847, the Pan Am Flight 103 Lockerbie tragedy. These and numerous other episodes exposed vulnerabilities in our nation's policies and practices that we failed to heed. 9/11 has resulted in the creation of massive new law enforcement bureaucracies and programs, and a sense of vigilance has certainly arisen among the American public. The Trentos' disturbing investigation reveals, however, that many key aspects of what went wrong on 9/11 have never been carefully examined, rendering meaningful reform impossible. For instance, the TSA was created to replace the low-wage private screeners who once guarded our airports. But no investigative body, including the 9/11 Commission, has ever concluded that the private screening firms contributed to 9/11 by failing to do their jobs, and this book reveals for the

first time the breathtaking story of the Bush administration's concerted effort to deflect blame onto those private companies. Inspired by the belief that true vigilance is impossible without an honestly informed citizenry, *Unsafe at Any Altitude* shines the bright light of truth on past and present practices that have remained in the dark for far too long.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

THE BOOK THAT REVEALED THE NO-FLY LIST ON 60 MINUTES"An important new book, *Unsafe at Any Altitude*, highlights a number of glaring holes in aviation security that were supposed to have been plugged after the 9/11 attacks and the creation of the Transportation Security Administration." — U.S. News & World Report "Susan and Joseph Trento, who have used the lens of investigative journalism to write several books on the ins and outs of federal government, spend most of their latest book, 'Unsafe at Any Altitude,' outlining in great and captivating detail every...possible omission and profit-tinged venture that keep our airports and our planes open to terrorism... They write that the major problem with airport security both before and since Sept. 11 lies not with the screener on the ground but with the country's 'sloppy and arrogant' intelligence agencies and the way they fail to properly collect information and communicate with one another... 'Unsafe at Any Altitude' tracks the contradiction between the governmental line on terrorism and real-world politics and commerce...'Unsafe at Any Altitude' makes a very convincing argument that, despite all the money and attention spent in the last five years, our airport security system remains porous...[A] persuasive argument of a book." — Los Angeles Times "The authors - she's a

former congressional staffer, he's a former CNN reporter- say five years after 9/11, no-fly lists are out of date, [and] mismanaged. The book takes readers behind the scenes at big-city airports and inside what they term 'the remarkably inept' Transportation Security Administration. " — The Boston Herald

Susan B. Trento is an author and journalist who began her career on staffs in the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives. In Congress she was the youngest chief of staff of a Congressional office at the time. Her investigations into space shuttle safety issues led to her coauthoring *Prescription for Disaster*, a history of NASA leading up to the Challenger disaster. She also co-authored *Widows*, a history of counterintelligence. Her book *Power House*, about the lobbying and public relations industries in Washington, was compared by critics to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and Jessica Mitford's *American Way of Death*, because it looked at the issue of lobbying and influence peddling in a revolutionary way. She also has taught graduate writing at American University's School of Communication. She cofounded in 2000 and is the managing partner of Film and Ink Productions, which has produced four books. Joseph J. Trento is the author of six nonfiction books and an internationally known investigative reporter for over thirty-five years, and he has been a correspondent for CNN's investigative unit. He now serves as the president of the Public Education Center, a nonpartisan and nonprofit foundation that conducts investigative reporting on environmental and national security matters. He is the author or co-author of numerous books on national security and intelligence issues, including *Prescription for Disaster*, *Widows*, *The Secret History of the CIA*, and *Prelude to Terror*.

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the country was looking for a scapegoat so the government, under the guise of the newly created Homeland Security Department, served up Richard Argenbright of the eponymous Argenbright Securities. The only problems were that he no longer owned the company at the time of the hijackings and the terrorists carried on items that were still considered legal (boxcutters) to implement their plans. Today, many years later, TSA struggles to catch 50% of the material now prohibited while charging the Federal government (read: taxpayers) billions. The private, pre-9/11 screeners routinely caught 85 - 90% of all prohibited material while charging the airlines about \$650 million!

This book offers a professional analysis and it brings the aviation terrorism phenomenon into the front of the stage, by highlighting some evidence regarding some of the major aviation terrorism

incidents of the past decades. As an academic researcher of aviation terrorism, this book certainly may be useful for those who are interested in the 'story behind the story'. Dr. Hillel Avihai

Although the idea for this book is good, it is written in a very disjointed way. Chapters have little relevance to each other and have large gaps in the timeline the authors have tried to write about. Verges on a long rant. Too much like a government conspiracy book than a piece of analytical non-fiction.

I'm almost finished with this book, and may not bother. When I saw the title I expected a critique of airport security procedures, which are window dressing to make the traveling public think something is being done to keep us safe in the air. But most of the book is a defense of Frank Argonbrecht & Argonbrecht security. I had forgotten about questions raised about the screeners after September 11 until I read this book. It's a little heavy on the conspiracy theory for my taste. I suppose that the information about the Lebanese man who was in league with the terrorists while convincing the Reagan administration he was on our side was interesting, but that was not why I read this book. For a better analysis of security, read Gavin de Becker.

I saw the advance publicity for the "60 Minutes" report last night and went out to get a copy of "Unsafe at any Altitude," the book the report was based on. Not only did this book's authors, Susan and Joseph Trento, obtain the copy of the no-fly list that "60 Minutes" used as the basis of its report, but that list is only one of many interesting revelations as this book explores how flawed our aviation security system is.

It costs a lot for responsible government officials to play the game: Don't blame me don't blame you -- blame that fellow behind the tree. The authors tell you how that game was played in response to 9/11. And because this billion dollar game was played with the screeners at airports, the extra billions of dollars spent are not providing any more safety than before 9/11. But the mind set of the post 9/11 air traveling public must make us safer. The passengers now know if they fight for the control of the plane there is a chance for life -- if they don't fight death is certain.

Much of the info in this book is fact. However, assumptions are made to fill in the fact gaps. Even what they call "truth" is sometimes assumption or just plain wrong. The authors offer some ideas on improving airport security, but you have to figure that they have already been considered by the

U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

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