

**Isaac Leshok**  
**Honors US History 2**  
**Mr. Mealy**

**Leshok, John. Telephone interview with the author. Norfolk, Virginia. October 16, 2016**

**Overview:**

John Leshok is an employee in the Federal Aviation Administration. During the attacks on September 11, 2001 he and his colleagues were directly affected by the concerns of safety in airports and in airplanes. His role in the implementation of additional safety precautions was the inspection and verification of the security and proper installment of the new bulletproof cockpit doors.

**Question (Isaac): Alright so question number one, what is your name?**

Answer (John): Pops

**Question (Isaac): Your real name?**

Answer (John): Oh, John Leshok.

**Question (Isaac): Alright question number two, where did you grow up?**

Answer (John): Dubois, Pennsylvania

**Question (Isaac): Alright and question three, what is your current job title?**

Answer (John): Aviation safety inspector.

**Question (Isaac): Alright and what led you to your career?**

Answer (John): My mechanical ability to work on things that someone could not work on in the back yard i.e working on cars and stuff like that so I decided to go with airplanes.

**Question (Isaac): Alright so that ends like the get your nerves out questions. So question number five, can you describe the extent of airplane and airport security before 9/11?**

Answer (John): Uh say that again.

**Question (Isaac): Can you describe the extent of airplane and airport security before 9/11?**

Answer (John): Well airport security before 9/11 did not have the metal detectors and the capabilities that they're currently have after 9/11. Didn't have to remove your shoes, didn't have to take stuff out of your bag, didn't have to do any type of liquid stuff. So that's all been changed after 9/11. Airplane security. There's codes that are used for ... different codes that are used in

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the event of hijacking and that type of stuff after 9/11 even though they still used them but it's a little different nowadays, and the cockpit doors are bulletproof. Before 9/11 they were not bulletproof

**Question (Isaac): Alright so question number six, what was the initial reaction in the FAA to 9/11?**

Answer (John): The initial reaction was just like every American out there, heartbroken and shocked.

**Question (Isaac): And how long did the shock last?**

Answer (John): I would say to put a time on it, the shock would probably be weeks.

**Question (Isaac): Alright so then before I ask this question i guess, how long did like the first change (wording changed) How long did it take that first change to like get put into place to start amping up security?**

Answer (John): I would say it was right away. Meaning that all the security directives were immediately put in place right away. That it for airport security and also aircraft and uh (mumbled) there many other (unrecognizable word) that took place too with the training of pilots and stuff like that and how that was looked at for foreign pilots coming in and training. So all those things were put into motion right away.

**Question (Isaac): Alright so now with like, was there a big difference with like some changes that were immediately put into place and some that took time to really like get out there?**

Answer (John): Absolutely. Airport security was immediately put into place because that needed to be done right away and that took place immediately...Maybe the process now got better with technology but at the end of the day airport security was beefed up and ramped up right away. The cockpit doors, that took a little time because of manufacturing of the doors and implementation of those doors. So that was a phased approach, and other things were also phased approached. Anything as it relates to aircraft modification would have been in phases.

**Question (Isaac): Alright so you said that your role was inspecting like the cockpit doors right?**

Answer (John): Uh yea, I mean we would definitely... If an AD is, an AD is an airwardness directive, if an airwardness directive is issued on the aircraft for the air carriers and or the company you can call their directive to do something in order to operate the aircraft. We would then go out and inspect the aircraft.

**Question (Isaac): Alright so ... (trouble wording) what would you say like the most important change was or the most needed change was to stop another 9/11 like event from occurring?**

Answer (John): I would say, I would say you know really awareness but the most important, the most needed change, was the security was the of the passengers coming through the airport. And

then it's really awareness of everybody else around. You know, all of the other extra stuff is there just incase someone were to get through like the cockpit doors you know. Not normally anybody would be coming through that would have any type of weapons but if they were to make it then

at least the crew is protected to put the aircraft on the ground safely. But I'd say the most important is the security of passengers coming into the airport and then awareness.

**Question (Isaac): So like before 9/11 did the like flight attendants perform like their security briefing before every flight?**

Answer (John): Yeah, they do it absolutely

**Question (Isaac): Ok and that wasn't a product of 9/11 or that was always a thing?**

Answer (John): Uh yes, that's always

**(technical difficulties recording software on laptop failed to pick up any audio for about a minute so I will just resume where the audio resumes)**

Answer (John): That was done after 9/11 where when the aircraft overnights they actually have to pull up all the seat cushions and they have to be inspected for the first morning departure to make sure there is nothing underneath them. And thats whats called a security inspection. That was not in place prior to 9/11 and is in place after 9/11. And that's something done by you know the flight attendants sometimes do that but the cleaning/ground crew people they do that.

**Question (Isaac): Ok so like are you personally pleased with the changes that were made to amp up security?**

Answer (John): Yeah, I mean any change that increases security for passengers is a benefit. Now I mean of course sometimes some of the changes can be critiqued a little bit and modified a little bit to make them better. But I would say in all, yes. They have all been great.

**Question (Isaac): Ok and (stuttering) whenever a pilot or any sort of person that wants to work in the aviation industry now. Is their training prior to becoming a pilot or a flight attendant different because of 9/11. Like do they have to go through different security measures and stuff?**

Answer (John): Let me think. Well I would say there may be some things within the training program for the pilot that touch on some of the security threats that are out there that they need to

be aware of but in whole the training for the pilots because of 9/11 would only have been enhanced in maybe that area. There have been some enhancements after 9/11 but it was not driven off of 9/11 it was driven off of aircraft accidents not related to 9/11.

**Question (Isaac): Where were most of your airplane doors (meant to say cockpit doors) and these things made. Like where were they made and which part of the country. And were you the one to inspect them after they've been installed or before they've been installed?**

Answer (John): After.

**Question (Isaac): So like what job role would have installed the doors?**

Answer (John): The mechanics and repair stations. The parts would have been flown in from wherever the manufacturer would have made them. Boeing aircrafts is out in Seattle. And there's

other locations. AirBus has facilities all over the world. Some of their stuff is brought in overseas and then shipped here. So I would say all over the United States and the world the parts come in and then they're installed in various repair stations, maintenance facilities through the united states and we just ensure the mechanics that installed the aircraft were properly certified and they did it according to the technical specifications on how they were supposed to put it on the aircraft.

**Question (Isaac): Alright so were the companies like Boeing and Airbus were they blamed for anything or not already having some of these security measures in place?**

Answer (John): No. No there was no fault found on any of the manufacturers of the aircraft. The airplanes were in good shape. They did what they were supposed to do unfortunately it was just at the direction of a terrorist.

**Question (Isaac): Ok and (omitted info)...**

Answer (John): So i think this also if I could add another thing that changed I believe that changed after 9/11 where pilots could carry guns in the cockpit if they owned them.

**Question (Isaac): They are no longer allowed to?**

Answer (John): They can, yes they can.

**Question (Isaac): Oh they can like after 9/11.**

Answer (John): Yes, I don't believe they were carrying guns in the cockpit prior to 9/11 and if the pilot is a gun owner and has gone through all the proper training and the certificates have been issued they can carry guns in the cockpit.

**Question (Isaac): So before 9/11 I assume they didn't have the x-ray machine that they have today where they go through you carry on and make sure that you're allowed to have everything that's in there.**

Answer (John): So there were x-ray machines but as far as with the carry on I believe they've been enhanced to accommodate any type of powder agent, liquid agent, whatever it might be that could be explosive and it would detect all that stuff. So they did have it but i think there was just some additional enhancements.

**Question (Isaac): So with the restrictions on the amount of liquids you're allowed to carry, is there any particular reason why you're only allowed to carry a certain amount of like lotion?**

Answer (John): Yeah and the reason is because they have determined that anything beyond that size could be enough to make a bomb. Anything below that size isn't enough to make anything happen.

**Question (Isaac): Ok and what sort of weapons or anything that could be used to harm somebody else on planes before 9/11?**

Answer (John): Pocket knives were allowed

**Question (Isaac): And do they allow any of these today?**

Answer (John): No. I mean you can't have anything that resembles any type of shape object. You cannot have anything that could be used as a weapon.

**Question (Isaac): Ok so who really implemented the changes with what you just said to figure out what needs to be restricted and how to restrict what allowed of the airplane?**

Answer (John): It's TSA and remember the TSA which is a government agency that was completely created after 9/11. But TSA did not even exist prior to 9/11. It's all part of the homeland security thing. I think that's something George Bush put into place after 9/11. It was Homeland security and then TSA.

**Question (Isaac): So how long did it take to fill the jobs and to get people trained for TSA?**

Answer (John): I'm not apart of that but they were pretty quick about it. They got a large number of folks hired in months and days afterwards and everything was implemented

quickly and they continued to implement more and more folks and hire more and more people throughout the year.

**Question (Isaac): Alright so today if you were to walk into an airport and were to suspect that you were attempting some terrorist scheme... (omitted info) and they were to do some additional security on you what would they look for today compared to before 9/11.**

Answer (John): Well first off if they suspect something they're going to, well if it's to the point where they suspect that much they are going to completely arrest you but there may be an additional screening where they take you and basically ask you a bunch of questions and do some additional looking into your luggage and stuff like that