

Beat: Technology

U.S. tightens overseas airport security on electronics

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USPA News - Some overseas passengers flying to the United States will have to prove their electronics such as cell phones and laptops are working before being allowed to board the aircraft, U.S. officials said on Sunday, the latest sign of increasing concerns about a terrorist plot to blow up an airliner. The U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA) did not say which overseas airports are affected by the enhanced security measures, though British and French airports are known to be among them.

It follows increasing concerns that al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is working on new ways to smuggle explosives onto a U.S.-bound airliner. "As the traveling public knows, all electronic devices are screened by security officers," the TSA said in a brief statement on Sunday. "During the security examination, officers may also ask that owners power up some devices, including cell phones. Powerless devices will not be permitted onboard the aircraft. The traveler may also undergo additional screening." The new measures may cause problems for travelers who arrive at an overseas airport with electronics that have run out of battery charge. A U.S. official with knowledge of the increased security measures said that airport security personnel have also been directed to closely check the shoes of passengers. "TSA will continue to adjust security measures to ensure that travelers are guaranteed the highest levels of aviation security conducted as conveniently as possible," the TSA statement added. In December 2001, just months after the attacks on the United States, al-Qaeda member Richard Reid attempted to detonate explosives on board a flight flying from Paris to Miami. The explosives were concealed in his shoes, but the bomb failed to detonate due to perspiration from his feet. A similar attempt happened in 2009 on a Detroit-bound airliner involving explosives sewn to underwear. Less than a week ago, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) already announced it would implement "enhanced security measures" at certain overseas airports with direct flights to the United States. DHS did not name which airports were affected by the measures, but both Britain and France confirmed they were among the countries which had increased aviation security.

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