

Matching Luggage

The scenario is not uncommon. The plane is not taking off. The captain's voice comes over the PA. "Folks, we'll be delayed a few minutes at the gate, while we remove a piece of luggage that doesn't match the passenger list". Some travelers feel more secure knowing the checks are in place, others are irritated at the inconvenience. The security system is used on international flights but not on domestic flights. A new study, funded in part by the FAA, says that delays resulting from the practice would not amount to more than seven minutes waiting time and may enhance security (an unmatched piece of luggage carried the bomb that exploded on Pan Am Flight 103 in 1988). While domestic carriers oppose the practice, saying that it would increase already critically delayed flights, the study, helmed by MIT professor Arnold Barnett, claims that airlines and passengers would adjust quickly, making any delays negligible in light of the extra security edge that airlines and passengers would gain.

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