

MEDIA INFORMATION



Congresswoman

Sheila Jackson Lee

18th District - Texas

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Press Statement

Washington, DC - Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, a senior Member of the Homeland Security Committee and Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection, made the following statement:

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for joining us this afternoon so that we can begin our exploration of the topic of Border Security. Some may ask the question "how does border security relate to transportation security?" Well here are some facts that we all should be aware of; for example, the annual number of truck crossings remains above four million. The majority of our focus regarding the cross border trucking issue has been on the safety implications while little has been done to ensure that cross border trucking is not an easy conduit for terrorists to enter the United States and use those vehicles to commit acts of violence against Americans.

"The security implications of a cross border trucking program from a Homeland Security perspective are four fold. In order to be secure we need to know the driver, the truck, the cargo and the destination. Further, we must be concerned with the whereabouts of this driver once he is through the border and driving on our national highways.

"The vulnerability created by allowing foreign carriers to operate freely in the U.S. cannot be overstated. Increasingly foreign terrorist organizations are getting a foothold in Latin America and exploiting our porous border with Canada to gain entry into the U.S. Once inside with a truck, regardless to what materials he may be carrying, a terrorist will have many tools available to him to harm Americans. We need to understand what methods TSA and CBP are putting in place to ensure that when our borders are finally open to foreign carriers, we have a process to find out who they are, what they are carrying, and where they are going. In addition we want to make sure that carriers actually arrive at their destination. This is a two pronged process and we hope to see that CBP and TSA are working in lockstep to check drivers at the border, and then track them once they are on our Nation's highways.

"Because the Nation's highway transportation system is robust and interconnected, including 3.8 million miles of roadways, 582,000 bridges, and 54 tunnels over 500 meters in length. The highway systems supports 86% of the personal travel of Americans, and moves 80% of freight (based on value), which is projected to double by 2020. This system is the backbone of our nation and all Americans use this system. At attack could seriously hamper commerce and we need to make sure that foreign carriers are just as secure as our domestic carriers. This process starts at the border.

"In the wake of September 11th, we have learned that you must think outside the box. This committee must continue to think about the impossible. This a security issue that we must make sure is not exploited for the purposes of carrying out a terrorist attack and I believe that if we continue to use Band-Aid approaches or turn a blind eye, it is only a matter of time before we will once again regret that we did not act sooner.

"As Members of Congress, and more specifically, as Members of the Committee on Homeland Security, we have a responsibility to make sure our highways are secure. We are at a crossroads--where we must take action to find out what is the best way to provide a safe, secure, and functional system. If we do not put effective, security measures in place, our Nation may very well be susceptible to another attack, which in turn will cause a major disruption in commerce and could subject us to grim economic consequences. We must make sure that we have confidence in cross border trucking. We must demonstrate to that we know who is in our country, what they are carrying and where are they going, anything less is unacceptable."

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