

**Committee on Homeland Security  
Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection**

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KHOU-TV, Houston, Texas  
“General Aviation Security: Assessing Risks and the Road Ahead”  
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Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss our investigative report, “Airport Insecurity” which first aired February 2, 2007.

KHOU-TV discovered while commercial airports all over the country had been forced to make millions of dollars in security upgrades since 9/11, smaller general aviation airports remained unchanged. In fact, we found they were practically wide open to someone stealing a corporate to mid-size jet, lifting off, and turning it into a weapon.

Acting on a tip from inside the aviation industry, KHOU-TV Investigative Photographer Keith Tomshe and I visited three general aviation airports in the Houston area. Using undercover cameras, we captured how easy it was to gain access into these facilities and to aircraft with doors left wide open and an unobstructed pathway to the tarmac.

At Hooks Airport in Northwest Harris County, we walked right through an unlocked door and into a hangar containing an unlocked executive jet. At Lone Star Executive Airport, about an hour north of Houston, we parked just yards away from a regional commercial jet and walked right up to it—no doors, no fences, no security, no questions. At Sugarland Regional Airport southwest of the city, it had a security gate and call box. But both proved worthless on our visits, as evidenced by our comments to gain access:

First visit: “Can you open ‘er up?” (Gate Opens)

Second Visit: “I’m here to see the plane I was here last week” (Gate Opens)

In addition, we consulted with numerous security experts so as to ascertain was this scenario a real threat? Indeed terrorism experts, a former Inspector General for the FAA, structural engineers, industrial chemists, and others all confirmed that in these situations, one could indeed take these planes and do effective terrorism with them.

Part of the reason for that was something else KHOU-TV uncovered: That our area was a target-rich environment that made us "a sitting duck" for a particular kind of terrorism. Why crash a plane into a building when the Houston area is littered with million-gallon containers of toxic chemicals right next to a vulnerable population center? In fact, we found deadly chlorine, a certain type of nerve gas, and many other dangerous fluids stored all around Houston, and uncovered a government study showing at least 17,000 people could die in such a strike. Again, we confirmed with chemical plant security

experts that nearly all such plants were vulnerable to a plane crash attack. We also interviewed structural engineers specializing in these types of plants, who agreed that a general aviation plane could easily pierce and explode one of the many huge containers lining the Houston Ship Channel. Finally we also brought in one of the leading national experts on such scenarios, Dr. Jay P. Boris of the Naval Research Laboratory, to examine our local landscape. Using computer-modeling programs to assess the possibilities and outcomes of an attack in our city, Boris concluded such an attack would be “far worse than 9/11.”

And one more thing: Mohammad Atta, the self-proclaimed ringleader of 9/11, and his cohorts had been considering a similar sort of attack in the years leading up to that tragic day. Various news reports, security reports, and counter-terrorism experts we consulted confirmed this.

Attached is the verbatim transcript of our February 2, 2007 report as well as a follow-up report which aired February 22, 2007. In that, Wing Aviation, a corporate tenant at Lone Star Executive Airport, was in the process of installing \$100,000 in security upgrades. Additionally, DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff promised to “turn up the temperature” on the general aviation industry.

I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.