

NEWS ALERT



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Homeland Security Committee

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Chairman



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson

An Assessment of Checkpoint Security: Are Our Airports Keeping Passengers Safe?

March 17, 2010 (WASHINGTON) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection Subcommittee hearing entitled “An Assessment of Checkpoint Security: Are Our Airports Keeping Passengers Safe?”:

“The work we do today will help to inform DHS’ efforts to keep the flying public safe and secure. In addition, the preparation for such a hearing may also help the relevant components of DHS—in today’s case, S&T and TSA—to more effectively cooperate.

In January, the Full Committee held a hearing that took a close look at the events surrounding the attack on December 25th. The attack on December 25th was a reminder that terrorists continue to plot against our aviation system, so we must remain vigilant and aggressive.

That hearing shed light on the counterterrorism efforts and the information sharing processes that must be improved across the government as we address the very real terrorist threat. Likewise, the hearing highlighted some of the steps taken by the Department soon after the December 25th incident, particularly in the aviation sector.

The Department has made great efforts to enhance airport security in the aftermath of that attack by strengthening relationships with international partners and enhancing checkpoint security here at home.

I look forward to an update from the Department on its developments in partnering with foreign countries and how those efforts will bolster security.

In addition, we are taking another step today to evaluate the processes at the Department that are in place to develop, procure, and deploy innovative technologies and procedures at our airports.

Without robust and clear processes, we will never be one step ahead of those wishing to do us harm.

The GAO has called into question whether the process DHS has in place is effective, and we will hear more about that from all stakeholders today.

Obviously there is no single technology or procedure that we can rely on to mitigate all risks; however, through a strategic and transparent framework, we can ensure that our

checkpoints are able to incorporate a layered security program that successfully identifies people wishing to cause us harm.

I hear a lot about our layered security approach, and I believe it has the potential to make us more secure. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses and am committed to improving our checkpoint security in order to meet the changing challenges we face.

There is clearly a lot of work to do to improve how the Department deploys smart technology and procedures, so I am pleased this hearing helps to begin this process.”

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