

NEWS ALERT



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Homeland Security Committee

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Chairman



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson

100% Air Cargo Screening: Remaining Steps to Secure Passenger Aircraft

June 30, 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 “100% Air Cargo Screening: Remaining Steps to Secure Passenger Aircraft”:

“Today, we will evaluate progress made by TSA in implementing the 9/11 Act’s requirement to screen 100% of all cargo aboard passenger aircraft.

I would like to take this opportunity to applaud the efforts of my colleagues on this Committee for championing this important mandate and ensuring that we take all necessary steps toward enhancing the nation’s aviation security.

After all, the 9/11 Commission Report recommended that TSA “intensify its efforts to identify, track, and appropriately screen potentially dangerous cargo in aviation.”

In an effort to fulfill this recommendation, Congress has undoubtedly provided TSA with the necessary tools to implement the air cargo screening program.

Additionally, through this Subcommittee, I have continuously offered a public forum where an honest discussion of the air cargo screening mandate could be held.

Developing a program to fulfill this mandate is no easy task; however, it is imperative that Congress and the Administration continue an open dialogue on program challenges and identifying solutions that will ultimately yield greater security of the flying public.

Last year, in conjunction with my colleague from Massachusetts, I requested GAO conduct an evaluation of TSA’s air cargo screening program. Today, I look forward to Mr. Lord’s testimony, in which he will shed light on key recommendations that will delve into the program goals of TSA’s air cargo screening initiatives.

Mr. Sammon, I am looking forward to your testimony, particularly with regard to TSA’s perspective on the recommendations GAO has provided.

Earlier this year, we learned that interagency cooperation continues to be a challenge within the Department. GAO has testified before this Subcommittee emphasizing the lack of coordination efforts aimed at streamlining technology goals which can be crucial in fulfilling mandates such as the 100 percent air cargo screening deadline.

Today, I look forward to receiving a status update from TSA on coordination efforts between TSA, S&T and industry. We need to ensure that the work and progress made by industry relevant to screening can be leveraged by TSA to effectively screen and detect explosives hidden in air cargo.

We will also hear from stakeholders who have concerns about TSA's plan to implement this mandate. I look forward to this input from the private sector which is playing a critical role in this endeavor to screen all cargo on passenger planes.

We are interested in strengthening aviation security and protecting the traveling public.”

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