



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hearing Statement of Transportation & Maritime Security Subcommittee Ranking Member Shri Thanedar (D-MI)

The Future of FAMS: Evaluating the Federal Air Marshal Mission

September 24, 2024

This is our Subcommittee's first hearing since we commemorated the anniversary of the September 11th attacks a couple weeks ago, so it is a fitting time to evaluate the state of the Federal Air Marshal Service. FAMS has evolved significantly since September 11, 2001, when only 33 air marshals were in service, working under the Federal Aviation Administration.

In the following months and years, FAMS expanded exponentially, hiring hundreds and eventually thousands of marshals to protect our skies. Today, FAMS carry out an essential mission every day, serving as the last line of defense to secure commercial flights from terrorist attacks. TSA has evolved its methodology for assigning FAMS to flights to ensure coverage is driven by intelligence and risk assessments.

Thanks to the leadership of Ranking Member Thompson and the support of Congress, TSA has also evolved pay for FAMS, along with the rest of the TSA workforce, finally placing employees on equal footing with counterparts at other Federal agencies.

However, other aspects of the FAMS have changed little over more than 20 years and may be in need of reform. For far too long, FAMS have voiced dissatisfaction with the day-to-day reality of serving as air marshals. The job of an air marshal is extremely demanding, as FAMS must stay alert and focused during long-haul flights, travel on little rest, and spend significant time away from loved ones and support networks.

FAMS have struggled with impacts to their health, including their mental health. Tragically, according to TSA data, since 2002, 16 FAMS have taken their own lives. Sadly, this experience is far too common among law enforcement within the Department of Homeland Security and throughout the country.

I am proud to cosponsor Ranking Member Thompson's bill, the *DHS Suicide Prevention and Resiliency for Law Enforcement Act*, which would help address the challenges facing FAMS and other DHS law enforcement personnel. Congress must consider whether FAMS requires additional reforms to protect the health and well-being of its employees and ensure their ability to continue to secure air travel.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about their recommendations for the future of the Federal Air Marshal Service.

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Media contact: Adam Comis at 202-225-9978