



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Concealed Carry-Ons: Confronting the Surge in Firearms at TSA Checkpoints

February 15, 2022

As frontline workers have put their health and lives on the line to protect our nation during a global pandemic, it is our duty to ensure their safety from gun violence. Even with significantly lower passenger volume due to the COVID-19 pandemic, TSA detected twice as many firearms per passenger screened at security checkpoints in 2020 compared to 2019. These numbers continued to rise as Americans resumed traveling more, with nearly 6,000 firearms found in 2021. That is a shocking and alarming rise in dangerous weapons found at airports across the nation.

While most passengers may have brought their firearm accidentally, these weapons nevertheless present a very real danger to Transportation Security Officers, the traveling public, and our transportation system. Consistently, more than 80% of firearms found have been loaded. At best, the presence of so many undeclared, unsecured guns creates serious disruptions at security checkpoints. At worst, these firearms could prove incredibly dangerous.

Just last November, at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport—where I travel through regularly—a firearm was accidentally discharged during screening. Thankfully, no one was hit with a bullet, but the incident created chaos throughout the terminal and exemplified the risks posed by the presence of so many guns at TSA checkpoints.

I am a hunter myself, and I recognize the right gun owners have to transport firearms. But passengers who wish to travel with a firearm must follow proper procedures for transporting them unloaded and locked away in their checked baggage. Congress and TSA must do everything possible to make gun owners aware of the legal ways to transport firearms and deter them from bringing firearms to screening checkpoints.

We must all work together to curb the rise in firearm incidents, or there could be deadly consequences. I look forward to learning more about actions Congress can take to reverse the dangerous rise in firearms at TSA checkpoints and ensure American passengers leave their firearms at home when they fly.

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