

**Statement of Ranking Member Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), as prepared
Subcommittee on Transportation Security
Committee on Homeland Security**

For Hearing: “Securing Air Commerce From the Threat of Terrorism”

March 9, 2011

Today, the Subcommittee will continue its oversight into air cargo security. In the last Congress, we had two hearings on the statutory mandate contained in the “Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act” directing that all cargo on passenger aircraft be screened for explosives.

Without doubt, this cargo screening mandate is critical to aviation security, and TSA has informed us that for domestic and outbound flights, industry has implemented screening procedures such that all of the belly cargo on passenger aircraft is being screened.

In October of last year, we learned of a terrorist plot to ship explosives from Yemen via passenger and all-cargo aircraft to addresses in the United States.

Through intelligence and coordination between the U.S. Government and air carriers, the packages containing explosives were intercepted before being transported on flights to the U.S., but the incident showed that terrorists are still targeting aviation and that there are potential vulnerabilities to address with respect to air cargo security.

Mr. Sammon, we have talked about the need to implement 100% cargo screening on passenger flights inbound to the U.S., and I know TSA is working with industry and foreign governments to achieve this milestone by the end of this year. I look forward to receiving an update on this international work from you today, as well as an assessment of what tools you need to accomplish this task.

As I have said before, if enacted properly, fulfillment of the passenger plane cargo screening mandate will be a major milestone in aviation security, building upon our previous mandates to conduct 100% screening of checked bags, fortify cockpit doors, deploy federal air marshals, secure airport checkpoints and perimeters, and improve the way we check passengers against the terrorist watchlist.

Mr. Lord, in your report last year, G-A-O raised concerns about TSA’s ability to conduct effective oversight of the domestic Certified Cargo Screening Program known as CCSP.

I look forward to hearing an update from you on TSA’s verification and compliance efforts in ensuring that the private sector is fulfilling the cargo screening requirements, as well as TSA’s progress in certifying new and effective screening technologies.

Mr. Chairman, I know we share the same interest in securing the aviation system. While TSA has made great progress in establishing security systems for cargo, this is not the time to take our eyes off the ball.

We must ensure that there is domestic compliance by the private sector, and we must work with foreign governments in establishing a credible cargo screening system for air cargo inbound to the United States.