

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Securing Air Commerce From the Threat of Terrorism***

March 9, 2011 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Transportation Security subcommittee hearing entitled “Securing Air Commerce From the Threat of Terrorism”:

“Last Congress, this subcommittee held multiple hearings on air cargo security and former Chairwoman Jackson Lee and I produced a TSA Authorization Act addressing many of the issues relevant to today’s hearing. I am pleased to see that Chairman Rogers will continue work in this critical issue area.

Time and again, we have seen those who wish to do us harm plot attacks targeting the aviation sector. Even as the nature of the threat we face evolves, the aviation sector remains a preeminent target for our adversaries.

Recent events involving explosive devices on passenger and all-cargo aircraft originating from Yemen again demonstrated the threat to aviation and revealed potential vulnerabilities in the air cargo transportation system.

Following the attempted attacks originating from Yemen, Ranking Member Jackson-Lee and I requested that DHS establish an advisory committee that would include industry stakeholders, TSA and CBP in order to enhance information sharing between government and industry on ways to identify and mitigate threats to air cargo.

I applaud the Department for establishing such a working group under the direction of the DHS Office of the Private Sector and I look forward to hearing more about this important endeavor.

On another note, as you are aware, the 9/11 Act requires that 100% of cargo aboard passenger aircraft be screened for explosives.

To date, the Department has declared that it has met this requirement for domestic passenger aircraft.

However, TSA has yet to satisfy the requirement that 100% of cargo aboard passenger aircraft on international inbound flights be screened for explosives.

As I acknowledged at a hearing on the same topic in June of 2010, developing a program to fulfill the 9/11 Act mandate is no easy task; however, it is imperative that Congress and the Administration continue an open dialogue on program challenges and potential solutions that will yield greater security for the flying public.

During the hearing last June, we explored challenges TSA has faced with regard to interagency cooperation and coordination with Department components such as the Directorate for Science and Technology.

For TSA to fulfill both its larger mission and its role in air cargo security, it must continue to improve its coordination and cooperation with Department components, foreign partners, and stakeholders.

I look forward to an update from Mr. Sammon on TSA's efforts to meet the statutory mandate that 100% of cargo on international inbound passenger flights be screened for explosives.

Additionally, I am eager to receive an update on TSA's efforts to improve its coordination with department components and industry alike.

As always, I look forward to hearing GAO's perspective on TSA's air cargo security efforts, including areas where improvements have been identified and challenges remain."

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