

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

**Hearing “TSA Reform: Exploring Innovations in Technology Procurement to
Stimulate Job Growth Part III”**

November 3, 2011

As we have discussed in the past, securing our nation requires not only vigilance and resources but also innovation and imagination.

One year ago, U.S. officials discovered a plot to plant explosives aboard a cargo airplane leaving North Africa and bound for America.

We are fortunate that the plot was uncovered and no lives were lost.

The anniversary of this Al-Qaeda inspired plot should remind us that this nation’s security depends on our willingness to find and fix known security vulnerabilities.

Our adversary’s determination to exploit the security vulnerabilities must be met and exceeded by our determination to fill the gaps.

The challenge of mitigating threats can only be accomplished by our refusal to settle for the status quo.

We must continually improve upon our security policies, develop and deploy innovative security technologies, and take the necessary steps to increase our security posture.

To that end, policies should not undermine the ability of the Department to procure cutting-edge technologies developed by small, innovative firms.

Having said that, I would caution that the Department must be prudent in its approach to testing, evaluating and approving innovative security technologies.

As we saw with the purchase and deployment of the “Puffer” machines under the previous Administration, the failure to exercise due diligence in testing and evaluating innovative technologies before purchase can lead to wasted taxpayer dollars.

In these tight budgetary times, the Department must have a clear vision. As it says in Proverbs—Where there is no vision, the people perish.

That is why I was proud to support the amendment my colleague from Illinois, Mr. Davis, offered during committee consideration of the DHS Authorization bill.

His amendment would have established an office of public-private partnerships within the S&T Directorate responsible for enhancing the Department’s collaboration in the area of security technologies with stakeholders, including small businesses.

Unfortunately, his amendment was defeated on a party line vote.

Turning to our panel of witnesses, I am pleased that we have a panel of witnesses who are current officials of the Department of Homeland Security.

I look forward to their insights about the Department's efforts to change internal policies and partner with small and large private sector companies to develop, test, evaluate, procure and ultimately deploy security technologies in a cost efficient and effective manner.

In particular, I look forward to hearing from Mr. Edwards, the Acting Inspector General for DHS.

His office has made recommendations on improving the process. We need to know how those recommendations have been incorporated into the procurement process.

I am also eager to hear from Dr. Nayak. As the new Chief Procurement Officer, I look forward in learning about his view of the changes needed in the DHS and TSA procurement process.

Finally, I look forward to hearing from Mr. Benda on the potential impact that the cuts contained in the House passed Republican Homeland Security Appropriations bill would have on DHS Management and S&T Directorate's ability to perform its core function.

During the 111th Congress, under Democratic leadership, this Committee conducted oversight, held hearings and saw that the House passed legislation addressing the development, procurement and deployment of innovative security technologies at the Department.

I look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, to see that this Committee continues its legacy of oversight to identify problems and legislation to achieve solutions.