

**Statement of the Ranking Member Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX)**

**Subcommittee on Transportation Security  
Committee on Homeland Security**

**Hearing: “A Review of Passengers Screening Technology at US Airports”**

**December 8, 2011**

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This month will mark the two year anniversary since Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab attempted to set off explosives while aboard Northwest Airlines Flight 253.

Immediately after the Christmas day bombing attempt, this Committee began holding hearings to examine the circumstances and the Federal government’s response.

Those hearings led to a clear understanding of the need to coordinate Federal information sharing and response activities long before a dangerous person takes a seat on a plane bound for America.

While some will argue that we should decrease our focus on the security of the aviation sector, materials found with Bin Laden have indicated that our adversaries still regard the aviation sector as a viable target.

But while those who seek to harm us may pursue the same targets, they will not use the same means.

Our safeguards and defenses must evolve to meet the evolving methodology of the terrorists.

Given the risks to the aviation sector, DHS must continue to develop and refine its layered security approach.

This year, this subcommittee has had several hearings that clearly point to the need for coordination between the Department of Homeland Security’s Science and Technology Directorate and the Transportation Security Administration.

Each of these hearings emphasized the need to ensure systematic deployment of the best technology available to address current and emerging threats to our aviation sector.

These hearings also explored the need to bring transparency to the current process of development, procurement and deployment of passenger screening technologies.

All of these are worthwhile goals that we must embrace.

But while I support technological development, we must recognize that a technology cannot be fully effective if the technician has not been fully instructed, properly trained, and adequately supervised.

We cannot allow our focus on technology to allow us to ignore the men and women who must operate the machines.

Earlier in the year, this Subcommittee overwhelmingly supported a TSA authorization bill. Aimed at improving airport security, that bill included critical provisions addressing both processes and personnel.

I look forward to working with the Chairman of the Subcommittee to gain Full Committee consideration of this bill.

Because of the sensitivity of the issues to be discussed today, we will proceed to meet with witnesses in Executive Session. Therefore, I cannot discuss the contents of the testimony in an open forum. However, I would like to thank these witnesses for their time with us here today. I would also like to thank them for their thorough and thoughtful analysis of the efforts to mitigate aviation security threats.

Today's Executive Session will offer more than just an opportunity to discuss the status quo in aviation security—it is an opportunity to discuss realistic goals and objectives for the future of this nation's passenger screening process.

It will afford us with an opportunity to see where we are today in the deployment of security technologies and procedures.

Finally, I would like to thank the Chairman for convening this hearing. I look forward to working with him to address the key recommendations submitted today by our witnesses.