

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

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

### **Hearing: “Rightsizing TSA Bureaucracy and Workforce Without Compromising Security”**

**March 28, 2012**

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Before I begin discussing the topic of today’s hearing in depth, I would like to start by acknowledging the efforts undertaken by the passengers and flight crew yesterday aboard JetBlue Flight 191 from New York City to Las Vegas. Their brave and astute course of action mitigated what could have been an unforgettable tragedy.

Unfortunately this is not the first time an incident like this threatens passengers in the sky. Just hours after this particular incident took place; the media reported that a passenger was arrested for being disruptive aboard a flight. Earlier this month passengers subdued an American Airlines flight attendant after she became disruptive. A couple of years ago, a copilot was reportedly removed from an Air Canada flight after experiencing mental problems.

And as we all recall, on December 25th of 2009, passengers subdued the Christmas Day bomber. These are instances where immediate passenger and flight crew response was critical to ensuring the security of the aircraft and its passengers.

I look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, to ensure that we conduct oversight of in cabin security.

Turning to the hearing today, I would like thank the witnesses for joining us. I look forward to hearing how TSA determines its staffing level needs and where efficiencies that do not compromise security may be found. In these tight budgetary times, it is incumbent upon all of us to find ways to be more efficient without compromising security.

As the Chairman and other Members are aware, a lapse in our transportation security could have devastating consequences. Before calling for a reduction in the number of frontline employees at TSA, we should ensure that all other means of achieving cost efficiencies are explored.

We must ask whether TSA is wisely investing its resources in new technologies. We must ask whether encouraging the outsourcing of screening operations to contractors at a cost premium is fiscally prudent.

And we must ask whether TSA, as some have suggested, is top heavy and employs excessive headquarters staff. I am pleased that the Chief Financial Officer for TSA is here today to answer questions about how TSA’s headquarters is organized and staffed. I look forward to hearing from him on how TSA’s ongoing headquarters re-organization will reduce costs and create efficiencies, if at all.

I am also looking forward to hearing from the representatives from the Human Capital Office and Office of Security Operations on how they have implemented DHS Inspector General and GAO recommendations for determining appropriate staffing levels at airports.

Time and again, terrorists have targeted our aviation sector. We must not allow the desire for short term savings to cloud our decision making about the allocation of resources for securing our nation’s rail, mass transit and aviation systems.

Doing so would be penny wise and pound foolish.

As you know Mr. Chairman, I am committed to working with you to ensure TSA is as effective and cost efficient as possible.