

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

**Hearing: “Access Control Point Breaches at Our Nation’s Airports: Anomalies or Systemic Failures?”**

**May 16, 2012**

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A little over a year ago, under the direction of the President of the United States, Navy SEALs eliminated the architect responsible for the most horrific terrorist acts against this Country. Since September 11<sup>th</sup>, we have made significant progress in securing our transportation system, particularly our aviation sector.

We must recognize and proactively address the evolving nature of the threat to aviation to protect the millions of people every year who use commercial aviation. In 2011 alone, U.S. airlines flew 730 million passengers.

Mr. Chairman, when we discuss aviation security, we usually think of our Transportation Security Officers, Pilots, Flight Attendants, and passengers. However, we must not forget those who work behind the scenes to ensure that these jets are properly stocked and maintained. The mechanics, technicians and operators play a critical role in the functioning of our aviation system. Additionally, we must not forget about the small businesses that operate at the airports. The men and women who own operate or work at these shops can be a helpful component to a layered security environment.

The men and women working at our airports and aboard aircraft must not only have the proper training to be a part of this effort but they must also undergo proper vetting to ensure that risks are reduced.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today and gaining a comprehensive understanding of where we stand with access control and perimeter security.

Earlier this year, Philadelphia International Airport, was the subject of discussion after an individual drove through the airport’s metal fence and headed for the runway while a plane was gearing for landing.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time an incident like this has threatened passengers at an airport.

Just before this particular incident took place; the media reported that another couple bypassed perimeter security and headed for the runway at Philadelphia International Airport. Last year, the media reported on a video at Hartsfield Atlanta Airport that shows back doors being opened to allow several people through without swiping their badges and gaining access to catering carts destined to be loaded onto flights.

And we all recall the infamous shutdown in Newark in 2010, when flight operations were shut down and thousands of members of the flying public were inconvenienced for nearly 7 hours. Operations were halted after a man walked in to the sterile area of the airport through the exit lane and without being screened.

These are instances where perimeters and access controls were breached and caused major disruptions and shed light on security vulnerabilities at these airports.

Unfortunately, all relevant examples are far too many to cite in the 5 minutes allotted to me today, and span across various commercial airports of all sizes. I look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, to ensure that we continue to conduct oversight of perimeter security at our airports.

As you know Mr. Chairman, I am committed to working with you to ensure TSA improves its operational capabilities to manage access controls and perimeter security and that it is as effective and cost efficient as possible.