

NEWS ALERT



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Homeland Security Committee

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

***Access Control Point Breaches at Our Nation's Airports:
Anomalies or Systemic Failures?***

May 16, 2012 (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 “Access Control Point Breaches at Our Nation’s Airports: Anomalies or Systemic Failures?”:

“No agency in the Federal government has a more central role in securing our aviation system than TSA. Accordingly, it is essential that TSA have the necessary processes and protocols in place to secure our aviation system.

These processes and protocols must include ensuring the integrity of airport perimeters by securing access controls and providing comprehensive and sufficient guidance to airport operators.

In March, the media reported on an individual who drove a truck onto the runway at the Philadelphia airport. Last year, we learned of the tragic case of a young man who breached the airport perimeter and became a stow-away in the wheel well of a plane.

While none of the people involved in these cases had any terrorist intention, each case should have put us on notice that the grounds surrounding the airport must be considered in Airport Vulnerability Assessments.

To accomplish that, TSA must establish a single comprehensive definition of what constitutes a security breach. Failing to establish such a definition leads to inconsistent and subjective reporting.

Without a clear understanding of the types of breaches occurring at our airports, TSA cannot make any reasonable conclusions about the kinds of security enhancements that should be broadly implemented.

But in a system of layered security, perimeter security must be complemented with other measures. An equally important component of a layered security environment is ensuring that only properly vetted people can gain access to the secure areas of the airport and access to aircrafts and field operations.

The vetting process should not be a burden to individuals or businesses, but it must enhance the security of the airport. I look forward to hearing from our second panel of witnesses on how TSA’s vetting process is working today.”

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