

**RANKING MEMBER RON BARBER (D-AZ) OPENING STATEMENT**

Committee on Homeland Security  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency

**Joint Hearing on: *“TSA Integrity Challenges: Examining Misconduct  
by Airport Security Personnel”***

Wednesday, July 31, 2013

In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) was created in an effort to protect air travel and keep the travelling public safe.

In order to implement its mission, TSA employs thousands of Transportation Security Officers that on a daily basis screen almost 2 million passengers at 450 airports throughout the United States.

These dedicated, hardworking civil servants perform their duties in the face of frustration from weary travelers and critics of TSA’s often frequently changing policies.

They serve as our first line of defense in aviation security and we rely on them, and the technology they utilize, to keep us safe from harm.

Most organizations have experiences where employees do not live up to an organization’s work standards. Unfortunately, this is also true sometimes for the Transportation Security Administration.

According to media reports, from December 2010 through February 2013, 108 TSOs have been arrested and 93 crimes – related to their employment – have been committed.

According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), from 2010 through 2012, the annual number of TSA misconduct cases increased from 2,691 to 3,408.

The GAO also reported that 1,936, or 20 percent, of the aforementioned misconduct cases, were classified as security and screening violations. These pertain to incidents that include not conducting security or equipment checks and allowing people or baggage to bypass screening.

TSA’s first and foremost responsibility is to ensure the safety and security of travelers in a professional manner. We cannot allow one bag or one person go unscreened and this percentage is simply unacceptable.

When compared to the TSA workforce in total, which numbers more than 55,000 employees, the overall misconduct numbers indicate around 6 percent of TSA’s employees were involved in wrongdoing.

These statistics clearly show that more work can and must be done to properly train and effectively hire Transportation Security Officers.

It should be noted that this data from GAO also indicates that the vast majority of TSOs are law-abiding citizens, seeking to carry out the mission of the Department of Homeland Security.

According to GAO, TSA has made some progress in improving the professionalism and accountability of its workforce.

For example, having a table of offenses with clearly defined ranges of penalties ensures that consistency and fairness exists in what was previously an *ad hoc* and arbitrary process.

Furthermore, the creation of the TSA Office of Professional Responsibility has resulted in a reduced backlog of cases and quicker decisions for employees waiting to resolve their matters.

TSA has also added additional training classes for its airport-based personnel so that managers and supervisors are better able to identify and investigate misconduct.

While these steps are important, they do not rule out the need for TSA to improve weaknesses that still exist, such as ensuring that misconduct cases are recorded in TSA's centralized database and making sure that misconduct cases are properly handled in accordance with TSA policies and procedures.

Furthermore, when addressing misconduct, Congress and TSA have a responsibility to ensure proper oversight over the entire TSA workforce, including management and supervisors.

According to a recent Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General (OIG) report, supervisors at TSA's Transportation Threat Assessment and Credentialing Office, have exhibited a pattern of poor management practices and inappropriate use of informal administrative processes to assess and address misconduct.

This report is but one example of why an examination of TSA misconduct should be extended beyond the TSO workforce.

I therefore look forward to hearing from both GAO and the OIG on how TSA can improve its processes and from TSA on how it intends to comply with GAO and OIG recommendations.