

*Statement of the Honorable Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)
Ranking Member, Committee on Homeland Security*

**Field Hearing: “Lessons from the LAX Shooting: Preparing for and
Responding to Emergencies at Airports”**

March 28, 2014

At the outset, I would like to acknowledge Executive Director Lindsey and Chief Gannon of Los Angeles World Airports for their hospitality.

Your willingness to aid the Committee in its oversight by hosting the hearing and accommodating our Members’ request to tour the site of the tragic shooting of November 1, 2013, is appreciated.

To Administrator Pistole, thank you for appearing before the Subcommittee to discuss TSA’s findings in the wake of the shooting and planned reforms to mitigate any similar incident in the future.

We place the security of our aviation sector in the hands of the men and women of the Transportation Security Administration every day.

Those on the front lines, the Transportation Security Officers, deserve to know that we are doing everything within our power to see that they themselves are secure when performing the critical job of screening passengers.

I am pleased that the National President of the American Federation of Government Employees, J. David Cox, is appearing before the Subcommittee today to give voice to the Transportation Security Officer workforce.

As has been well documented, on November 1, 2013, an armed gunman entered Terminal 3 of Los Angeles International Airport and opened fire on Transportation Security Officer Hernandez.

The gunman then proceeded through the Terminal, targeting other TSA employees, shooting and injuring Transportation Security Officers Grigsby and Speer.

Thanks to the bravery of the police officers on duty, the gunman was ultimately taken down and prevented from causing further harm.

While some may wish to point fingers and assign blame for this horrific incident, I believe doing so would prove counterproductive.

All of our energy should be directed toward not only learning from the incident, but also implementing needed reforms.

Frequently, we speak of the lessons learned from a tragedy, but fail to implement the reforms necessary to prevent those lessons from having to be learned again.

For instance, after 9/11 we identified that communications between and amongst first responders was an area in need of major reforms.

Despite knowing this, and having spent 13 billion dollars to correct the problem, a review of the report the airport released last week reveals that, more than a decade after 9/11, the police and fire departments at this critical airport could not communicate effectively during an emergency.

The tools Transportation Security Officers have been trained to use in the event of an emergency did not work.

This state of affairs is unacceptable.

Our police, fire fighters, Transportation Security Officers, and emergency medical personnel, along with the American public, deserve better.

Had the shooter at LAX on November 1st been intent on firing upon passengers rather than targeting TSA personnel, untold lives could have been lost.

In addition to the communications issues, I have concerns regarding the training Transportation Security Officers receive for active shooter scenarios.

I look forward to hearing from Administrator Pistole on how he intends to ensure all TSOs are trained to respond to an active shooter scenario in a manner relevant to their work environment.