

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Cedric L. Richmond (D-LA)
Subcommittee on Transportation Security

“Lessons from the LAX Shooting: Airport and Law Enforcement Perspectives”
May 29, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for convening this hearing. Your continued focus on the tragic events that resulted in the death of Transportation Security Officer Hernandez is appreciated.

I would also like to thank our panel of witnesses for being here today. Mr. Capello and Mr. Landguth will provide the airport’s perspective on how the tragic events at Los Angeles International Airport on November 1st, 2013, prompted changes in preparedness and response planning for similar incidents.

Mr. Murphy, President of the Airport Law Enforcement Agencies Network, will share with us the collective sentiment and strategies being implemented by airport law enforcement agencies across the nation.

We learned a great deal about the response on the day of the shooting and what can be done to improve upon that response from the respective reports released in March by the Transportation Security Administration and Los Angeles World Airports. Those reports, exposed several flaws and identified viable solutions that can and should be implemented to ensure that similar future incidents are mitigated or deterred altogether.

Today, we have the opportunity to understand how the airport law enforcement community and individual airports are implementing these recommendations and to learn about what more can be done. Having said that, Los Angeles World Airports, as well as other airports throughout the nation cannot implement all of the reforms necessary without assistance from local and Federal partners. A significant portion of the reports addressed the need for interoperable communications and reliable emergency infrastructure.

In the technologically-advanced society that we live in, it is hard to accept that some panic buttons within airports do not work, and that we cannot figure out a way to ensure first responders can communicate seamlessly during an emergency. Undoubtedly, Federal funds and resources will be required to ensure all of the needed reforms are implemented. That places the onus on Congress to provide the funding needed to make planned reforms a reality.

Mr. McClain, thank you for being here today. Your perspective is extremely valuable. In your position as President of the Los Angeles Airport Peace Officers Association, your insight comes from having first hand experience at LAX on that tragic day. I am interested in hearing more about the concerns you outlined in your prepared testimony regarding airport law enforcement’s interaction with the Transportation Security Administration. Given that law enforcement and TSA share a common goal, the safety and security of the traveling public, it was troubling to read in your testimony that recommendations made to TSA prior to the shooting were not acted upon.

Before yielding back, I would like to emphasize the important work Transportation Security Officers do to protect our nation against attack. As Mr. McClain points out in his prepared testimony, airplanes and airports remain desired targets of terrorists around the world. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to marginalize that threat as we become consumed with the desire to expedite screening for larger and larger segments of the population.

Officer Hernandez reported to work at LAX on November 1, 2013, with the goal of ensuring our aviation sector remained secure and passengers could travel freely. In a senseless act of violence, his life was cut short while working to protect the rest of us. Today, we will strive to identify ways to better safeguard the Officers we task with keeping our aviation sector secure. Mr. Chairman, I am looking forward to working with you on legislation derived from this Subcommittee’s oversight work that will enhance preparedness and response capabilities at airports when incidents occur.