

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Lessons from the LAX Shooting: Airport and Law Enforcement Perspectives***

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

“The shooting at LAX resulted in the loss of Officer Hernandez’s life and served as a stark reminder of the dangers the men and women on the front lines of securing our aviation sector face. Unarmed and exposed, Transportation Security Officers perform the often thankless task of screening approximately 1.8 million passengers per day.

They do so with limited workplace protections and the great responsibility of preventing another terrorist attack on the scale of 9/11. Given their vulnerability and the critical role they play in protecting our homeland, it is essential that airports and the law enforcement agencies that serve them have the resources, training, and plans in place to ensure a swift and effective response when an incident that threatens the safety of Transportation Security Officers occurs.

In March, this Subcommittee held a site visit and field hearing at LAX to better understand the circumstances surrounding the response to the shooting. While the response of the individual police officers who prevented further loss of life on that tragic day is to be commended, the overall response at LAX left much to be desired.

Panic buttons at the checkpoint were not in working order. The emergency phone Transportation Security Officers have been trained to use did not display the location of the incident to the command center, and the police, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel responding could not communicate via interoperable radios.

In the wake of the shooting, Administrator Pistole initiated a nationwide review of the preparedness and response capacity of our airports so that we can either prevent or mitigate a similar incident in the future.

As was displayed this past weekend in Santa Barbara, California, it may not be possible to prevent a disturbed individual from opening fire on innocent strangers in a public setting. That reality, however, should not stop us from instituting policies that will improve the response to such incidents at our nation’s airports.

I look forward to hearing from Mr. Capello, the Director of Security at Fort Lauderdale International Airport and Mr. Landguth, the President and Chief Executive Officer of Raleigh-Durham International Airport regarding the lessons their airports learned from the response to the shooting at LAX.

I am also eager to hear the law enforcement officer’s perspective from Mr. Murphy and Mr. McClain on how the response to an incident at an airport can be improved. Given his position with the Los Angeles Airport Peace Officers Association, Mr. McClain is in the unique position of being able to help us understand how the response to a similar incident at LAX would differ today from that on November 1, 2013.

Before yielding back Mr. Chairman, I would be remiss if I did not point out that the House has still not acted on legislation introduced by Representative Brownley of California that would result in Officer Hernandez's family receiving death benefits in the amount of three-hundred thousand dollars.

Making a family who lost their husband and father in the line of duty whole should not be a partisan issue, yet, to date, not a single Republican Member has cosponsored Representative Brownley's legislation.

I would encourage the Chairman and all of my Republican colleagues to consider cosponsoring H.R. 4026 and to urge their Leadership to allow for consideration of the legislation on the House floor."

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