



One Hundred Thirteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

December 24, 2014

Honorable John S. Pistole
Administrator
Transportation Security Administration
601 South 12th Street
Arlington, VA 20598

Dear Administrator Pistole:

I am writing to express my deep concern over the revelations that firearms and ammunition have been smuggled aboard domestic commercial flights between Atlanta and New York City. According to media reports a current Delta Airlines employee, Eugene Harvey, working in concert with a former employee, smuggled approximately 131 firearms and ammunition within carry-on luggage on flights between May 1st and December 10th of this year.

Although these weapons were not intended to inflict damage to these flights or passengers, it pains me to think of the catastrophic consequences we would have faced had these firearms, or any other weapon that could be used to harm an aircraft or those aboard, had been used in a nefarious manner while in transit.

I understand that employees who enter the sterile area of an airport are vetted and screened using a process that differs from checkpoints for passengers, but it is unacceptable for any unauthorized weapon to make its way onto a commercial passenger aircraft where it can be used to harm travelers.

We have made great strides and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) should be commended for its work in securing the aviation sector and making traveling via airplane more secure for those traveling to and within the United States. However, it has never been clearer that there is more work to be done. We need to make sure that there are policies and procedures in place to ensure that there is absolutely no way that a weapon makes it aboard an aircraft unless it is carried by a law enforcement officer, or the proper protocols have been followed to ensure that it cannot be accessed by passengers at any point during a flight.

In our efforts to ascertain what needs to be done to ensure events such as these never happen again, and pursuant to Rule X cl. 3(g) and Rule XI of the United States House of Representatives, please provide the following information no later than January 7, 2014:

1. When was Eugene Harvey's Secure Identification Display Area (SIDA) badge issued?
2. Who conducted Eugene Harvey's background investigation?
3. Did the Federal Bureau of Investigation alert or work in collaboration with TSA during its investigation.
4. If the answer to the previous question is affirmative, were there Federal Air Marshals aboard all flights that guns were smuggled on?
5. How often, if at all, does TSA conduct physical inspections of employees with SIDA badges at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport when such employees are entering sterile areas?
6. How often, if at all, does TSA conduct physical inspections of employees entering sterile areas with Secure Identification Display Area badges nationwide?
7. Are individuals with SIDA badges allowed to take commercial flights, as passengers, without undergoing screening at the passenger screening checkpoint?

I appreciate your attention to this matter. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this inquiry, please contact Hope Goins, Chief Counsel for Oversight, at 202-226-2616.

Sincerely,

/S/

Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security