

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Reform and Improvement: Assessing the Path Forward for the Transportation Security Administration***

October 8, 2015 (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 “Reform and Improvement: Assessing the Path Forward for the Transportation Security Administration”:

“Throughout this Congress, this Committee has voiced its concerns with the state of security within the commercial aviation sector. Over the span of recent years, both the Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office have compiled numerous reports that detail mismanagement, inefficiencies, and vulnerabilities within TSA.

These reports range from vulnerabilities associated with granting expedited screening via the use of secure flight and managed inclusion, to vulnerabilities associated with access to the secure areas of airports and the tracking of maintenance for security related technologies within airports.

Most recently, the Inspector General released a report, “Covert Testing of TSA’s Passenger Screening Technologies and Processes at Airport Security Checkpoints”. Details of this classified report were leaked this summer, and the Inspector General has given a briefing on the final report to the Subcommittee.

While I look forward to hearing the status of solutions that TSA and DHS are implementing to ensure that any security gaps associated with checkpoint screening and technologies are secure, I remain concerned that TSA will continue to purchase more technologies that address the threats of yesterday instead of the threats of tomorrow.

Consequently, the “Transportation Security Administration Reform and Improvement Act of 2015” a bill that recently passed the Committee includes language that aims to aid in the development of innovative security technologies through a program that would create public and private sector partnerships to help businesses, particularly small businesses, to commercialize these innovative technologies.

And while that amendment is designed to improve the technologies TSA uses, I still have concerns about some of TSA’s other screening programs the Inspector General has found ineffective. For example, the Inspector General has found that TSA’s behavioral detection program, commonly known as SPOT, is a magnet for racial profiling and TSA has little evidence that the program is an effective tool for screening passengers.

We know that terrorists span all races and ethnicities and having a profiling mechanism as a means of security is skeptical. Once again, I ask the Administrator to review its efficacy of behavioral detection programs.

When the Administrator appeared before the Committee in July, I, along with my colleagues across the aisle, stated that we would give him appropriate time to address some of the glaring concerns at TSA. It is unrealistic to expect sweeping reforms to have been made in such a short amount of time, and I want to express my appreciation for the Administrator’s agreeing with Congress that the managed inclusion program was flawed and needed to be phased out.

Even though the Inspector General's reports have been scathing, I am optimistic that the culture of TSA and the willingness to take the recommendations from these reports and implement reforms is improving.

I am interested in hearing how these entities work together to take the issues found within these investigations and audits and use them to create solutions that will keep the traveling public safe.”

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FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
H2-117, Ford House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone: (202) 226-2616 | Fax: (202) 226-4499
<http://chsdemocrats.house.gov>