

*Opening Statement of Ranking Member Kathleen Rice  
Subcommittee on Transportation Security*

**Hearing “Transportation Security Acquisition Reform Act: Examining Remaining Challenges”**

**January 7, 2016**

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The Transportation Security Acquisition Reform Act was signed into law just over one year ago. Among other things, the law requires the Administrator to establish a strategic five-year technology investment plan and submit its intentions to Congress. The Administrator, with the approval of the Secretary, published the 2015 report to Congress in August of last year. This five-year plan shows us the full scope of TSA’s investment objectives, and it’s a good start – but there are clearly some challenges that need to be addressed.

In December, GAO released a report assessing TSA’s acquisition process – specifically, TSA’s process for testing and evaluating screening technology. This test and evaluation process is a necessary step that allows TSA and DHS to determine whether technologies meet mission needs before proceeding with procurement and deployment, which saves the agency time and money.

The GAO report acknowledges that TSA has come up with ways to improve the test and evaluation process, in part by developing a third-party testing strategy, in order to determine whether or not a vendor’s technology is immature before TSA and DHS begin the test and evaluation process.

But unfortunately, we’ve learned from this report that TSA has yet to implement that strategy. Allowing third-party testing and evaluation would determine early on if a certain technology is mature enough to deploy, which will save time and money and prevent wasteful spending.

So I hope to hear from our witnesses today why that strategy has not yet been implemented, and when we can expect that it will be. While third-party testing has yet to be finalized, I am pleased to learn that TSA has been highly-responsive to GAO’s recommendations. With TSA screening more than one million passengers and checked bags and more than three million carry-on bags every day, it’s critical that TSA utilize taxpayer dollars as efficiently as possible to procure the most effective technology available.

And we know that those numbers will only keep growing. The Federal Aviation Administration Aerospace Forecast for fiscal years 2015-2035 projects the number of passengers on U.S. Carriers to increase two percent each year over the next 20 years. So TSA clearly needs technology that will cater to such growth, and as new threats emerge, there’s no question that we need to prioritize certain security-related technologies over others.

That’s why it’s so important that TSA do the work now to establish and finalize all the components of a straightforward and cost-efficient acquisition process, in order to ensure that the agency can continue to fulfill its mission and keep passengers safe. Again, I appreciate the fact that TSA has been so responsive to the GAO report, and I appreciate the opportunity to talk with our witnesses today about TSA’s efforts to improve their acquisition processes.

Among other things, I look forward to learning more about how TSA works with DHS to evaluate technologies. I’m also interested in the ways in which TSA incentivizes small businesses to be able to innovate and compete with larger companies that provide screening technology.

TSA’s acquisitions process has been described as too long and too expensive for large businesses – so I can only imagine the issues that arise with small businesses that may be at a competitive disadvantage, and may endure a lengthy process only to learn their products aren’t mature enough for deployment. So I hope our witnesses can speak to that point as well.