

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ) Subcommittee on Transportation & Protective Security

The Future of the Transportation Security Administration

February 2, 2017

The Transportation Security Administration, as well as airports, airlines and other stakeholders, have experienced major challenges recently in regard to aviation security.

While there have been many lessons learned and improvements made to aviation security, there is much left to be done in this area.

Mr. Dow, I understand that the U.S. Travel Association has taken time to produce a plan for the future of aviation security, and I look forward to hearing your perspective on how we can enhance security while facilitating an efficient experience for travelers. I also look forward to your perspective on ensuring that the aviation security fee, which is currently diverted to offsetting the deficit, is utilized as a resource for enhancing aviation security- the purpose for which it was originally intended.

Ms. Brooks, I look forward to hearing the perspective of aviation security stakeholders around the world through your expertise as head of security for Airports Council International. Aviation security is a global issue, and your exposure to technology and diverse security policies through the Smart Security initiative will add great value to this hearing. President Cox, I thank you for being here today.

In 2016, Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) screened more than 738 million passengers, 466 million checked bags, and discovered more than 3,300 firearms in carry-on bags.

However, when issues arise at the nation's checkpoints, such as lengthy wait times associated with the recent peak travel season, or reported high failure rates from covert testing, transportation security officers usually bear the brunt of the traveling public's frustrations.

Eventually we learned that a multitude of factors can contribute to these issues, including, but not limited to technology, policies, and management – not just transportation security officers.

I thank TSOs for working day in and day out to ensure that no weapon or person with ill-intent is able to harm us via our commercial aviation system.

I look forward to your testimony about disparities between the rights of these federal workers in comparison to those of other federal workers. As we discuss the future of TSA and transportation security, we cannot leave out the perspectives of those that you represent.

I also believe that this subcommittee **MUST** convene a hearing on this topic that also includes the perspective of the agency whose future we are discussing, the Transportation Security Administration.

Lastly, year after year, the funding for the aviation sector is multiples higher than the funding for the surface sector. My district has extensive rail infrastructure, including Amtrak's Northeast Corridor, as well as both freight and commuter trains that run through it and are extremely important to my constituents.

Given the attacks on trains in Brussels, in which a metro train was the subject of a bombing that killed and injured travelers, as well as the attempted attack on a high-speed train travelling from Amsterdam to Paris, we must ensure that discussions of the future of TSA and transportation security also incorporate other modes of transportation.

Those who wish to do American citizens harm will continue to attempt to exploit soft targets, and we must shore up vulnerabilities that exist throughout our transportation systems.