



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

***Innovation at TSA: Examining Threat Mitigation Through
Technology Acquisitions Reform***

Subcommittee on Transportation & Protective Security

January 18, 2018

A little more than two months ago, Administrator Pekoske testified before the Full Committee that “the threat to international aviation is high and multiple terrorist groups remain intent on attacking our surface transportation systems.”

Members of the Committee on both sides of the aisle agree that countering such threats demands enhancements to current security systems, including the deployment of innovative technologies such as computed tomography, or “CT” machines. Unfortunately, deploying advanced technologies to the Nation’s TSA checkpoints is easier said than done.

While TSA has taken some positive steps such as establishing the Innovation Task Force, piloting CT machines, and publishing a refresh of its Strategic Five-Year Technology Plan, TSA can and should do more to reduce the timeline for deploying new technologies to the field.

Congress must do its part as well. We can start by passing H.R. 2514, the “FASTER Act”—a bill every Democrat on this Committee supports—to return \$1.28 billion in fees collected by TSA from the flying public for security that is currently being diverted away from TSA.

It defies logic to call out TSA for failing to invest in new technologies while refusing to support the FASTER Act, which could provide TSA with the funding needed to realize the promise of integrating new technology in our aviation security system.

Further, I am not sure it is fair to demand that TSA set out in great detail its plans for technology investments for the next five years at a time when the agency is funded on a stopgap basis.

Nevertheless, enhancing our transportation security efforts remains imperative. In addition to securing aviation systems, TSA must work with transit agencies and stakeholders across the country to secure subways, railroads, buses, and other surface transportation systems. I look forward to hearing about the TSA’s efforts to

develop and deploy technologies to secure surface transportation systems used daily by millions of Americans.

Finally, I want to emphasize that technology alone will not provide security. Such solutions must be staffed and operated by well-trained, capable officers. We must do more to support TSA officers and work to improve their morale—starting by providing them with workplace protections in place for other Federal workers. Democrats remain committed to doing just that.

Administrator Pekoske, you have a difficult job and I thank you again for joining us today.

#

Media contact: Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

