



Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Peter T. King

Opening Statement

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Statement of Chairman Rogers (R-AL)

Subcommittee on Transportation Security

**"Access Control Point Breaches at Our Nation's Airports: Anomalies
or Systemic Failures?"**

May 16, 2012

Remarks as Prepared

I would like to welcome everyone to this hearing and thank all of our witnesses. We look forward to your testimony and greatly appreciate your time.

Securing our Nation's aviation system requires 100% accuracy. Our enemies could exploit any weaknesses in the system.

The many reports of security breaches and unauthorized access to the tarmac are extremely troubling and continue to underscore the need to strengthen access controls.

We must make certain that the billions of taxpayer dollars we spend screening passengers is not wasted if systemic vulnerabilities exist through the back doors of our airports that could lead to an attack.

I look forward to questioning TSA and its partners about the measures in place to not only physically protect airports, but also to ensure that employees with sterile-area access have been thoroughly vetted and do not pose a threat.

A secure airport requires the coordination and cooperation of a range of stakeholders. When breaches occur, it is incumbent upon both TSA and its partners to evaluate what went wrong, and take immediate steps to mitigate or eliminate that vulnerability.

What concerns me is that with such a large number of breaches occurring, it is hard to believe these do not reflect some larger, systemic problem.

In October 2011, a local news station in Atlanta investigated the access control procedures at Atlanta International Airport after a whistleblower contacted the station. The whistleblower, an employee of an airline catering company, was able to capture on video, a company employee swiping his badge to let another person in the secure area, allegedly without that person having the necessary credentials to pass through.

The video also revealed that the employee was able to put unauthorized juice containers onto several carts as inspectors from the company responsible for inspecting all food containers loaded onto aircraft, stood nearby.

The Aviation and Transportation Security Act requires all supplies put on an airplane to be sealed to "ensure easy visual detection of tampering." However, the video shows rows of unsealed catering carts on the dock and in trucks waiting to be loaded onto flights.

While we can all hope that this is an isolated incident at Atlanta Airport, this is more than likely indicative of a broader, more pervasive problem affecting airports nationwide.

In another recent case, a civilian vehicle crashed through an airport gate and drove on a taxiway near a busy runway at Philadelphia International Airport. According to sources, the vehicle drove past a Philadelphia police officer in a patrol car and two airport employees.

Thankfully, in these two examples there was no harm done. However, we may not always be so lucky. And with a huge financial cost to taxpayers, we frankly expect better from TSA and others who are responsible for securing our aviation system.

Finally - and I cannot stress enough how disturbing this is - the DHS Office of Inspector General reported just this week that over half of all security breaches that occur at airports are never properly reported up to TSA

Headquarters. In addition, only half of all incidents result in some corrective action. Mr. Sammon, these are sobering findings.

I am eager to receive testimony today from the Acting DHS IG about the report and the recommendations that TSA will need to address going forward.

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