



Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Peter T. King

Opening Statement

August 1, 2012

Media Contact: Shane Wolfe

(202) 226-8417

Statement of Chairman Rogers (R-AL)

Subcommittee on Transportation Security

"Breach of Trust: Addressing Misconduct Among TSA Screeners"

**August 1, 2012
Remarks as Prepared**

I would like to welcome everyone to this hearing, and thank TSA's new Deputy Administrator, John Halinski, for testifying here today.

Congratulations on your recent promotion, Mr. Halinski. I share Administrator Pistole's confidence that you can get the job done.

The need for the Federal government to oversee and direct aviation security is undeniable.

Terrorists have proven time and again their commitment to attacking our nation's aviation systems. The government has a duty to protect its citizens against these kinds of attacks.

Having said that, the majority of Americans do not support the government's current approach, and when they hear that the people at TSA that are supposed to enforce and ensure their security are engaged in gross misconduct it only makes matters worse.

Stealing from checked luggage; Accepting bribes from drug smugglers; Sleeping or drinking while on duty - This kind of criminal behavior and negligence has contributed significantly to TSA's shattered public image.

It is true that other Federal departments struggle with criminal cases against their employees; but TSA, unlike most agencies, interacts with the general public in a very frequent and personal manner.

The fact is TSA's high-profile criminal cases have contributed to its major image problems and a growing lack of support.

I believe TSA has an oversized workforce, which only increases the likelihood of this type of behavior. I think the number of employees could be reduced dramatically, with significantly more attention paid to qualifications and training.

It is just a small percentage of the overall workforce that is involved in criminal or negligent behavior; but it only takes a few bad apples to spoil the bunch, and at the end of the day perception is reality.

I did not convene this hearing to rehash all the details of the recent incidents of misconduct, nor is my intention to vilify every TSA employee.

Rather, this hearing is a chance for TSA to describe its efforts to more quickly identify and remove employees whose behavior or lack of judgment can further damage TSA's already troubled image.

I believe the American taxpayer is owed this information.

More importantly, I believe the frequency of TSA employee misconduct is a symptom of a larger problem we have examined before.

With the exception of S-P-P airports, TSA is responsible for both overseeing the screening and conducting the screening.

In some cases, we have seen poor screener performance going uncorrected or, even worse, being encouraged or covered up by TSA management.

One of the most disturbing examples occurred last year in Honolulu airport, where screeners and supervisors were letting luggage go through without screening for explosives.

TSA's own Federal Security Director was in on it.

One of these cases is too many. But there have been other disturbing cases since then, including at airports in Southwest Florida, Philadelphia, JFK, and Newark.

Today, I look forward to receiving information from Mr. Halinski on his efforts to tackle these issues and how Congress can assist you in those efforts.

TSA has taken some action under Administrator Pistole's leadership to improve the integrity of TSA's workforce, including the creation of a new Office of Professional Responsibility.

While I regularly support the Administrator, adding bureaucracy on top of bureaucracy is generally not a good solution.

###