



Committee on  
**HOMELAND SECURITY**  
Chairman Michael McCaul

*Opening Statement*

March 28, 2014

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**Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Richard Hudson (R-NC)  
Subcommittee on Transportation Security  
Committee on Homeland Security**

**“Lessons from the LAX Shooting: Preparing for and Responding to Emergencies at Airports”**

**Remarks as Prepared**

I would like to thank our witnesses for their participation in this hearing, and their commitment to aviation security.

I also want to acknowledge the sacrifice of TSA Officer Hernandez who lost his life here on November 1, 2013. It is my sincere hope that this hearing not only reminds us of the horrible events of that day but also motivates us to make changes that will improve our ability to detect and deter potential threats, and respond to future emergencies. I believe we owe it to Mr. Hernandez and all of those impacted by the shooting to examine the facts and shed light on the details and timeline of this incident in an open setting. That alone is the purpose of today’s hearing

The shooting that occurred here at LAX exposed significant weaknesses in the ability of Federal and local personnel to communicate and coordinate during an emergency – weaknesses that I suspect exist in many other airports across the country. Perhaps these weaknesses stem from resources constraints, or clashes between agencies, or a belief that an incident like this is unlikely. It is certainly easier to push emergency planning and exercises off to sometime in the distant future rather than making them a top priority for today.

Having said that, I think most of my colleagues will agree that thirteen years after 9/11, these types of flaws cannot be tolerated, regardless of the reasons. Based on the reports completed by Los Angeles World Airports and TSA, it appears there is widespread agreement on this.

According to Los Angeles World Airports, the response and recovery efforts that followed the November 1<sup>st</sup> shooting lasted roughly thirty hours. The shooting affected over 1,500 flights and 171,000 passengers. Among the findings in its report, LAWA highlights significant coordination and

communication challenges among local first responders. I agree with LAWA's assertions that airport security needs to become more risk-based, emergency communications need to be more streamlined, and there must be a unified incident command set-up immediately after an event like this.

While the report provided details on certain aspects of the response, LAWA's report conspicuously excludes any mention whatsoever of where the two officers assigned to Terminal 3 were at the time the first shots rang out, and what impact, if any, this may or may not have had. I believe the location of these officers is crucial to understanding the viability of a flexible response to screening checkpoints, especially when you combine it with the lack of interoperable radio communications that we know exists.

If we do not have law enforcement officers stationed at heavily trafficked screening checkpoints or ticket counters, we should at least have confidence that we know exactly when the first officers will be there to respond to an active shooter or other emergency. I look forward to discussing this issue in greater detail today.

In addition to LAWA's report, we have had the benefit of reviewing TSA's recent report, which highlights several recommended actions, including mandatory active shooter training for screeners, improved communications systems, and enhanced law enforcement officer presence at checkpoints and ticket counters during peak travel times. The bottom line is TSA cannot do it alone, and must rely on its local law enforcement partners in an event like this.

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to remind Members that we are on a tight schedule, with folks flying out at varying times this afternoon. I will be enforcing the five-minute rule for all Members so that hopefully we are able to get through two full rounds of questioning.

My intention is to hold a second hearing in Washington to look more broadly at how the lessons we discuss here today can or cannot be applied to airports nationwide, and I welcome all Members to attend that hearing as well.

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