



Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Michael McCaul

Opening Statement

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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: Airport and Law Enforcement Perspectives”

Remarks as Prepared

The Subcommittee is meeting today to continue its review of lessons learned from the senseless act of violence that occurred at Los Angeles International Airport last year and to assess how we can better secure our nation’s airports and transportation systems. On the morning of November 1, 2013, a lone gunman entered LAX’s Terminal 3 and brutally shot and killed transportation security officer Gerardo Hernandez, while also shooting and wounding one passenger and two other TSOs, who had heroically stayed behind to assist an elderly gentleman evacuate the checkpoint.

The LAX shooting resulted in an inspiring display of bravery by emergency first responders, law enforcement officers, and TSA personnel. In March, I, along with Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, and several other Members traveled to LAX and conducted a site visit and field hearing where we were able to meet with first responders and better comprehend the complexity and scope of the response to the shooting.

While I remain impressed by the planning and execution of incident response at LAX, it is incumbent upon this subcommittee and TSA to ensure that airports of all sizes are aware of best practices in security incident response and are prepared to work together with law enforcement to mitigate such events in the future. As our nation faces an evolving threat landscape that focuses on soft targets—as was seen in the tragic bombings at the Boston Marathon—we all must recognize the vulnerabilities airports have and the need to be adequately prepared to handle such events.

Indeed airports around the world have experienced such incidents in the past. The Frankfurt airport shootings and Moscow airport bombing in 2011, as well as the Glasgow airport car bomb in 2007 show a history of attacks perpetrated against the unsecured areas of airport facilities. With approximately 450 federalized airports in the United States, effective coordination between law enforcement, airport

operators, first responders, and TSA is critical to protecting the public in an emergency and mitigating an incident as quickly as possible.

I believe that better interoperable communications, regular emergency response and evacuation drills, equipment testing, and well-articulated response plans are the basis for accomplishing this objective. These observations reflect lessons learned from the LAX shooting, as we saw some confusion and delay in establishing an incident command post, communicating effectively between responding agencies, and keeping the public at LAX informed as to what was happening and where they should go. The after-action review conducted by LAX admits that normal operations could have resumed sooner had the response effort been better-coordinated.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses their own thoughts on security incident response and how their airports are prepared to deal with such events. I also am eager to hear your thoughts on TSA's after-action review and recommendations for enhanced law enforcement presence at ticket counters and security checkpoints during certain peak travel times. While TSA is responsible for screening passengers and helping to prevent acts of terrorism against the aviation sector, the overall security and safety of the airport environment primarily lies with airport, local, and state law enforcement agencies stationed in and around the airport.

Whether it be an active shooter or an individual breaching perimeter security and stowing away in the wheel-well of an aircraft, it is important for the Subcommittee to understand the unique challenges facing airport stakeholders and what can be done to detect and respond to perceived and known threats.

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