



Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Michael McCaul

Opening Statement

July 16, 2015

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**Statement of Subcommittee Chairman John Katko (R-N.Y.)
Subcommittee on Transportation Security**

“Examining the Federal Air Marshal Service and Its Readiness to Meet the Evolving Threat”

Remarks as Prepared

I would like to express my support for Administrator Neffenger, who assumed his new position as TSA’s Administrator last week. I had the opportunity to sit down with Administrator Neffenger, and I am hopeful that he can provide steady leadership in order to bring TSA into a new and more-effective chapter. While it is clear that he will have his work cut out for him, I believe that his experience in the United States Coast Guard will be a valuable asset to TSA and I look forward to working with him and hearing his views on how to fix this agency at our full committee hearing later this month.

Since the beginning of the 114th Congress this subcommittee has aggressively examined several issues related to TSA’s operations, policies, and procedures in order to ensure that TSA is fulfilling its mission of keeping the traveling public safe. Today, we will examine what many have called “the last line of defense” against potential terror attacks in the sky: Federal Air Marshals.

The Federal Air Marshal Service was significantly expanded in the wake of the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. The outcome of 9/11 could have been very different if we had Federal Air Marshals on those planes. However, we also have to keep in mind that the threat to aviation security has evolved dramatically over the last fourteen years. The terrorists are constantly adapting their tactics, and we need to make sure we are not protecting ourselves against yesterday’s threat and ignoring the threats of tomorrow.

For example, the threat of an IED being detonated aboard an aircraft is very real. Is a Federal Air Marshal capable of preventing an IED from being detonated? Or should we reallocate some of the hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars that are appropriated every year for the Federal Air Marshal Service towards better intelligence efforts, or security measures for other soft targets such as the unsecure areas of the airport.

The purpose of today's hearing is to discuss if the Federal Air Marshal Service, in its current form, is demonstrating a risk-based approach to securing our nation's aviation system from a terrorist attack.

It is not clear to me whether the Service and its strategy for resource allocation have kept pace with new threats. Additionally, I remain concerned that continued public allegations of employee misconduct and abuse within the Federal Air Marshal Service have served to hurt public perception of air marshals and decimate employee morale.

Today we plan to examine several key areas of this program to determine its effectiveness and whether there is anything Congress can do to assist and ensure the continued safety and security of the traveling public. We all share the same goal, and as such, it is our duty to ensure that we constantly reexamine what we are doing and why we are doing it in order to yield better security enhancements and be more intelligence-driven.

At today's hearing we have the Assistant Administrator for TSA's Office of Law Enforcement, Mr. Rod Alliston, to address these issues and discuss what tools are necessary to improve efficiency and security, and on our second panel we will have Captain Tim Canoll, from the Air Line Pilots Association to discuss the Federal Flight Deck Officer Program and its coordination with the Federal Air Marshal Service. I look forward to hearing the testimony from both of our witnesses and having a meaningful dialogue on how to make improvements to the Federal Air Marshal Service, as we work together to counter threats facing the U.S. aviation sector.

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