



Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Michael McCaul

Opening Statement

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**Statement of Chairman Michael McCaul (R-Texas)
Subcommittee on Transportation Security
Committee on Homeland Security**

“A Review of Access Control Measures at our Nation’s Airports”

Remarks as Delivered

I would like to commend Chairman Katko and Ranking Member Rice for starting off the Congress with focusing on the important and timely topic of access control and employee screening at our Nation’s airports.

It is vital that the agencies responsible for protecting our airports are doing all that they can to keep our aviation sector safe. This responsibility does not end at the passenger screening checkpoints; a robust system of vetting employees at airports is equally as important.

This hearing is an important opportunity to examine security programs designed to mitigate potential insider threats from airport employees, airline employees, TSA personnel and others who have access to sterile areas of domestic airports.

In addition to the most recent access control breaches at Atlanta airport that have been mentioned, there have been a number of insider threats and employee issues at various other airports in recent years.

For example, in December 2013, the FBI arrested an avionics technician at Wichita Airport for plotting a suicide attack using a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device. The technician allegedly intended to use his airport clearance to gain access to the tarmac and detonate the vehicle near planes and the terminal during peak holiday travel, in order to maximize casualties. He was charged with attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction and attempting to provide material assistance to al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula.

Additionally, in September 2013, a TSA screener at Los Angeles International Airport was arrested a few hours after resigning his position for making threats against the airport that cited the anniversary of

9/11, and for leaving a suspicious package at the airport. His actions resulted in the evacuation of several airport terminals.

Finally, in September 2014, a former airline employee at Minneapolis Airport died in Syria fighting alongside the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Though the individual had left employment with the airline several years prior to becoming a foreign fighter of ISIS, he did have access to sterile areas of the airport during his employment, including the tarmac.

There are significant lessons to be drawn from these and other incidents involving employees. The bottom line is that our aviation network remains a prime target for terrorism. We must be vigilant and constantly reevaluate our security posture according to the threats we face, and that includes potential insider threats.

I am pleased that the Subcommittee will hear testimony from TSA, the FBI, and airport and airline representatives on this important topic and I look forward to examining what additional measures should be taken to protect our airports and the American people.

I thank Chairman Katko for his leadership of the Subcommittee and I yield back the balance of my time.

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