

Ranking Member Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX)
Opening Statement

Subcommittee on Transportation Security

**“Last Line of Defense: the Federal Air Marshal Service 10
Years After 9/11”**

I would also like to thank Chairman Rogers for holding this important and timely hearing to take a closer look at the Federal Air Marshal program and discuss the recent findings in a report released last week by the Department of Homeland Security Inspector General.

The Aviation Transportation Security Act of 2002 designated the Federal Air Marshal Service as the law enforcement organization within the Transportation Security Administration.

Prior to September 11, the Federal Air Marshals comprised a workforce of 33 sky marshals.

After 9/11, it became clear that a 33-person unit would not be sufficient to protect the American flying public from this new threat.

FAMS was vastly expanded to address vulnerabilities exposed on 9/11.

The Federal Air Marshal Service serves as the last line of defense for thousands of passengers on flights, both domestic and international.

While FAMS police our skies and protect passengers, we must wonder what happens when they leave the airport and return to the office.

In the last few years, we have learned about a hostile work environment epitomized by the use a crude game to demean FAMS who are Women, Minority group members or Gays.

Today, the Inspector General will testify that 47% of survey respondents fear retaliation if they speak out about workplace conditions.

Today, we will hear from the leadership of FAMS about the plan to correct the workforce issues that have long plagued this organization.

We will also hear from the Inspector General about the recommendations he has made to remedy the issues at FAMS.

This is not the organization we envisioned 10 years ago, and while I believe there is a security value added by FAMS, I am eager to hear from our witnesses today on how we can best address the serious concerns raised by the Inspector General.

Compounding my concern about the Inspector General's report is the fact that the workforce challenges at FAMS are not new.

In 2005, GAO released a report recommending that FAMS develop a communication strategy to share expectations and report related progress within its workforce.

In 2009, GAO released another report recommending that the Director of FAMS take appropriate actions to increase the usefulness of the workforce satisfaction surveys.

Today, we will receive testimony from the IG recommending that the Director of FAMS provide increased transparency and forms of communication across the organization, particularly between "rank and file" FAMS and management.

It seems that every examination of FAMS—whether by GAO or the Inspector General—finds a workplace that needs improved transparency, increased communication and opportunities for upward mobility.

It is also clear that every examination since 2005 has yielded a promise from FAMS management that practices would improve and conditions would change.

It appears that those promises have not been kept. Today, I do not want to hear new promises. Today I want to learn how FAMS leadership will keep its commitment to those Federal Air Marshals who risk their lives every day to protect the flying public.

I look forward to hearing from Director Bray on what actions he intends to take to address workforce challenges once and for all.