

# **Opening Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)**

## **Subcommittee on Transportation Security**

### **“Building Secure Partnerships in Travel, Commerce, and Trade with the Asia-Pacific Region”**

12:30 p.m. Tuesday May 8, 2012

During the last Congress, as Chairman of the Full Committee, I held a hearing that took a close look at the events surrounding the attack on December 25<sup>th</sup>—which examined the events that led to a suicide bomber aboard Northwest Flight 253. That hearing led to significant findings regarding the counterterrorism and the information sharing processes that this Administration had to address to enhance our counterterrorism efforts.

The events reported yesterday demonstrate a successful halt of an attack plot against our aviation system. As such, this incident is once again a reminder that terrorists continue to plot against our aviation system, so we must remain vigilant and aggressive.

Today, we will hear from DHS, TSA, the State Department and industry stakeholders on the status of our efforts to collaborate on security partnerships with nations in the Asia-Pacific Region.

I look forward to hearing from our Department witnesses on efforts underway to address lessons learned on December 25<sup>th</sup> and strengthen international cooperation standards that mitigate threats such as those presented most recently by Al Qaeda.

Ensuring the flow of legitimate trade and travel is critical to our economy. However, we cannot afford to sacrifice our security concerns to facilitate our economic well-being.

This country’s participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations may support the creation and retention of high-quality jobs in the United States by increasing American exports to a region that represents more than 40 percent of global trade.

However, those efforts will mean little if TSA fails in its efforts to coordinate information sharing and standards for screening and supply chain security practices with foreign nations.

We must realize that when we increase the volume of shipments, we increase the quantum of risk. We know that tactics used by terrorists continue to evolve. And we know that there is an on-going desire to exploit vulnerabilities in our aviation system. I look forward to hearing from TSA about its efforts to reach agreements to harmonize security screening standards for passengers, baggage and cargo.

Last Congress, this Subcommittee conducted important oversight on supply chain vulnerabilities which led to the attempted shipment of explosives from Yemen. Our hearings and oversight shed light on security screening, counterterrorism and information sharing processes that must be improved not only by governments but by industry stakeholders.

Establishing partnerships and relationships with other countries is a critical component in increasing our ability to benefit from trade as well as assuring our security.