

***Opening Statement – Ranking Member Cedric L. Richmond (D-LA)
Subcommittee on Transportation Security***

For Hearing “Examining TSA’s Cadre of Criminal Investigators”

January 28, 2014

As you all know, the work that this Subcommittee does is extremely important. We are tasked with making sure that the Transportation Security Administration fulfills its mission of protecting the nation’s transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce.

More importantly, we are tasked with ensuring the safety of American Citizens as they travel across the nation.

To accomplish this mission, we must ensure that every office within the Transportation Security Administration is operating both effectively and efficiently.

The report released in September 2013 by the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Inspector General regarding the Office of Inspection is both alarming and scathing. The report details that the Office of Inspection is not operating at maximum efficiency, or in a cost-effective manor because of a top heavy structure.

Specifically, the Office of Inspection employs personnel classified as “criminal investigators”, despite their duties not fitting the classification of criminal investigations according to Federal regulations. This classification allows these “criminal investigators” to receive enhanced benefits, and LEAP pay.

According to the OIG report, and as I understand it, two prior reports, substantial savings could be achieved by reclassifying these “criminal investigators” in a manner consistent with the needs of the Office of Inspection and the type of work they perform.

Undoubtedly, there are many examples of instances in which the Office of Inspection has helped thwart the efforts of nefarious actors who mean to do our nation harm.

That, however, does not diminish the need for us to use our resources effectively so that we can operate at maximum efficiency.

It is my hope that through the testimony we gather today, we can get further insight about where these inefficiencies are occurring, how we can reallocate our resources in an effective manor, and also what can be done structurally within the TSA so that when these structural problems are first brought to light, they can be quickly addressed.

I look forward to all of the witnesses testimony, and hope that the work that we do here today aids in making the Transportation Security Administration stronger, more efficient, and more effective.

Before yielding back, I would like to note that this is the first hearing of the Subcommittee in the Second Session of this Congress. It is my expectation that this Subcommittee will be as bipartisan and productive this year as it was last year when our Subcommittee produced four out of the five bills that the Committee saw pass the House.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Chair to see that the bills we sent to the Senate in December, including Ranking Member Thompson’s bill to codify the Aviation Security Advisory Committee, become law this year.