

## **Statement of Ranking Member Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ)**

### **Subcommittee on Transportation and Protective Security Hearing**

#### **“Insider Threats to Aviation Security: Airline and Airport Perspectives”**

**September 27, 2018**

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I want to thank Chairman Katko for his collaboration in putting together the package of TSA legislation that was included in the FAA Reauthorization Act that passed the House yesterday.

By my count, the package includes 21 TSA bills that originated in this Subcommittee, reflecting the extent of our bipartisan work this Congress.

In addition to bills I authored to enhance surface transportation security and authorize TSA’s National Deployment Force, the package includes several provisions relevant to today’s hearing.

Congressman Keating’s bill, the Airport Perimeter and Access Control Security Act, requires the TSA Administrator to update key risk assessments and strategies guiding perimeter security and access control efforts.

Chairman Katko’s bill, the Aviation Employee Screening and Security Enhancement Act, of which I am a cosponsor, directs a cost and feasibility study of enhanced employee inspections at airport access points, as well as an assessment of credentialing standards.

These bills build upon provisions enacted in the 2016 FAA Extension Act that required TSA to update rules on airport access controls and improve criminal background checks.

TSA and industry stakeholders have worked to implement those requirements and other measures to enhance security, including recommendations made by the Aviation Security Advisory Committee.

For example, TSA has developed the Advanced Threat Location Allocation Strategy, or “ATLAS,” to ensure limited resources for employee screening are deployed based on risk and in a manner that maximizes the expectation among employees that they will be subject to screening.

Airports and airlines, for their part, have worked to reduce access points to secure areas and improve security awareness among employees.

All parties deserve recognition for taking these threats seriously and coming to the table to develop sensible and effective solutions.

Nevertheless, recent incidents have made clear that significant vulnerabilities remain.

Last month, a Horizon Air employee was able to steal and fly a passenger jet at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, ultimately crashing it in what was fortunately an unpopulated area, killing only himself.

If this individual had had different intentions, or if we had simply been less lucky, the incident could have placed all of downtown Seattle in grave danger.

Just a week ago, a student pilot was able to jump over a perimeter security fence at Orlando-Melbourne International Airport and access the cockpit of a large passenger jet.

Fortunately, two courageous maintenance workers were onboard the plane and heroically disrupted the apparent plot to steal another plane.

Again, under slightly different circumstances, events could have played out much more negatively.

While the student pilot in Orlando was not an “insider” in the same way as the airline worker in Seattle, the incident highlighted the need to control access to aircraft more strictly—as well as the need to better secure airport perimeters.

It also highlighted that workers should not be viewed primarily as a threat to aviation, but rather as important security partners.

Aviation workers know airports better than anyone. They know who should be where, and they recognize when something is out of place.

Security solutions must be developed in consultation with workers and take full advantage of their expertise.

Both of these recent incidents are being investigated, and I am eager to learn more about the motives of the individuals in question and how they were able to defeat security measures so easily.

In the meantime, I hope our witnesses today will be able to shed some light on how similar incidents can be prevented in the future and what this Committee can do to be helpful.