



OPENING STATEMENT

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**Statement of Subcommittee Chairman John Katko (R-NY)
Transportation Security and Counterterrorism and Intelligence Subcommittees
House Homeland Security Committee**

Safeguarding Our Nation's Surface Transportation Systems Against Evolving Terrorist Threats

Remarks as Prepared

I would like to welcome everyone to today's hearing.

I am pleased to be joined by my fellow New York delegation members Chairman Peter King, Ranking Member Kathleen Rice and Ranking Member Brian Higgins to talk about a topic that is so vital to the state of New York. Protecting our nation's surface transportation systems requires full cooperation and participation at the federal, state, local and individual levels.

An attack on any of our surface transportation systems would not only disrupt the local economy and infrastructure, but would have a ripple effect to cities across our nation.

For example, in my own district, in Syracuse, NY, we have a freight rail line that runs through our downtown area, and provides critical economic benefit to the region.

The purpose of today's hearing is to assess our ability and readiness to detect and disrupt threats to our nation's critical surface transportation systems.

Before we begin, I would like to express my pride and admiration for the four Americans that, through unrivaled acts of courage and bravery, were able to thwart a terrorist attack aboard a Paris-bound train on August 21, 2015.

The heroic actions of those four men; Mark Moogalian, a teacher originally from Midlothian, VA; Anthony Sadler, a senior at Sacramento State University; Air Force Airman 1st Class Spencer Stone and Oregon Army National Guard Specialist Alek Skarlatos, saved countless lives.

However, it is our responsibility to the American people to do all that we can to defend them against such heinous acts, and the American people should not be put in a position requiring them to defend their lives while riding a train, subway or bus to vacation, commute to work or simply run an errand.

Since September 11, 2001, many people have come to think of a terrorist attack against the United States as one which is an elaborate scheme against a hardened target.

Increasingly, however, the terrorists and their sympathizers are choosing soft targets; the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris, the military recruiting centers attack in Chattanooga and now the train attack in Paris are just a few such examples.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today on their perspectives on the state of rail and mass transit security, to identify progress made since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 and assess any remaining shortfalls.

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