



**Statement of Chairman Michael McCaul (R-TX)  
Homeland Security Committee**

*“Long Lines, Short Patience: The TSA Airport Screening Experience”  
May 25, 2016*

Remarks as Prepared

Today we face a crisis at our airports.

We’ve all read the headlines, and we know how bad it’s gotten:

- Three-hour-long security lines.
- 450 American Airlines passengers stranded overnight in Chicago O’Hare.
- Travelers from Atlanta, Charlotte, and Alaska waiting forever to be screened, causing missed flights and further delays.
- More than 3,000 bags fail to get loaded onto planes in time in Phoenix.
- An 80 percent increase in wait times at JFK airport compared to this time last year.

Administrator, the American people are angry and frustrated as we head into the busiest travel season of the year, starting this Memorial Day weekend. And they deserve answers.

This crisis didn’t just come out of nowhere. Airports and airlines have been sounding the alarm for months.

There is no doubt that part of the challenge we face is a high terror threat environment. But wait times are not soaring simply because security is that much tighter. It’s because the TSA bureaucracy has gotten weaker.

The agency has struggled to keep up with high demand and has been unable to put the right people in the right place at the right time. Change is not happening fast enough.

Admiral Neffenger, I know you are working to reform TSA’s broken bureaucracy, and today I hope to hear how you will confront this crisis swiftly.

But Congress will not sit back as the situation gets worse. That is why this Committee and the House of Representatives passed legislation to fix the problem. I commend my colleague, Mr. Katko, for offering these bills.

Among other measures, our legislation would accelerate TSA's PreCheck program, which helps reduce wait times by putting low-risk travelers through expedited screening.

Unfortunately, the Senate has failed to pass these bills, which is unconscionable. So today I would like to send my message to my colleagues in the other body: it's time to get moving—because the American people are fed up.

This week we will introduce yet another bill to attack the problem, and I hope this time we can get it to the President's desk more quickly.

And in the coming months, we will take a broader look at TSA, including the first-ever reauthorization of the agency, which will give us an opportunity to make wider reforms and long-term changes.

Additionally, we plan to take up legislation to enhance TSA's Screening Partnership Program.

But as I noted, we must also take account of the serious aviation threats we face.

Although investigators are still working to determine the cause of the EgyptAir crash, one fact is clear: terrorists are trying to bring down airplanes, and the aviation sector is still their crown-jewel target.

This month I led a Congressional delegation to the Middle East and North Africa to examine the spread of terror safe havens. And we walked away concerned that screening is inadequate at some airports which have direct flights to America.

For instance, airports like Cairo lack full-body scanners to detect non-metallic IEDs, and they lack access to comprehensive terrorist watchlists for screening their employees.

This is a concern because we know that militants are trying to recruit "insiders" to take down passenger jets. We've seen this twice in recent months, including an attack in Somalia and one against a Russian jet flying out of Sharm el Sheikh in Egypt.

But this is not just a problem in the Middle East or North Africa. Just this past December, Charles De Gaulle airport in Paris— which has 50 direct flights into the U.S. every day—fired 70 employees who were suspected of having extremist connections. 70 employees.

We have got to help our foreign partners weed out extremists. The House has passed two bills from this Committee to ramp up security at overseas airports, and yet again, they are sitting in the Senate waiting for action. We cannot afford further delay.

But as we adapt to the evolving threat, we must also make sure agencies like TSA adapt their business models to keep travel flowing smoothly. Terrorists would like nothing more than for us to undermine our own economy by allowing air transportation grind to a halt.

Admiral Neffenger, we've given TSA the resources it asked for to make screening more efficient. Congress even granted a recent request to reallocate \$34 million to hire nearly 800 new TSA officers before July and to pay for additional overtime for existing personnel.

Today, we expect you tell us how you are putting these resources to work—and how you are going to address the crisis at our airports once and for all.

Thank you.

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