



HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Statement of Subcommittee Chairman John Katko (R-NY) Subcommittee on Transportation and Protective Security

“Raising the Standard: DHS’s Efforts to Improve Aviation Security Around the Globe”

September 26, 2017

Remarks as Prepared

The recent failed plot to take down a passenger plane in Australia is a stark reminder that aviation still stands as a top target for terrorists around the world. This incident is alarming for many reasons, but perhaps most disturbing is how the improvised explosive device came into the hands of the suspects. According to reports, an ISIS operative sent the parts of the IED on a cargo plane from Turkey to the suspects in Australia. The suspects were able to build the IED and then attempt to conceal it in their luggage. Fortunately, the bag was over the weight limit and unable to be brought on the plane. If not for good luck, this plot could have been successful. The Australians called this one of the most sophisticated plots that has ever been attempted on Australian soil.

Exposing not only the vulnerabilities and threats to both passenger and cargo aircraft, this plot illuminates the importance of the international community in securing aviation. The international aviation system represents our modern, globalized world. However, with interconnected transportation systems comes interconnected risk. No matter how good our domestic airport and aircraft security is, we must continue to raise the standard of global aviation security for foreign countries and last point of departure airports. It is imperative that aviation security standards are robust, and that these standards are commonplace in foreign countries, especially those with LPD airports. Confidence in aviation security at home begins with the assurance that our global partners are enforcing security standards abroad.

Today, the Subcommittee holds this hearing to better understand the scope and impact of DHS’s global programs aimed at securing international aviation, as well as recent efforts to enhance security at overseas airports with direct flights to the United States. We want to hear from all of our witnesses about what we are currently doing to improve global aviation security, as well as what we could be doing better, and how Congress can work with the Department to support these efforts.

We cannot afford to ignore the potential security lessons from the Australian incident, which was thankfully unsuccessful. Just as the failed 2010 Yemen plot led to major improvements to cargo screening, we must use this as a way to assess and improve our own security and the security of our international partners. Additionally, ISIS’s role in this plot solidifies their sophistication, determination, and ability to threaten every corner of the globe—despite losing large parts of its so called caliphate in Iraq and Syria.

DHS's overseas mission is now more important than ever, and it is critical that this Subcommittee understands the extent of the Department's global reach, as well as how the U.S. Government is working with foreign partners and aviation stakeholders to enhance security at overseas airports. The Subcommittee supports the recent security measures that were implemented for inbound flights to the U.S. We look forward to hearing how these measures are improving our security and what else is under consideration to continue to raise the standard of global aviation security.

Additionally, we want to hear about the efforts of other entities, such as the International Civil Aviation Organization, in setting aviation security standards worldwide. ICAO and other entities are an essential component in proliferating security best practices and capacity building at high-risk airports around the world. However, many airports around the globe with inadequate security are receiving "passing grades" based on ICAO standards. DHS must do all it can to raise these international standards and ensure their enforcement, and I look forward to hearing more about that.

Throughout the 114th and 115th Congresses, this Subcommittee has worked to close security gaps at LPD airports. This includes my legislation signed into law that directs TSA to perform comprehensive security risk assessments of all LPD airports and develop a strategy to enhance security for inbound flights, while also authorizing TSA to donate screening equipment to foreign airports in need of advanced technology. It also includes Chairman McCaul's DHS Authorization bill, which directs the U.S. to work with international partners to increase the minimum standards for aviation security worldwide, and requires foreign airports to provide U.S. inspectors with information about the screening and vetting of airport workers during regular security assessments. These pieces of legislation highlight the challenges our foreign partners face in passenger and cargo screening, as well as vetting aviation workers with access to secure and sensitive areas of airports.

These efforts in Congress, together with the actions of DHS abroad, will continue to bring attention to LPD airport security and show the global aviation community that the U.S. is serious about these international challenges. Regardless of how challenging they may be, however, we must always strive to lead in this critically important area, because raising the aviation security standard around the globe will ultimately keep Americans safe.

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