

Statement of
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Before the
United States House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Subcommittee on Transportation Security
Hearing on “Lessons from the LAX Shooting: Airport and Law Enforcement Perspectives”
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Chairman Hudson, Ranking Member Richmond, and members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to participate in this public hearing. I would like to commend this subcommittee and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for the thoughtful and collaborative approach they have taken surrounding the horrific events that occurred on November 1, 2013 at LAX. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family of Mr. Hernandez. I believe the efforts of this subcommittee and the collaborative discussion it has created within the industry will provide measurable security improvements for travelers and workers at the nation’s airports.

Raleigh-Durham International Airport is located in North Carolina and is the 39th largest airport in the United States. We handle over nine million passengers a year. As a commercial service airport we have the responsibility to detect, deter and prevent both security threats and safety concerns that could harm passengers and employees. The LAX incident was significant, and airports have responded aggressively by looking at emergency responsiveness, evacuation strategies, local/federal coordination and a host of other issues to make sure they are adequately prepared if such an incident occurs again.

Commercial service airports across the country are required to develop an airport emergency plan that addresses the following: aircraft, terrorism and hazardous material incidents, structural fires, natural disasters, sabotage and hijackings, water rescues and crowd control. Airports are constantly evaluating safety and security risks and regularly review their emergency and contingency plans to ensure they are prepared. At RDU we have added to our emergency plan over time by developing a special passenger assistance plan, crisis communications plan, baggage handling contingency plan and a communicable disease plan. Also, at this time, my staff is developing a severe weather plan to address a significant weather event such as a hurricane. We also hold annual safety and security table-top exercises to practice and test our emergency plan.

With regard to the incident at LAX and its impact on airport emergency response, I offer several recommendations below on how airports and the federal government can work together to strengthen the response to these types of incidents.

Encourage the development of active shooter response and recovery *guidelines* by TSA versus *one-size-fits-all regulations* to ensure that all airports have the basic framework to meet the requirements of their individual airports. The tasks and actions needed for recovery and return to normal operations are best handled in the Airport Emergency Plan, or a standalone plan, not in the Airport Security Plan.

Enlist TSA to act as a clearing house for lessons learned from active shooter incidents. While RDU sent three of its employees to the LAX active shooter and the SFO aircraft accident debriefings, not all airports across the country can afford this type of investment. Therefore, a real-time clearing house of information of the very best ideas on how to deal with active shooter scenarios would significantly increase the overall preparedness of all airports.

We encourage your recommendation that airports, in coordination with TSA, conduct active shooter awareness training for all of their employees and tenants. In the summer of 2013 RDU provided its employees with active shooter awareness training. It was so well received that employees have requested that we provide this training to their families. While on the surface that may not seem like a significant deterrent, we believe we mitigated a potential act against our passengers and employees at our facility after the training was conducted.

Recognize that a layered approach to terminal area security around the checkpoint and ticket counters is the most effective. One layer includes community policing. At RDU we are developing and expanding our community policing program to include the employees of the airlines and other tenants to reinforce the importance of immediate action drills and proper communication procedures, while infusing a mindset of constant awareness.

Additionally, we conduct two active shooter tactical drills each year; have enhanced our armament and weapons training and added two explosive detection dogs; and we are exploring ways to utilize technology, such as CCTV and facial recognition software, to act as a force multiplier to assist with the detection & prevention of and the recovery from criminal activity.

Our objective is to build rings and layers of security to detect, discourage, mitigate and react to threats. Airports are concerned with how to respond to ever changing threats while maintaining the common goal of protecting citizens in our facilities.

Finally, I appreciate the leadership of Chairman Hudson, Ranking Member Richmond and members of the Subcommittee on the exit lane staffing. In light of the tragedy at LAX, we encourage that a long term technology solution be considered. This solution would further reduce the potential point of entry by individuals wanting to harm our passengers and employees. Movement to employ a technology solution at the exit lanes will require an investment to achieve this security objective. I would encourage members of Congress to make the necessary investment by offering a grant to implement technology solutions at airports across the country.

Looking forward, Mr. Chairman, I know that the committee is interested in seeking actions to ensure that all airports are adequately prepared should future active shooter events materialize, which we all hope will not be the case. Therefore, I summarize the action recommendations discussed above as follows:

1. Plans for response and recovery from active shooter scenarios should be handled in the Airport Emergency Plan or other emergency planning documents developed by the airport to ensure they are tailored to the specific airport.
2. TSA should act as a clearing house for the best ideas from across the country to address active shooter scenarios and in a timely fashion share this information with airports.
3. Require Active shooter awareness training for all airport employees including those of airport tenants and the TSA.
4. Airport law enforcement should take a layered approach to security around the checkpoint and ticketing counter and include testing of these plans as part of the annual AVSEC tabletop exercise.
5. Work towards funding a program for implementation of a technology solution at the nation's airport exit lanes.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue facing our country. The industry appreciates the collaborative approach you have chosen to address your concerns.