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Written  
Statement

Before the Committee on Homeland  
Security

Subcommittee on Transportation  
Security

Examining Critical Security Measures, Communications, and Response at Our Nation's  
Airports

October 26, 2015

Good morning Ranking Member Keating and Chairman Katko. On behalf of New York State's public and private use airports, I would like to thank you for inviting me to participate in today's field hearing on Examining Critical Security Measures, Communications, and Responses at Our Nation's Airports. NYAMA's mission is to promote the viability and business interests of New York State's airports. NYAMA represents over 13,000 members and affiliate members, 120 commercial service and general aviation airports, fixed based operators, consultants, engineers, and aviation professionals at the state and regional levels.

Airports are economic engines fueling growth in the communities they serve. According to a 2010 study by the New York State Department of Transportation, the aviation industry contributes over \$50 billion in annual economic activity in New York State and almost 400,000 State residents work in aviation or aviation-related industries. The economic benefits of New York State airports are impressive. As a whole, aviation generates \$18 billion in payroll and \$4.5 billion in state and local tax revenue annually. However, the efficacy of this powerful economic engine and its benefits to New York's citizens is threatened by a critical funding for our airports security programs.

Airport security is an essential function of the how airports operate. The TSA and airport staff process millions of passengers, thousands of airport employees, and tons of air cargo safely and efficiently all year round. This is done primarily through the cooperation of private business such as the airlines, vendors, concessions, air cargo operators, and the other agencies such as the airport operators, TSA and local law enforcement. It is because of this cooperation, that our airports are some of the safest in the world.

### Airport Security

The TSA serves a two part role in airport security. First, they are responsible for the screening operation of passengers and their belongings. Second, they are the regulatory authority over all other airport security functions. The airport operator must develop and maintain an Airport Security Program (ASP) in accordance with CFR Part 1542. This program describes the means in which airports will carry out security functions such as; employee credentialing, fingerprinting, criminal history background checks, security training, fence line perimeter security, airport terminal access control systems, camera systems, vehicle checkpoint inspections. In addition, airports are required to provide a law enforcement entity to support their ASP and the TSA passenger checkpoint. All of these functions come at a high expense which the airport must bear with little or no Federal funding.

Airports are considered "high value targets" for those who wish to do us harm. The latest challenge in the battle to secure our nation's airports is to identify and eliminate what is referred to as the "airport employee insider threat". One way our airports is addressing this is through the TSA's newly created "My Airport Initiative" which is an awareness program designed to target airport employees and instruct them of the appropriate actions to take if they observe any employees acting in a suspicious manner. The program was initially launched with a short 5 minute video clip explaining the initiative and the TSA is encouraging airports to promote this new campaign directed at the insider threat.

One of NYAMA'S member airports decided to incorporate the TSA's "My Airport" into its security training classes to teach employees how to identify and report these insider threats. This airport has also teamed with local law enforcement which has created informational posters that have been put up in the work areas of airport employees. These posters encourage employees to report any suspicious behavior anonymously to airport operations. This effort shows how airports, local law enforcement, and the TSA can work together to increase awareness about airport security threats and take steps to mitigate these potential problems before they happen.

NYAMA strongly supports active shooter planning and training. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, one of our members, operates six metropolitan New York airports. When I inquired about their active shooter program, the stated that their airports law enforcement officers have partnered with TSA and other first responders to hold drills at each of their airports. They also use TSA /Homeland Security videos to train airport staff in recommended procedures for active shooter incidents – run, hide, fight, etc. The Port Authority's Assistant Director of Aviation Security and Technology indicated that the TSA's resources are very limited for training and educational aids like posters or handouts on active shooter. They have posters on their website that airports can reproduce at their own expense and the Port Authority has in fact spent its own funds for this purpose.

In recent years the TSA has engaged airports requiring them to increase the airport's participation in screening airport employees and products entering the sterile and secured areas of the airport. Currently, airports are required to conduct random and cursory inspections on all employees. The TSA has begun to ask if airports are willing to do more, much more. This increase has overloaded airports which are generally funded through federal and State grants. Adding more duties is a difficult task to accomplish. There could be a point in the future where the screening of all employees and products entering all sterile and secured areas of the airport will become a requirement. This will place a demand on the staffing and facilities like no other. Before such a mandate could be initiated, federal funding assistance would need to be available to reimburse airports for these costs.

### Airport Security Funding

The funding of airport security improvements for equipment and facilities has always been a challenge for airports. Shortly after the end of World War II, the Federal Government embarked on a grants-in-aid program to units of state and local governments to promote the development of a system of airports to meet the Nation's needs. This program known as the Federal-Aid Airport Program (FAAP) was authorized by the Federal Airport Act of 1946 and received its funding from the general fund of the U.S. Treasury. Since then, this program has been amended several times, most recently with the passage of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012. Funds obligated for the AIP are drawn from the Airport and Airway Trust fund, which is supported by user fees, fuel taxes, and other similar revenue sources.

A lot of things have changed since 1946. The aging infrastructure of today's airports have required the allocation of a large majority of airport funding to go directly to immediate safety needs such as those associated with runways, taxiways, safety areas, aircraft parking areas, etc.

Airport security, while just as important, in many cases takes second place to these very visible safety improvement projects. One way to combat this would be to create a dedicated funding stream, similar to the current AIP in order to assist airports in funding security improvements or TSA mandates. This could be accomplished through carving out special funding sources through the passenger facility charge program or the security fee charges through airline ticket purchases.

To give some perspective on the significant costs associated with security improvements, I would like to provide the following example. In May of 2013, right here in the Syracuse Hancock International Airport completed construction on a passenger terminal security and access improvements project. This \$60 million project, which is currently being paid for through the collection of passenger facility charges, was designed to bring both the physical screening of passengers and baggage in alignment with current-day security requirements, and it also allowed for expansion and implementation of future screening requirements. The new centralized security checkpoint has improved passenger and baggage screening at several levels; new screening equipment including advanced imaging technology, implementation of TSA Pre-Check; improved customer service by consolidating TSA resources into one centralized location; and the ability to implement new security requirements, such as the requirement to screen all concession employees.

While programs like this are not typical, extensive financial resources had to be obligated in order for this project to occur and most airports would see other critical projects go unfunded as a result of such a reprioritization of resources. In the meantime, for the next several years a portion of the airport's PFC funds will have to go to paying for this required project rather than addressing other needs. Having a national program that could prioritize these needs similar to the AIP program with oversight and ranking by priority might give airports more flexibility focus on operational needs.

### Airport Security and Technology

Technology in airport security has its own set of challenges. Just like your home computer and other personal electronic equipment, airport security technology has a limited life span. This technological obsolescence where a product is no longer technically superior to another similar product requires airports to be constantly planning for the next major upgrade or replacement of these very important systems.

For example, access control from the public area to the secure areas of most airports is strictly managed through the use of a computer controlled access system using a card reader and personal identification number. These systems have the capability to enable and disable all automated controlled access points on all card readers/security badges. If an employee loses their security badge, it is stolen, or the employee leaves airport employment, all access can be immediately revoked. The second layer of this system is the closed circuit television system which is an integral part of every airports security program. The airport, local law enforcement, and TSA, have the ability to reduce the number of access control doors employees are permitted to use which ensures greater control over who can access the secure area and from which access point.

Both of these types of systems have improved substantially over the course of the past decade. Unfortunately, the costs associated with keeping the technology on the cutting edge, and in some cases, keeping them functioning, takes significant operational and capital investment.

Another technological advancement that Syracuse Airport is using are referred to as the automated exit portals. Following completion of the centralized security checkpoint, the airport reconfigured the previous checkpoints at each concourse as the exits for passengers leaving the secure area. The airport then installed automated exit portals at these locations. The automated exit portals allow passengers and employees to exit the secure area safely, while at the same time preventing people from accessing the secured area. The portals provide a positive barrier to security breaches by preventing people and things from entering or accessing the secure area from a non-secure area. In addition to the safety and security benefits of the exit portals, the cost savings are such that the portals have paid for themselves. Because the exit portals are automated, the airport is no longer required to physically monitor the exit lanes, thus eliminating the human error element. In addition to Syracuse, the exit portals are also located at the airports in Atlantic City, St. Petersburg/Clearwater and installation is scheduled to begin this November at JFK.

#### The “Gerardo Hernandez Airport Security Act”

Individual incidents and detection of new security threats at airports will many times result in increased scrutiny of and mandates on airports on the part of the TSA. Sometimes events lead to congressional actions. The Gerardo Hernandez Airport Security Act represents one such response by Congress that seeks to improve security incident preparedness by directing TSA to verify that airports across the United States have incorporated procedures for responding to active shooters targeting security checkpoints into their existing incident plans.

Additionally, the legislation directs the Administrator of TSA to report to the appropriate Congressional committees findings regarding the levels of preparedness at airports. The new federal law also requires that the agency certify to the appropriate Congressional committees that all screening personnel have participated in training for active shooter scenarios. Another feature of the legislation requires TSA to conduct a review of the interoperable communications capabilities of the law enforcement, fire, and medical personnel responsible for responding to a security incident at airports in the United States.

These are all important tasks and it is appropriate in most cases that Congress exercise oversight over TSA and airport security efforts. Compliance by both TSA and airports with these mandates will necessitate cooperation and coordination among all stakeholders and recognition that new rules and requirements for new technologies will impose additional costs on already financially-burdened airports.

NYAMA is well positioned to actively participate in this process and represent New York’s airports and related industries in this effort to make the nation’s aviation facilities the safest and most secure in the world against hostile threats. We stand ready to assist you, the Congress and the TSA in this important endeavor as we go forward.

I'm available to answer any questions you may have.