

**The House Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response & Communications hearing on Protecting our Passengers; Perspectives on Securing Surface Transportation in New York & New Jersey**

---

Testimony of: W. Greg Kierce, Director Office of Emergency Management & Homeland Security,

City of Jersey City

Date: Tuesday June 21, 2014

Location, New Jersey City University, Gothic Lounge

Chairman Donovan, Ranking Member Payne and members of the subcommittee thank you for affording me the opportunity to appear before you this morning.

After every major terrorist attack in any part of the world, security officials and the American public alike turn to the question of what can be done to deter or prevent a similar attack from occurring here.

Unfortunately, it often requires a major disaster to arouse concern sufficiently to mobilize the political will to take needed action. Useful things are often accomplished in the shadow of tragedy.

It is not because those charged with security are unable to imagine what terrorists might do. It is rather that people seldom support costly and potentially disruptive measures to protect them against things that haven't occurred.

**The House Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response & Communications hearing on Protecting our Passengers; Perspectives on Securing Surface Transportation in New York & New Jersey**

---

The reality is that because terrorists can attack anything, anywhere, any time, while we cannot protect everything, everywhere, all the time, security, tends to be reactive. Certainly we must try to protect targets that terrorists show a proclivity to attack.

Terrorist attacks on public transportation are nothing new. Since the early 1990s, those concerned with the security of public surface transportation have been increasingly worried that trains and buses were becoming highly attractive targets for terrorists bent upon body counts.

For those determined to kill in quantity and willing to kill indiscriminately, trains, subways and buses are ideal targets. They offer terrorists easy access and escape. Congregations of strangers guarantee anonymity.

Approximately one-third of terrorist attacks worldwide target transportation systems, with public transit the most frequent. Analysis of more than 22,000 terrorist incidents from 1968 through 2014 indicated that assaults

**The House Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response & Communications hearing on Protecting our Passengers; Perspectives on Securing Surface Transportation in New York & New Jersey**

---

on land-based transportation targets, including mass transit, have the highest casualty rates of any type.

Although major terrorist attacks like those on transit systems in other parts of the world have not occurred in the United States, chances prove exceedingly high.

Heavily populated systems that operate on predictable schedules, with passengers having little or no chance to escape crowded stations, buses, trains, and other conveyances, make public transportation susceptible to acts of terrorism.

Moreover, many systems are expanding and ridership has generally increased, raising more policing concerns. Vehicular gridlock, air pollution, expensive parking fees, and higher gasoline prices have made mass transit an attractive option for urban dwellers in the metropolitan.

Numerous individuals have chosen to leave their vehicles at home and, subsequently, have logged millions of more daily rides on mass transit and regional rail.

**The House Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response & Communications hearing on Protecting our Passengers; Perspectives on Securing Surface Transportation in New York & New Jersey**

---

Terrorists and criminals continue to think of new schemes and attempt to adjust their tactics to thwart law enforcement officials who, in turn, must remain relentless when developing and integrating strategies to safeguard the public.

Surface transportation cannot be protected in the same way commercial aviation is protected. Trains, subways, and buses must remain readily accessible, convenient, and inexpensive.

The deployment of metal detectors, X-ray machines, explosive sniffers, and armed guards, which have become features of the landscape at airports, cannot be transferred easily to subway stations or bus stops.

The delays would be enormous and the costs prohibitive – public transportation would effectively be shut down.

Transportation facilities are public places. Other public places that offer terrorists similar body counts--shopping malls, crowded streets, or the lines of people waiting to get through security measures--are just as vulnerable.

**The House Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response & Communications hearing on Protecting our Passengers; Perspectives on Securing Surface Transportation in New York & New Jersey**

---

This does not mean that nothing can be done to increase surface transportation security.

Security officials in countries that have been subjected to terrorist attacks have developed some effective countermeasures.

Good security can make terrorist attacks more difficult, can increase their likelihood of being detected, can minimize casualties and disruption, can reduce panic, and can reassure passengers.

Visible security patrols and staff have a deterrent effect. Closed-circuit television coverage has been used extensively in Europe with good results. And enlisting employees and the public in surveillance can also be very effective.

Much can be done through the design of vehicles and facilities to eliminate hiding places, facilitate surveillance, and reduce casualties by removing materials that explosions may turn into shrapnel or that burn with toxic fumes.

**The House Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response & Communications hearing on Protecting our Passengers; Perspectives on Securing Surface Transportation in New York & New Jersey**

---

Adequate ventilation to remove deadly smoke, a leading killer in tunnels, must be ensured. Safe areas can be created to protect passengers during bomb threats

Transportation operators, either public commissions or private companies, have the front-line responsibility for implementing security measures, responding to threats, crisis planning, and restoring operations.

We must do all we can to enhance the ability of our intelligence efforts and law enforcement officials to uncover and thwart terrorist plots, increase security around vulnerable targets, and improve our ability to respond to attacks when they occur.

At the same time, we must be realistic about the acceptance of risk. We cannot allow fear to become the framework of American governance.

Ensuring the security of this country's critical infrastructure has become even more of a priority since September 11, 2001.

**The House Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response & Communications hearing on Protecting our Passengers; Perspectives on Securing Surface Transportation in New York & New Jersey**

---

To that end, public transportation systems must continuously develop and implement programs to protect passengers, employees, and property from those individuals who wish to do harm.

We should be wary of slouching toward a "security state" in which protected perimeters, gates, and guards dominate the landscape and irrevocably alter everyday life.