



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

Commerce, Science, and Transportation

ERNEST F. HOLLINGS, Chairman

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**Statement of Chairman Ernest F. Hollings
Senate Commerce Committee Hearing on Federal Aviation Security Standards
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All Americans have been deeply affected by the events of Tuesday, September 11. We have been through a terrible tragedy, and as the country begins to heal, it is appropriate to ask, “How can we prevent future terrorist attacks?”

It would be naive for us to think that there is an easy solution that will make air travel secure. We have invited our witnesses to let us know what some of the problems are, how this happened, and, most important, what we can do immediately and over the long term to make air travel safer. Secretary Mineta, I know that you have established a security review team whose recommendations are due on October 1. We look forward to looking at those recommendations as well as your testimony here today.

The current system of aviation security is a hodgepodge system of shared responsibility among the air carriers, security subcontractors, the airports, and the Federal government. Make no mistake – lines of responsibility need to be more clear. I have said for years that we need to professionalize the nearly 18,000 screeners in our nation’s airports who are employees of the airlines and private screening companies. We need to make them Federal employees. We need to give them better training and advanced security equipment. In addition, we need to increase the number of Federal Air Marshals on both international and domestic flights. All of this will be costly, but we have to do it. The events of last week demonstrated that this is a national security issue and we must protect American citizens. We will find the money. That should not be an issue.

In addition, we need to focus on cockpit security. Currently, flight attendants have access to the cockpit. That access should be eliminated. Also, the door is not secure enough to withstand a forced entry. The cockpit door should not be able to be breached, allowing someone other than the pilots to control the plane. Ensuring that a cockpit is the most secure place on the plane is a critical step to preventing the scenarios that seem to have occurred last Tuesday.

Another issue that needs to be considered is the issue of data sharing. We need to make sure that law enforcement agencies, the FAA, and air carriers can appropriately share information so that known terrorists do not board airplanes.

We have all heard of technologies that are capable of improving security: eye scans for identifying those that are allowed access to secure areas; information technology products capable of integrating data from multiple sources; advanced x-ray machines; MRI-like devices to

scan passengers; and automated collision avoidance for planes, among others. I encourage our witnesses to think about what kind of technological solutions may be appropriate to improve security.

Efforts have been made to increase aviation security over the past 30 years. Those efforts have focused on securing vulnerabilities that were exploited in the preceding terrorist act. Sadly, the tragedy of last week has demonstrated that we must think about security in a whole new way. Besides closing the current vulnerabilities, we must anticipate the terrorists' next attempt and have safeguards ready and waiting.

Finally, I would like to note that this hearing is just the first step. The Committee will begin to do what it can to help you, Secretary Mineta, and the FAA begin to address security problems immediately. The Committee will also continue its commitment to work with the Administration to enact legislation needed to address this crisis and to address additional security concerns within the nations' other transportation infrastructures.