

NEWS ALERT



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Homeland Security Committee

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Chairman



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson

Is the Flying Public Protected? An Assessment of Security at Foreign Repair Stations

November 18, 2009 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection Subcommittee hearing entitled *Is the Flying Public Protected? An Assessment of Security at Foreign Repair Stations*:

“Security of foreign repair stations is a complex issue, and it raises questions about how much the U.S. government can do to further secure aircraft repair and maintenance work performed overseas.

We are here today to discuss a topic that not only highlights a potential security risk for our flying public, but also reminds Congress of the need for improved interagency cooperation in the creation and implementation of harmonized security policies.

Security at foreign repair stations is not a new topic. In fact, Congress first required TSA to develop a security risk assessment and audit of foreign repair stations as early as 2003.

Today, nearly 7 years later, TSA has finally released an NPRM for repair station security. Although I am pleased that it has been issued, I am also concerned that it fails to clearly address serious procedural and communication questions that will be essential in implementing an effective foreign repair station security program.

In addition, I am also concerned about the extent to which relevant stakeholders were engaged in the construction of the NPRM.

While the NPRM provides a framework for this security program, we need further clarification about how TSA and FAA will coordinate to make it effective, particularly in the case of TSA identifying security discrepancies that may impact FAA’s certification of a foreign repair facility.

The communication between TSA and FAA must be timely and reliable regarding the security of certified repair stations. With this proposed rulemaking, this interagency process simply is not clear.

The 9/11 Commission emphasized the need for government to harmonize security policies and improve coordination and information sharing in order to improve homeland security.

Unfortunately, based upon my review of the NPRM and my conversations with staff, I have concerns that the necessary coordination between FAA and TSA has not taken place in order to create an adequate security regime.

I think that today's hearing offers an important opportunity to recommit to the necessary dialogue among TSA, FAA, and industry stakeholders.

The Obama Administration has been hobbled on this topic by the multi-year delay of the previous Administration. Accordingly, this hearing allows us to establish where we are and where we need to go to keep the flying public secure.

I look forward to hearing from the Department of Transportation's Inspector General as well as TSA and FAA. I also want to welcome our other stakeholder witnesses.

This Congress and this Administration have a continued commitment to strengthening our homeland security efforts which include securing the aviation system to protect the lives of those flying and the vast international commerce that aviation supports.

Finally, let me say that I look forward to working with the Executive Branch in establishing an effective foreign repair station security program so that we can finally implement appropriate security oversight on this very important, yet sometimes overlooked, part of the aviation industry."

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