



**Testimony of Lauren Stover
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**Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection
Committee on Homeland Security
Airport Security: The Necessary Improvements to Secure America's Airports
April 19th, 2007**

Good morning Madame Chairman, Ranking Member Lungren and Members of the Subcommittee. I thank you for having a hearing on this very important issue of screening airport employees. As you know, since 1999, we have been performing security screening of all employees working in secure and restricted areas of Miami International Airport. This practice grew out of necessity as we discovered an organized narcotics smuggling operation not unlike the recent incident that occurred at Orlando International Airport.

In response to the drug smuggling activities that involved airline employees, a comprehensive security enhancement program, including most notably the screening of all employees with access to secure areas of the airport, was implemented at MIA.

We began conducting criminal background and warrants checks for employees working at the airport needing access to secure and restricted areas. We hired more security staff and, in short, dramatically beefed up our overall security program such that in many ways, MIA was ahead of its time in terms of security measures that now, in the post 9-11 era, are completely applicable to neutralizing a potential terrorist threat.

The overall issue we had to address in 1999, and what Congress will be deliberating this year, is how to keep airport employees from using their access to restricted areas as a means to conduct illegal activities. First, let me say as an airport employee for many years, most of us are good, hardworking people, but a few, with ill intentions, can do a lot of damage. In conducting employee screening, we are reducing the "insider threat" which is a critical element of our security program.

Let me briefly describe who these airport employees are. There are airport employees such as myself that work for the operator of the airport, which in most cases is the local government or an airport authority. The vast majority of people who work at the airport, however, work for airlines, vendors and tenants, many of whom have access to restricted areas in order to perform their duties.

At MIA, we have 30,000 people working at the airport. My security department manages the credentialing of these employees with identification media/or ID badges. In the secure areas of the airport, including the SIDA area - or Security Identification Display Area - employees must always have on visible display the ID media issued by my security division at the airport. All airport employees are trained to challenge anyone not displaying a proper ID in the SIDA.

Criminal History Background Checks are conducted on all employees who have a need to access secure areas. We color-code our ID badges which helps anyone be able to immediately identify the specific area where an employee will work, such as on the airfield or inside the terminal beyond the security checkpoint, etc. At MIA, 100% of the individuals accessing the secure area through the terminal are screened by magnetometer (or walk through metal detector) and their personal items are subjected to x-ray inspection. Employees are also required to log-in and log-out through our access control system when beginning and ending their shifts.

We contract with a private security firm to operate our four employee-only screening checkpoints for personnel that work in the ramp area where the aircraft are positioned at gates connected to the terminal. These are the baggage handlers, maintenance personnel and other employees that work directly on airplanes and around the airfield. In the terminal area, working closely with our air carrier and employee unions, we incrementally reduced the 34 unmanned employee entrance areas to the four we have today. We have implemented security directives that specify the types of items employees can carry with them into SIDA areas. For instance, many employees carry tools that are necessary for work but otherwise would not be allowed through a standard passenger checkpoint. Employees who work in the secure areas *within the terminal* that are beyond the passenger security checkpoint are screened at the passenger security checkpoint by TSA.

With background checks and comprehensive security measures including Behavioral Pattern Recognition which I will discuss later, we have a layered approach to security and we ultimately know who these people are and what they are doing.

We spend about \$2.5 million dollars each year to implement this employee screening program at MIA. As I said before, our security program is multi-layered, and we work closely with our local law enforcement – the Miami-Dade Police Department – as well as with our federal partners in DHS--TSA, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and Customs and Border Protection as well as the U.S. Department of Justice, the FBI and the Joint Terrorist Task Force. We make a point to regularly meet and exchange information in order to allow investigations to proceed without interference and to continue to monitor activity in securing the airport. We also regularly conduct sweeps with these law enforcement partners and our canine teams to ensure employees are not engaged in criminal activity.

In addition to conducting comprehensive background checks, inter-agency sweeps and screening employees with access to secure areas, another security layer that we have at MIA that I am extremely proud of because we are a leader in this area is an airport-wide behavioral analysis program. Behavior Pattern Recognition, or BPR, is a security technique originated by Rafi Ron, the former security director for Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, where people are trained to detect suspicious individuals based on behavior rather than ethnicity.

To date, more than 1,500 employees at MIA have received the training, and training sessions will continue over the next two years with the goal of training all 30,000 employees at MIA. BPR will be permanently embedded into the fiber of the airport's security program, and BPR training will be required for employees renewing their airport ID badges. In March 2007, MIA was the first airport to host a national BPR training session for airport law enforcement officers.

As you look at ways to improve security at our Nation's airports, specifically through employee screening, I would like to say that all airports are truly different with respect to their configuration, security and threat analysis. A one-size fits all solution is not appropriate. A federal approach to employee screening must take into consideration that most airports are financially unable to dramatically increase security expenditures any more than what they have done since 9/11. In fact, most airports already are dealing with paying for unfunded federal mandates such as the in-line Explosives Detection System we are installing at MIA. Given our financial constraints, we have been forced to defer other capital projects in order to fund our North Terminal EDS project. To date, TSA has not committed funding.

Airport facilities differ and the way employees get to their jobs differ, but there is common ground and with input from airports, we can assist in crafting an airport employee screening legislation to better secure our Nation's airports and passengers.

I would like to leave you with some thoughts from our perspective on employee screening. First, any national program that mandates employee screening must be properly resourced and funded. Second, different standards must be established. The protocols and standards that are appropriate for employee screening are different than those that are appropriate for passenger screening. Third, we believe the emphasis should be on stopping ill-intended individuals from accessing the secure area. And, finally, a layered approach to security is our best defense from those who would do us harm.

I thank you for the privilege of sharing our experiences and thoughts and look forward to answering your questions.

Supplemental Statement

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Topic: At Miami International Airport (MIA) 100% of the individuals accessing the secure area through the terminal are screened by magnetometer and their personal items are screened by x-ray inspection. Employees are also required to log-in and log-out through an access control system when beginning and ending their shifts.

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