

## MEDIA INFORMATION

Congresswoman

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# Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee Working To Secure Our Nations Aviation Cargo

## *Hold DHS Officials Accountable For Aviation Security Cargo*

Washington, DC- Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Chair of the House Homeland Security Committee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protections released the following statement at a hearing entitled, “The Next Step in Aviation Security — Cargo Security: Is DHS Implementing the Requirements of the 9/11 Law Effectively?”:

“I am proud to convene today’s hearing to evaluate the progress made by TSA in carrying out Section 1602 of the ‘Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007,’ which mandates that 100% of all air cargo aboard passenger aircraft be screened by the year 2010.

“This landmark piece of legislation will make our citizens safer. I am proud that, under the leadership of Chairman Thompson, this Committee worked to steer this provision through Congress last year. As Chairwoman of this Subcommittee, I am ready to help ensure that it is implemented properly.

“I want to take this opportunity to recognize Mr. Markey of Massachusetts for his significant efforts in making this screening requirement a reality. I look forward to continuing to work with him on this important issue.

“I am concerned with the implementation of this mandate and the status of TSA’s pilot program. In particular, I want to be sure that the program will be narrowly tailored to ensure the least amount of impact on small and medium-sized businesses, and that TSA will be providing stakeholders with the necessary guidance and technologies in order to make implementation successful.

“This mandate was not designed to be heavy-handed. Instead, it calls for a three-year, phased approach to screening 100% of cargo carried on passenger planes, and lays out clear and specific benchmarks. It is with this framework in mind that the Subcommittee is evaluating whether progress has been made by TSA in attempting to reach the benchmarks and for us to help ensure that guidance is available to industry stakeholders who will be impacted by the implementation of new TSA regulations.

“To the witnesses from the Department, I want to be clear. It is vital that this Subcommittee be informed of any difficulties that have arisen in implementing this mandate. Unless we are made aware of real or potential obstacles, we cannot help you obtain the tools and resources you lack, and we will not look fondly on future shortcomings we could have helped to resolve.

“For that reason, I hope that you will be clear and specific about any problems you are experiencing or anticipating. I view the relationship between TSA and this Subcommittee as a partnership, and we are ready and willing to provide you with the tools you need—but you need to make us aware of the facts.

“This August will mark the anniversary of the enactment of the 9/11 Act. As Chair of the Subcommittee, I think it is appropriate to convene this hearing nearly a year after the enactment of the 100% screening provision to assess the progress made by TSA in implementing a critical component of this legislation.

“In accordance with the legislation’s phased-in approach, TSA must screen 50% of all cargo transported by passenger planes in the United States by February 2009, en route to fulfilling the 100% requirement by 2010. Because the implementation of this provision is complex and involves numerous stakeholders, it is imperative for Members to inquire about TSA’s progress and whether TSA is on track to meet the mandated 2010 deadline.

“Specifically, I am hoping our witnesses today will address the following issues:

- First, there seems to be a great deal of concern regarding the status of TSA’s pilot program. We must ensure that, as an integral part of this program, proper and timely guidance is provided to industry stakeholders to allow them to comply with regulations. Particularly relevant to this is the status of the Interim Final Rule. The Subcommittee must know when this will be released.
- Second, we are concerned that smaller companies with fewer resources at their disposal will be unable to comply with the program. TSA’s existing pilot proposal requires that certified screening facilities purchase equipment that can cost anywhere from \$150,000 to \$500,000 per facility. Unfortunately, small and medium-sized companies often are not able to invest in such expensive equipment—especially if there is no assurance that the equipment purchased will meet the requirements by TSA or prove to be effective for implementation of the program.
- Third, we want to know how DHS is evaluating any innovative technologies that can be applied to help fulfill this mandate. Under the law, the Administrator of TSA may approve measures beyond x-ray equipment, explosive detection systems, explosive trace detection, and canine teams to ensure that cargo does not pose a threat to our nation’s aviation security. I am interested in learning how DHS is thinking outside the box and about any strategic plan in place for evaluating technologies that can potentially enhance security as it pertains to this mandate. I will not rest until the bureaucratic tape is cut and innovative, effective technologies can be readily deployed.
- Finally, we are interested in hearing from industry stakeholders who will be affected by TSA’s proposed implementation plan. While some of these witnesses are engaged in the pilot program, others will discuss recommendations that should be considered by TSA as it implements regulations and works toward fulfilling the 100% mandate.

“I look forward to the witnesses’ testimony regarding this important program and stand ready for this Subcommittee to support your vital mission.

“Once again, I would like to thank everyone for their participation today, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.”

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