



One Hundred Ninth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

March 17, 2005

The Honorable Peter T. King
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman King:

I am deeply disturbed about the recent news reports concerning a Government Accountability Office (GAO) audit evaluating the vulnerability of U.S. airlines to suicide bombers. According to the reports, GAO investigators were able to carry inexpensive, readily-available materials needed to make homemade bombs through security screening at 21 airports.

I understand this investigation was requested by Congressman John Mica as the Chairman of the Aviation Subcommittee of the Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure. I understand that the results of GAO's investigation are classified and that Congressman Mica has requested a thirty-day restriction on their release. It would be beneficial to the Committee if we could get a copy of this report. I'm hopeful we can work with Mr. Mica to assure that this happens.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) was created specifically by Congress to ensure the security of all modes of transportation. It has been four years since 9/11 and the American public should not still be at risk from this kind of threat. For that reason, once Committee staff has had an opportunity to review the report, I believe it would be useful for us to hold a hearing on the vulnerabilities identified by the GAO investigation so that the Committee can continue its efforts to improve our nation's aviation security.

I hope that you agree. If you have any questions about this request, please have your staff contact Ms. Jessica Herrera-Flanigan, Minority Staff Director, at 202-226-2616.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bennie G. Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "B".

Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Homeland Security

cc: Chairman Daniel E. Lungren, Subcommittee on Economic Security, Infrastructure Protection, and Cybersecurity, Committee on Homeland Security

Ranking Member Loretta Sanchez, Subcommittee on Economic Security, Infrastructure Protection, and Cybersecurity, Committee on Homeland Security