Opening Statement

Statement of Chairman Mike Rogers (R-AL)
Subcommittee on Transportation Security

"TSA's Recent Scanner Shuffle: Real Strategy or Wasteful Smokescreen?"

November 15, 2012

Remarks as Prepared

I would like to welcome everyone to this hearing and thank our witnesses for taking time out of their schedules to be here today. Three weeks ago, TSA notified the public it was removing backscatter AIT machines from several large airports and replacing them with millimeter wave AIT machines.

TSA initially said it would redeploy those backscatter machines to smaller airports. However, TSA could not produce a list of smaller airports when prompted by the Subcommittee. That's because the machines won't be going to smaller airports anytime soon.

Instead, TSA is moving those 91 backscatter machines, worth 14 million taxpayer dollars, to its storage warehouse in Texas.

According to TSA, this is because the testing of backscatter privacy software suddenly failed, and smaller airports don't have enough space to support the backscatter machines without privacy software.

At this time, I'd like to insert a letter for the hearing record that I sent to Administrator Pistole yesterday expressing concern about recent allegations of contractor malfeasance that may have led to the failed tests that put us in this situation. Without objection, so ordered.

I hope we can get some answers today on this extremely disturbing situation.

Now, the reality is that TSA is squeezing backscatter machines into its warehouse next to the useless puffer machines we are all too familiar with.

Perhaps these backscatter machines will be put to good use eventually. But that's the point – We just don't know.

In the meantime, the Subcommittee has some serious questions:

How did the testing of privacy software for backscatter go so wrong?

What level of oversight did TSA provide during the testing process?

Why did TSA move backscatter machines out of big airports before knowing which smaller airports to put them in?

And when will ATR by ready to install on backscatter? Congress mandated that this software be installed by June.

In addition, TSA still has not complied with a D.C. Circuit Court ruling to allow for public comment on AIT, nor has the agency agreed to sponsor an independent third-party evaluation of AIT's health effects, despite bipartisan consensus that an independent study would be beneficial.

To me, it appears we not only have a technology problem, but a significant transparency problem on our hands.

Today, I hope we can get logical answers to some basic questions about AIT and its future.

I also look forward to getting a better understanding of the coordination that exists between DHS and TSA when it comes to assessing passenger privacy issues up front to avoid these types of costly, convoluted situations where we shuffle machines around and then stick them in a warehouse.

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