

Opening Statement of Chairman Ron Johnson

“Oversight of the Transportation Security Administration: First-Hand and Government Watchdog Accounts of Agency Challenges”

June 9, 2015

As prepared for delivery:

Good morning and welcome.

Today’s hearing will shed light on some of the problems within the Transportation Security Administration. TSA is charged with protecting the traveling public’s safety by screening passengers and baggage as well as securing our nation’s transportation network.

Recent media accounts and reports issued by the Government Accountability Office and the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General have identified numerous problems within the agency that raise questions about whether TSA is effectively fulfilling its mission. Specifically, serious questions have been raised about potential mismanagement, wasteful procedures, retaliation against whistleblowers, low morale and security gaps within TSA. These matters are troubling and must be addressed.

In February 2015, news reports revealed that 1,400 security badges were lost by or stolen from employees at the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport over a two-year span. In March 2015, authorities arrested two TSA contractors for conspiracy to smuggle methamphetamines through the San Francisco International Airport. On June 1, 2015, news broke about a DHS OIG investigation that used undercover auditors, known as “Red Teams,” to test security weaknesses in airport screening by smuggling weapons or simulated explosives through security checkpoints. According to media reports, TSA failed 95 percent of the time to prevent the Red Teams from successfully smuggling prohibited items. Today, GAO and the inspector general will be able to offer more information about the problems they have uncovered while auditing or investigating TSA.

We will also hear from two current TSA employees with first-hand accounts about problems within the agency. Federal Air Marshal Robert MacLean will testify about challenges in aviation security and the Federal Air Marshal Service. Assistant Federal Security Director for TSA at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport Rebecca Roering will testify about TSA’s PreCheck program and screening deficiencies.

TSA is charged with the vital duty of securing this country's transportation systems. As the committee considers the nomination for the next administrator of TSA, these issues are critical to understanding what actions need to be taken at the agency. I thank the witnesses for their willingness to provide their knowledge and expertise on these important issues, and I look forward to their testimony.

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