Statement

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Introduction

Chairman Lieberman and Ranking Member Collins, thank you for the opportunity to testify at this hearing. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) appreciates the leadership of the Senate in addressing this critical issue. It is our hope that today's hearing accelerates the much needed dialogue on the future of passenger screening post 9.11 in the United States.

IATA and our 230 US and foreign member airlines have a vision of future passenger screening that is based on a paradigm shift in the principles behind checkpoint operations. We believe next generation checkpoints must focus on looking for "bad people" and not just "bad things."

I would ask that you consider our vision of an effective airport checkpoint:

- Security is enhanced with higher probabilities of detection
- Passengers are treated with dignity
- Babies and children with names similar to adults on the no fly-list pass through screening uneventfully
- Harmless objects such as toenail scissors and nail clippers do not trigger alarms

In this scenario, the airport security checkpoint is no longer a standalone line of defense against terrorism but rather part of an integrated system that uses risk-based analysis as well as advanced screening technology to improve security and the travel experience for the passenger.

We call this vision "Checkpoint of the Future," and many of the key components are available today.

Why develop a future checkpoint? First, aviation remains a target, as was demonstrated by the December 2009 attempted bombing of a Northwest Airlines flight bound for Detroit. The status quo is not good enough. We must stay ahead of the bad guys.

Second, air travel is forecast to continue growing, and today's checkpoints are already showing their age. IATA expects an additional 90 million passengers will travel within North America between now and 2014 and 659 million new passengers for the entire world. Our long range projections are that by 2050 as many as 16 billion people will fly annually.

But the evidence shows that the throughput of today's checkpoints is decreasing. Our systems just cannot handle the traffic. In some places, we have seen a drop in throughput of as much as 50% in two years.

Some of the decrease was the result of the new security measures put in place after the Christmas Day 2009 attempted bombing. But the rest we believe is the result of a passenger screening system showing its age.

Third, the aviation security system needs to maintain the confidence of the traveling public. Unfortunately, the signs of discontent are growing. Passengers are becoming increasingly vocal about the inconvenience of security measures and the threat to personal privacy. We are seeing protests driven by social media sites. Last year, one group even called for a national opt-out of body scanning on the day before Thanksgiving.

Let me be clear: we have good systems, and the flying public is safe. But we also need a confident public that trusts the authorities. Good systems combined with distrustful passengers make for a toxic combination and a less secure system.

Lessons Post 9.11

What lessons have we learned in the past decade concerning passenger screening? First, dropping new technology into an old checkpoint will not work. That's akin to placing a new radio in an old car and saying you have a new car. You still have an old car.

Security and technology are often confused. IATA remains concerned that new technology is being viewed as the silver bullet for the future. There is no single silver bullet. For every technology with exciting detection capabilities there are complementary vulnerabilities.

Also, we must not overlook the process through which technology moves from the laboratory to the airport. Fundamentally, the journey takes too long, and it is affected by changing regulatory requirements, often producing a product which doesn't work in the real world. An unfortunate example was the recent failure of the so-called "puffer" explosive detection machines.

Second, object finding has served us well, but does not represent the future. If we have learned anything from the last decade, it is that a passenger with toenail clippers is not automatically a threat to aviation. Alternatively, if you find toenail clippers you have not necessarily found a terrorist.

Third, "one size fits all screening" has outlived its usefulness. Over 2.8 billion passengers are screened per year. We cannot continue at this pace without using risk-based screening measures.

IATA's Way Forward

IATA has been working for the last year and a half on developing a more efficient, effective and relevant checkpoint. Let me spend a few minutes discussing the core principles and explain how we propose turning these into a checkpoint.

The Checkpoint of the Future described here, relies on two basic concepts. The first is the introduction of risk-based screening, using data from travel documents and airline tickets that is already being used by the US Government and other governments for customs and immigration. Let me emphasize that this does not involve profiling of any kind. We are simply proposing that rather than using this data only at the end of a journey for purposes of border control, we should use it at the beginning of the journey for security purposes.

This process is invisible to the traveler, but it will enable a decision to be made before the traveler arrives at the airport. This fulfills a fundamental principle of the Checkpoint of the Future: passengers should be screened at the airport with devices and processes commensurate with what is known about them.

The second concept is the use of advanced screening technology to enable a seamless journey through the screening lanes without removing items of clothing or unpacking carry-on luggage.

Upon arriving at an airport checkpoint the passenger biometrically identifies himor herself and has a brief encounter with a behavior analyst. The passenger is assigned a lane based on the result of their electronic prescreening or random selection. The passenger proceeds through the lane and is screened while in motion. Passengers who voluntarily opt-in to a known traveler program and agree to provide additional information about themselves would proceed through a known-traveler lane. Those about whom little is known or those randomly selected would go through an enhanced security lane. But let me emphasize that all passengers are screened to a baseline and no one gets a free pass.

In addition to the improved security that will result from the use of risk-based analysis, passengers will also have a better experience. IATA estimates that even using today's technology the increased efficiency translates into as much as a 30% reduction in wait times for passengers.

So where are we and what have we done? IATA has developed blueprints and a roadmap and our Board of Governors has agreed to move forward. We are working

with like-minded associations, manufacturers, academics, and airlines to refine this concept. This needs to be a global effort.

To date, ICAO has endorsed the need for a global effort to study a future checkpoint. INTERPOL and 12 states have signed statements of principal that we are going in the right direction.

So where are we on key technology? IATA and our industry technology partners will be working on researching and promoting development of systems to optimize today's checkpoints. We believe that as processes and components are developed they should be made available as toolkits for implementation.

We certainly expect that in seven to ten years all the necessary components for a walk-through screening process will be available. But we can repurpose and reintegrate existing technology into an intermediate checkpoint that is possible in the next 2-3 years.

This reworked checkpoint uses existing hardware and combines several central elements of Checkpoint of the Future including passenger data already being used by governments, behavior analysis, and the creation of new screening lanes.

IATA is committed to making air travel safe, secure, and more enjoyable.
We believe a new passenger checkpoint paradigm is mandatory and needs to be brought to airports at an accelerated pace.

In summary we believe the foundation of the Checkpoint of the Future should be based on lessons learned post 9/11. The next generation of checkpoint should:

- Use passenger data
- Use behavior detection
- Screen passengers based on risk
- Provide for an uninterrupted journey from curb to aircraft door
- Preserve our investment in existing checkpoints

We won't settle for anything less than a revolution in the way passengers are treated at the airport.