

NEWS ALERT



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Homeland Security Committee

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Chairman



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson

Has the TSA Breach Jeopardized National Security? An Examination of What Happened and Why

December 16, 2009 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection Subcommittee hearing entitled “Has the TSA Breach Jeopardized National Security? An Examination of What Happened and Why”:

“There is no doubt that the events that transpired last week raise several questions about TSA’s operational procedures and practices in handling sensitive information. Perhaps more importantly, this incident also raises concerns about the security of our entire transportation system.

No actions, legislation, or press statement can undo the disclosure of this information; however, we can learn from this incident and move forward with security measures that ensure sensitive information will not be made available to the public.

The events from last week serve as a reminder of how critical it is to have accountability at the Department of Homeland Security.

I think it was the right decision for Secretary Napolitano to request that the DHS Inspector General begin an investigation of this incident. The review and investigation by the Inspector General is an important first step in learning the details that will be essential in helping TSA improve procedures for handling and posting sensitive material.

However, as I have said before, to get TSA to improve its operational performance in all program areas and at all levels of management, it is essential that TSA have permanent, effective leadership.

The President has nominated Errol Southers to be TSA Administrator, and I think we have waited long enough for his confirmation. His law enforcement background and operational experience will be essential in improving TSA and strengthening our homeland security efforts.

When strong leadership is in place, incidents, such as these, are less likely to happen.

Nevertheless, today’s hearing provides us in Congress with an opportunity to express our concerns and to hear from TSA what it plans to do. I am sure that we will need follow-up briefings and, perhaps, another hearing to review the Inspector General’s report and to assess the best steps going forward. There is clearly a lot of work to do, and I am glad this hearing helps to begin this process.”

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