



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

Commerce, Science, and Transportation

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**Statement of Senator Ernest F. Hollings
Hearing on Oversight of Aviation Security
May 21, 2002**

Good morning Secretary Mineta and Under Secretary Magaw. It has been six months since the passage of the Aviation and Transportation Security Act, which symbolized a complete change in the way we approach and conduct security for our nation's air transportation system. We have asked not only you, but travelers all throughout the country to accept a new reality -- one where everything is searched, and people are randomly checked.

In the name of security, we have asked people to give up some of their personnel freedoms to protect our country. The American public has shown great faith in our efforts -- passengers are accepting the new process and returning to airports, which has allowed air carriers to resume flights at near normal levels -- but we must be more vigilant than ever to ensure that "normalcy" does not translate into "complacency" as we move forward with implementing the requirements of the Security Act.

We set a series of tough deadlines in the Security Act -- we knew they were hard to meet when we set them, but we did not want to let anything stop the moment to make changes. While you have generally met the requirements of the Security Act to this point -- which I commend you on -- two significant deadlines are looming by the end of the year. In particular, TSA is required to have Explosive Detection Systems or EDSs in use at all commercial airports and screening every bag that goes on a passenger airplane by December 31st, or use alternative means until EDSs are installed. The Security Act also mandated that the Federal government assume control of all airport security personnel by November 19th. I have concerns about your approach and timing to ensure these milestones are reached.

I have heard your views on EDS, Secretary Mineta, and I believe we must proceed with great caution not to set up a security system that appears strong, but offers a backdoor which leaves us extremely vulnerable to attack. In announcing that you would purchase 1100 EDSs to be used in conjunction with Trace Detection for large airports and trace only, for now, at small airports, you must make sure that you follow up and upgrade all of the airport security systems as soon as the next generation of EDSs are available. I also urge you to use additional procedures for small airports so that large and small airports receive equal levels of security.

However, when the Senate passed the Security Act by a vote of 100-0, it was mindful of not setting up a dual-tiered approach that would provide such a backdoor. We want one level of security, a system where large airports get better security than small airports is not acceptable to

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us. The picture of the hijackers going through Portland, Maine, remains clear to everyone. Nothing could be worse than a false sense of security that lulls us into lowering our guard.

With the success that the terrorists had on September 11th, they will undoubtedly try to find our weakness again. News reports are already indicating the likelihood of another attack, and this time we must be ready. The Israeli onion ring of security, a layered approach, constantly shifting to keep the terrorist of guard, is what I know you want to establish. I need you to convince me that your plans for EDS – short- and long-term – are viable. Time is of the essence.

Other matters also remain to be addressed. It seemed to me that you were off to a strong start in deploying a Federal screener workforce to every commercial airport in the country, but with the number of employees that you will require more than doubling by most accounts, I would like to hear about the status of these efforts as they now stand. I am also increasingly concerned about the security of the cockpits on passenger airplanes, so much that I recently introduced a bill, S. 2497, which will require that cockpit doors remain closed while in flight unless the plane is fitted with mantrap doors which provide secure entrance and exit for the flight deck.

These concerns are just the tip of the iceberg. I realize the enormity of your task. You can not fail. You must continue to work with us about your thoughts, your concerns, and your needs. The challenge remains to develop a system of security which considers all potential targets, recognizes every potential threat, and justifiably restores the confidence of the American people. We continue to expect this challenge to be met.

Finally, I have been reading with keen interest about the lack of coordination between the intelligence agencies. In the Security Act, we specifically included all of these groups so that you had the best information available. If you have any problems, please, I urge you to let us know.

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