

**The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security**

Opening Statement:

Terrorist Travel

Witnesses:

**Principal Deputy Director Geoff O’Connell, NCTC
Director Tim Healy, TSC
Deputy Assistant Commissioner Kevin McAleenan, CBP Field Operations
Joe Salvator, Director of Vetting Operations, TSA TTAC
John Woods, Deputy Assistant Director (National Security Division), ICE HSI**

10:00 AM | Friday | April 1, 2011 | H-405

This morning we welcome a panel of distinguished civil servants to discuss an issue critical to homeland security – what our Nation is doing to detect, deter, and interdict terrorist travel. The panel is comprised not only of witnesses from the Department of Homeland Security, but also other agencies central to counter-terrorism efforts. They are:

Principal Deputy Director Geoff O’Connell of the National Counter Terrorism Center or NCTC. Most important for today’s briefing, NCTC manages the consolidated repository of information on international terrorist identities called the Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment (TIDE). TIDE is a classified database.

Second, we have Director Tim Healy of the Terrorist Screening Center, responsible for the Terrorist Screening Database or TSDB. The TSDB is the terrorist watch list which holds unclassified identifiers of all known and suspected terrorists for use by screening agencies.

Our briefers from DHS are more familiar. We have:

- Deputy Assistant Commissioner Kevin McAleenan of CBP Field Operations;
- Joe Salvator, the Director of Vetting Operations in TSA’s Office of Transportation Threat Assessment and Credentialing or TTAC; and
- John Woods, the Director of the National Security Division within ICE’s Homeland Security Investigations.

We are also joined by Ben Stefano, Branch Chief of the Terrorist Travel and Immigration Security division of DHS Intelligence and Analysis.

Thank you all for being here today. As I stated earlier, this is a critical topic where significant investments have been made across the U.S. government since the September 11th attacks. Despite those investments, we still have a long way to go – recognizing that the enemy is far

more agile in adapting its tactics to defeat our security measures than we are in implementing new countermeasures.

We know well that the threat to our Nation has not subsided – in fact, as Secretary Napolitano said, “...in some ways the threat facing us is at its most heightened state since the [9/11] attacks.” Aviation remains a fascinating target to our enemies. Yet, turning to our topic today, our global transportation system is also where terrorists are perhaps the most vulnerable as well.

As the 9/11 Commission Report observed, terrorists must utilize the travel system to meet, train, plan, case targets, and gain access to targets to carry out attacks. “International travel presents great danger, because [terrorists]...must surface to pass through regulated channels, present themselves to border security officials, or attempt to circumvent inspection points.” This means we have opportunities, albeit limited opportunities, to detect terrorists in travel and interrupt their plans.

So, today, Gentlemen, we would like to hear from you about what the U.S. government is doing to detect terrorist travel into, out of, and within the United States, as well as in the global transportation system. Further, when terrorists are detected, what are we doing to use those opportunities to interrupt their plans and thwart attacks?

More specifically, how are we gathering and sharing the intelligence needed to “connect the dots” amid the sea of information? How are agencies sharing that critical information to ensure our screening systems catch known terrorists? And how are we utilizing intelligence generally about terrorist tactics and behaviors to target and identify unknown terrorists in the travel system?

Our screening systems are only as good as the information available to them for screening – whether that is the number of identifiers present in the watch list or the quality of Secure Flight data submissions by passengers. However, there are no silver bullets – even with perfect information, front line operators need that information at the right time and place to take the right action.

All of you live with this challenge every day as you do your part to detect, deter, and interrupt terrorist travel and plans. For that reason, we appreciate you being here today to share your insights and perspective.

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