

**STATEMENT BY RAFI RON
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TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORMS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY, HOMELAND DEFENSE AND
FOREIGN OPERATIONS**

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Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee. First, let me thank the Committee for inviting me to testify concerning airport perimeter security.

I am Rafi Ron, President of New Age Security Solutions (NASS), a transportation security consulting firm based in Dulles, VA. The company was established in the wake of the 9/11 disaster to provide more effective security solutions to airports, government agencies, and private transportation companies. Over the last nine years, we have supported numerous projects in the US and abroad involving airports, seaports and ground transportation.

Prior to founding NASS, I served as Director of Security at Tel-Aviv Ben-Gurion International Airport for a period of five years. In this position I was responsible for all aspects of the security operation and coordinating with my counterparts at airports around the world. My previous experience included more than 30 years in the field of security, intelligence, and counterterrorism for the government of Israel.

Experience has demonstrated that transportation systems in general, and aviation facilities in particular, have become high-priority targets for terrorist and terrorist organizations. Such systems constitute a critical portion of our infrastructure, without which our modern societies cannot function. Every indication is that these systems will remain high-risk venues in the foreseeable future. Unfortunately, key links in our transportation systems remain vulnerable to attack. Potential damages include not only a large number of casualties but also significant residual delays with major economic and political repercussions. Few other systems carry a higher level of vulnerability, with so many potential targets for terrorists seeking to act against the interests of the United States.

Since the 9/11 attacks, aviation security has received a great deal of attention. Enormous resources have been dedicated to improving the system. In that time, the US has become a driving force in making the international aviation system safer. Unquestionably, American aviation has become a harder target for terrorists to exploit. The terrorists, however, have been unwilling to abandon their goals. Instead, they have found new ways to threaten the traveling public. Consequently, we must continue to identify vulnerabilities and mitigate them before terrorist take advantage of them. The question is, "What airport security investments will pay the highest dividends?"

I would like to focus on three points:

- The institutional response to the 9/11 attacks;
- The the imbalanced allocation of attention and resource between direct and indirect security threats; and
- The misalignment between federal, state, and local jurisdictional goals.

First Response

The 9/11 attack required swift measures to be taken to improve aviation security. Congress addressed this need by passing the Aviation and Transportation Security Act (ATSA) that created the Transportation Security Administration. Under the act, TSA was charged with performing passengers and bag screening as well as regulating other measures necessary to maintain a secure aviation system.

TSA set about to create a national screening system by hiring and training 60,000 federal employees in approximately twelve months, one of the largest non-military federal employment efforts in history. At the same time they focused on acquiring and encouraging the development of state of the art technology to screen passengers and bags. Billions of dollars were spent and are continuing to be spent on those two security features. But even the federal government has limits. With the concentration on passenger and bag screening, other aspects of security have been relegated to “the back seat,” receiving less attention and little funding.

The large federal investment and the relatively small state and local investment has resulted in unbalanced security airport systems. Much less attention has been devoted to other layers of security such as perimeter protection, access control, and terminal security.

The system can be described as a house with a multimillion dollar burglar alarm on the front door, surrounded by a 24 hour a day security team, while the walls and the back doors remain largely unsecured and unguarded. As it stands today, the vast majority of commercial airports in this country, including some of the high profile airports, do not have the capabilities to detect and prevent an intruder from entering the airside of the airport through the fence or an adjacent waterfront. Very few airports have an operational Perimeter Intrusion Detection System (PIDS).

We continue to learn frequently about perimeter breaches. Some of those breaches result in unauthorized access to the same aircrafts we protect by the expensive checkpoint and bag screening operations. In November of last year, a 16 year-old young man lost his life as a stowaway in the wheel well of a US Airways plane bound for Boston. The tragedy started with a perimeter breach at the Charlotte, North Carolina airport. Unfortunately, this is just the tip of a much bigger iceberg concerning unmitigated airport vulnerability.

Jurisdictional Conflict

There is a related jurisdiction issue that makes the situation even more difficult. While screening is carried out and fully funded by the TSA, other security measures at the airport are not (with

the exception of limited federal grant programs). Airport facility security is performed and funded mostly by state and or local authorities.

This results in two main shortcomings: The first is a vague division of responsibilities between the airport authority, local law enforcement agencies, and the TSA. Depending on the nature of the security concern at any given time, one or more the agencies may be called on to respond. Although they have some degree of coordination, no one person at the airport is in charge of security and proactive programs may be undertaken or skipped by any of the three without consulting the others.

The second consequence of this diverse responsibility is that each airport throughout the country and each of the agencies at a given airport do not place the same priority on security, commercial, and operational considerations. For a local government, where the airport is the lifeblood of their tourist economy, they may be focused on making sure passengers have a high quality travel experience. For law enforcement their resource allocation may be in response to a crime in progress rather than anticipating terrorist actions. And the Federal Government may be much more focused on passengers and baggage than unsecured gates or fences at the end of a distant runway or those surrounding an aviation fuel farm.

Lack of Standards

A lack of clear standards, combined with funding shortages have forced many airports to operate at the minimum local legal threshold. The problem is not limited to perimeter security. It poses significant risks concerning terminal security and other airport security vulnerabilities. Local law enforcement protection, based on locally defined standards, in many cases results in treating airports according to traditional law enforcement for a non-airport environment. But the risks at an airport are different than for a library, a water treatment plant, or a courthouse. And under local standards, airports compete directly for shrinking local budgets dollars and the demands on local law enforcement personnel. An example of inadequate standards is the absence of a building code for blast protection. This could address building materials, offset distances, or security procedures. Many of our airport terminals, including the newly built ones, are vulnerable to car bombs and other suicide attacks with potential catastrophic results.

Summary

The lack of comprehensive approach to airport security leads to unbalanced and insufficient airport security operation. Gaps in airport security exist in many of the areas beyond TSA screening. Among them are: perimeter protection, access control, and terminal security. Mitigation of most of these vulnerabilities can be addressed by implementing the following measures:

- Establish incentives and avenues for each airport to create a clear, integrated, and harmonized organizational structure. Provide for partnerships that integrate federal programs, local law enforcement priorities, and the airport authorities goals. Such an integrated structure will prevent gaps created by the existing fragmented approach.

- Task TSA with developing comprehensive, integrated airport security models that include design, technical systems, operational elements, and human resources factors. Then allow each airport security partnership to adopt an integrated model that responds to its individual circumstances.
- Develop standards based on the above models that cover all aspects of airport security. These standards should be enforced through federal funding, regulatory programs, and periodic supervision.
- Create clear goals for local law enforcement agencies in addressing their counter terrorist role at airports. Support these goals by providing dedicated funding for staffing, training, and equipment.
- Reallocate federal aviation security funding to support local airports in their efforts to develop comprehensive security measures that will improve passenger security.

Thank you for your consideration.

Rafi Ron, President and Chief Executive Officer

Mr. Ron is the former Director of Security at Tel Aviv Ben-Gurion International Airport and the Israel Airport Authority and is currently President of New Age Security Solutions. Mr. Ron is a world-leading security expert on aviation, maritime and law enforcement with more than 30 years of Israeli and worldwide security-related experience and has been recognized by federal and state authorities as an important contributor to the national security of the United States.

He is a Business Partner of Airport Council International, a member of ACI World Standing Security Committee, a member of IATA's and ACI's Global Aviation Security Action Group (GASAG). Mr. Ron has received the Airport Council International (ACI) and IATA Award of Excellence for Lifetime Service. Mr. Ron has provided testimony to Congress on matters of homeland security on various occasions.