



PRESS RELEASE
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Beyond Inexcusable: TSA's Ineptitude Jeopardizes Safety at One of World's Most Terrorist-Targeted Airports

Yesterday, [11 passengers breached a TSA screening checkpoint](#) when a screening lane was left open and unmanned at JFK Airport's JetBlue terminal. Even more unbelievable is that three of the passengers set off the metal detector yet were able to board their flights, since the Port Authority airport police were not informed by TSA of the security breach until two hours after the incident occurred. In a show of astounding tone deafness, TSA announced *post* departure that it searched the passengers, and appeared not to understand the gravity of yet another major mistake made by its agency.

It is unlikely that such incidents would happen at an airport like Denver International Airport, where police are stationed at TSA screening areas, allowing for seamless integration and definitive roles for airport police and the TSA. All threats and criminal acts (and TSA mistakes) are addressed immediately by police when a problem occurs at screening. As we have seen repeatedly, airport police presence at TSA screening checkpoints is desperately needed, proven by incidents like the attack at LAX in November 2012 that left one TSA agent dead and six other people injured; false alarm incidents in August 2016 at JFK and LAX that saw travelers bursting through TSA screening to the sterile area and active runways and planes; and yesterday's breach that left JFK vulnerable to perpetrators who had unfettered access to aircraft.

AAPO has supported two commonsense and easily implemented efforts that would mitigate these types of problems, which are happening with increasing frequency (many are not reported publicly but pose substantial risks that may indeed be tests of the system): 1) *Eliminate TSA's waiver authority* of a congressional requirement that armed airport police fortify TSA screening by passing the Checkpoint Safety Act (HR 550), and 2) **require** that TSA immediately notify airport police in the event of any breach, threat and/or criminal issues at screening.

Many people, including members of Congress, have expressed surprise that these policies are not currently in place, so it is necessary to require that these low cost/high impact solutions be implemented and enforced without exception. All entities at airports who are responsible for safety must be held accountable and have clear lines of authority to carry out their duties. Those who do not should face reprimands and serious consequences, as the work that all of us do is serious and integral to the security of the traveling public.

Most alarmingly, those individuals who are watching our security apparatus for potential gaps are being given a road map on vulnerabilities at our nation's airports, when back-to-basics efforts could plug many of the holes that have been exposed for American enemies to exploit.

"My officers were scrambling to find the people who set off alarms at TSA screening two hours after TSA screening was breached. We were not informed for *two hours* post this incident!" said Paul Nunziato, AAPO co-founder and President of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey Police Benevolent Association. "It is unconscionable. TSA, DHS, Congress, the President — they all need to look at this with clear eyes and do something about these problems that are happening with more and more frequency, before someone or many people are put at risk."

“TSA management must refocus their people on screening passengers and cargo. They have clearly taken their eye off the ball,” said Marshall McClain, AAPO co-founder and President of the Los Angeles Airport Peace Officers Association. “TSA is not trained to investigate breaches or search for subjects, and they do not have the authority to take enforcement action even if they have found the subjects. To intentionally delay notifying law enforcement for two hours after an incident is extremely dangerous to the traveling public. Moreover, it is inexcusable to send an unarmed civilian to search for potentially armed subjects who have gained access to the sterile area.”

McClain continues, “TSA management is more concerned with CYA than public safety. It is time to drain the swamp and conduct a comprehensive assessment of the TSA and how far it has wandered from its core function of screening passengers and cargo. This incident would have never happened if the TSA was focused on screening rather than all over the place, continuing to playing amateur detectives.”

The American Alliance of Airport Police Officers (AAPO) is comprised of rank-and-file airport police officers (including many dual police/aircraft rescue firefighters) who stand as the first line of defense against terrorist attacks, hijackings and other criminal activity at our nation's airports. We seek to promote security and safety for the traveling public, visitors and airport employees by highlighting best practices and identifying areas for improvement and proposed solutions for our nation's airport security deployment. AAPO focuses on regulatory issues that promote our efforts to provide the most advanced and cutting-edge service innovations and security processes in our nation and the world. Our organization represents thousands of sworn law enforcement officers across the United States beholden only to this mission. We are unencumbered by neither political nor managerial constraints that would prevent us from promoting sound public safety policy.

The founding members of the American Alliance of Airport Police Officers are comprised of numerous rank-and-file airport police officers from John F. Kennedy International Airport; LaGuardia Airport; Los Angeles International Airport; Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport; LA/Ontario International Airport; Newark Liberty International Airport; Van Nuys Airport; Stewart International Airport; and Teterboro Airport.