



PRESS RELEASE
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Officer Presence Near Screening Can Help Deter Crimes

Last week, at Orlando International Airport, a TSA agent was [arrested and fired for taking cash out of a passenger's purse](#). The AAPO commends TSA for taking swift action to rectify this situation.

The passenger in question was pulled aside for additional screening but complained that she could not see her belongings during the pat-down search. This prompted the TSA agent who was inspecting the passenger's bags to only slightly move so the passenger could see her luggage. After the pat-down, the passenger retrieved her bags and noticed money missing — as well as a large bulge in the shirt pocket of the TSA agent who screened her items. After she alerted the TSA to her concerns, it was discovered that the TSA agent who searched her bags had indeed stolen money from the passenger's belongings.

Instances like this reinforce the need for an airport police officer to be stationed near the screening checkpoint, not only to help fortify and secure the screening checkpoint, but also to help deter such actions.

“The TSA screening checkpoint is often a busy and chaotic area,” says Marshall McClain, co-founder of AAPO and president of the Los Angeles Airport Peace Officers Association. “This makes the screening area vulnerable for exploitation — whether it be by terrorists or by those looking to commit petty crimes. Having a law enforcement officer within 300 feet of the checkpoint not only protects travelers and TSA agents, but the presence of the officer also helps discourage criminal activity.”

“Airports are stressful places,” says Paul Nunziato, president of the Port Authority Police Benevolent Association and co-founder of AAPO. “This passenger was alert and aware of her surroundings and, as a result, prevented a theft. However, most crimes like this go unnoticed — most passengers are focused on getting to their gate on time. So having airport police near the screening area serves as a deterrence factor for these types of incidents.”

The American Alliance of Airport Police Officers (AAAPO) is composed 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 comprise 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.