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## Drain the Swamp at TSA—Make Airport Security Great

With the ushering in of a new Administration, and a call by President-elect Trump for a focus on protecting our country through law and order, the American Alliance of Airport Police Officers urges a “draining of the swamp” at TSA.

Over the last several years, TSA mismanagement and mission creep has placed traveler safety at risk. The original TSA mission—to screen passengers and baggage—is an important and critical one among the layers within the airport security apparatus. However, TSA management has strayed and diluted their focus to non-screening functions, such as Behavior Detection Officers, TSA-led Explosive Detection Canine Teams, and Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response programs, which divert valuable resources and have proven to be ineffective, which ultimately jeopardizes public safety.

TSA management has created fiefdoms and sought to expand the agency’s role into law enforcement type activities, which they are neither trained nor sworn to do. While airport police officers have strong working relationships with all the federal agencies and employees they work with—CBP, FBI and others, like airline pilots and crew—as clear lines of authority, areas of responsibility and open lines of communication exist, this is not the case with TSA management and this needs to change.

TSA must focus its efforts on providing the best training, best equipment and best support to give American airports the best passenger and baggage screening system in the world and DHS should look at airports that are doing the process right, like Denver International Airport. DIA stations airport police officers at screening checkpoints to provide law enforcement back up to TSA should any policing or security matter arise—from petty theft to potential terrorist threats—allowing TSA to focus solely on their job of screening, providing assurances to TSA that they are protected and sending a message to anyone considering advancing a threat on an airplane, that they will be stopped or taken down by law enforcement.

“It’s time for a fresh look at TSA—what they are doing right; what they are doing wrong; and how they can do things better. It starts at the top. DHS and TSA need leaders who think through the process and look at where the weak links are and fix them,” said **Marshall McClain, co-founder of the AAPO and President of the Los Angeles Airport Peace Officers Association**. “I hope the new leaders of DHS and TSA take TSA back to the basics of passenger and baggage screening. TSA’s management has failed its own employees in not providing the proper training, technological equipment and oversight of the agency and not enforcing laws on the books that require that a police officer be at screening to protect them, the traveling public and aircraft. The TSA can’t continue its business as usual. It’s time to make airport security great in America.”

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*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.*