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## Ongoing Security Gaps Jeopardize Holiday Travel

With the busy holiday travel season kicking off this week, and this year's Thanksgiving travel period expected to be the busiest ever for U.S. carriers, the American Alliance of Airport Police Officers (AAPO) reiterates the importance of enhancing security protocols at American airports.

The single most comprehensive and practical way to increase security at our nation's airports is to have an armed law enforcement officer stationed within 300 feet of the TSA screening area. Fortifying the TSA checkpoint, which is the most vulnerable and busiest chokepoint in airports and designed to be the last barricade to detect and stop threats from reaching airplanes, will better protect passengers, airport employees (including TSA) and airplanes.

Airport security cameras are also lacking, as most major airports have a fractured camera system in which vendors, tenants, TSA and others can deny access to airport law enforcement. Lapses in camera coordination have led to airport disruptions and numerous individuals eluding capture and the lack of police access to cameras casts unnecessary risk upon the traveling public. Airport police must have real-time access to all closed-circuit security camera systems at airports.

Screening all airport employees will likewise help prevent an "insider threat", or criminal activity by employees. Given the instances of drugs and weapons smuggling and thefts by airport employees, these incidents highlight the ongoing internal security vulnerabilities at our nation's airports. Just as every traveler must pass through screening before entering the sterile area of the airport, airport employees should be subject to the same screening.

"When a security gap exists, like the TSA screening area being vulnerable due to the lack of a police presence, the logical decision should be to close the loophole by having a police officer be within 300 feet of the area. Similarly, when airport police officers do not have real-time access to airport security cameras, which can impede investigations, the common-sense answer would be to give police access to the cameras. These security gaps continue to exist despite the fact that we have brought these issues up time and again but they continue to fall on deaf ears. The recommendations we have laid out are not only reasonable, but will help fortify security at airports. In the interest of public safety, these proposals cannot, and should not, be ignored any longer, especially during this busy holiday travel season" said **Marshall McClain, co-founder of the AAPO and President of the Los Angeles Airport Peace Officers Association.**

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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.*