



U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Washington, DC 20515

John L. Mica
Chairman

Nick J. Rahall, III
Ranking Member

James W. Coon II, Chief of Staff

January 3, 2012

James H. Zola, Democrat Chief of Staff

The Honorable Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

As Chairman of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I am concerned with repeated reports of Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) personnel misconduct. Therefore, I request that the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) conduct a thorough review of TSA personnel misconduct and TSA's hiring, background check and disciplinary processes.

The United States relies on approximately 50,000 transportation security officers and other TSA screening personnel to ensure the security of the traveling public and the nation's transportation system. These TSA personnel screen nearly 2 million passengers a day at over 450 airports nationwide. They interact with passengers in a variety of ways from checking for potentially fraudulent travel and identity documents, inspecting checked and carry-on baggage, to observing for suspicious behaviors and conducting physical "pat-downs" of passengers referred for secondary screening, among other activities.

Even as TSA personnel are charged with protecting the security of the nation's traveling public, some of these employees engage in questionable conduct as highlighted in recent media reports. For example, in the fall of 2011, several high profile allegations were made against TSA officers. In October 2011, a TSA security officer at Los Angeles International Airport allegedly was paid between \$5,000 and \$6,000 to smuggle drugs through airport security without being detected. In another example, a TSA security officer from Maryland was charged with unlawful possession and distribution of child pornography. At Miami International Airport, a TSA screening official unlawfully tried to bring a handgun in the airport's secure area. Also, earlier this year, a behavior detection officer at Buffalo-Niagara International Airport allegedly provided information to suspected drug traffickers and allegedly helped them circumvent airport security.

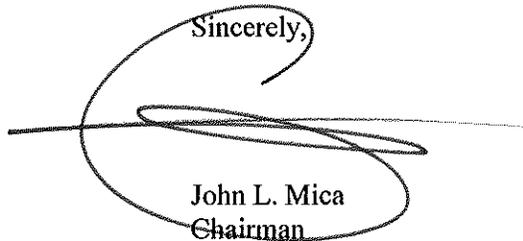
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I remain concerned that these examples of misconduct are evidence of a systemic weakness in the TSA's background checking procedures for its employees. In addition, I am also interested in clarifying whether these incidents pose a potential security risk in the U.S. aviation system. As reported by GAO in July 2011, TSA did not consider the threat posed by an insider attack—an attack from an airport worker with authorized access to secure areas—in its *Transportation Sector Security Risk Assessment* but expected to address this issue in the next iteration scheduled for release at the end of calendar year 2011. I am also interested in an assessment of TSA's security background check procedures and related criminal statistics on TSA's security workforce. Specifically, your assessment should provide information on:

- the number and types of criminal offenses for which TSA personnel have been arrested and/or convicted over the past 5 years;
- the extent to which the TSA has established comprehensive policies, procedures, and a monitoring system to help limit the recruitment and employment of individuals with serious criminal histories or other potentially disqualifying offenses;
- a thorough review of the TSA's hiring, background check and disciplinary processes and how these processes may be impacted with the introduction of collective bargaining by TSA personnel; and
- steps the TSA has taken to analyze the potential security risk, including the potential threat and vulnerabilities, if any, that TSA employee misconduct could pose to the nation's transportation system.

Thank you for your assistance on this important matter. Please contact Holly Woodruff Lyons, Majority Staff Director of the Subcommittee on Aviation, at (202) 226-3220 if you have any questions regarding this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John L. Mica", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive.

John L. Mica
Chairman