



One Hundred Thirteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

February 24, 2014

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

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

In September 2009, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report on our Nation's airports and their perimeter security needs.^[1] Since then, a number of high-profile perimeter security breaches have occurred at airports across the nation. In 2012, a driver crashed through a gate and onto a busy runway at Philadelphia Airport; in New York a jet skier walked across two runways past security, cameras and motion detectors that the airport recently paid millions of dollars to install; and in Massachusetts, a 16-year old stow-away who breached airport security at Charlotte-Douglas fell to his death as the plane was nearing Boston Logan Airport. We write to ask GAO to update their 2009 report on airport perimeter security and incorporate a review of these high-profile breaches and any policy changes put in place since 2009 to bolster perimeter security.

In the 2009 report, GAO determined that TSA had not conducted a comprehensive risk assessment based on assessments of threats, vulnerabilities, and consequences, as required by DHS' *National Infrastructure Protection Plan (NIPP)*. GAO further reported that without a full depiction of threats, vulnerabilities, and consequences, an organization's ability to establish priorities and make cost-effective security decisions is limited. As a result, GAO recommended that TSA develop a comprehensive risk assessment, along with milestones for completing the assessment. DHS concurred with GAO's recommendation and informed GAO that it would include an assessment of airport perimeter and access control security risks as part of a comprehensive assessment for the transportation sector—the *Transportation Sector Security Risk Assessment (TSSRA)*. The *TSSRA*, published in July 2010, included an assessment of various risk-based scenarios related to airport perimeter security but did not consider the potential

^[1] Government Accountability Office, *Aviation Security: A National Strategy and Other Actions Would Strengthen TSA's Efforts to Secure Commercial Airport Perimeters and Access Controls*, GAO-09-399, September 30, 2009.

vulnerabilities of airports to an insider attack—the insider threat—which it recognized as a significant issue. To that end, GAO considers its recommendation unresolved.

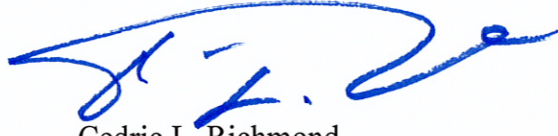
Given our concerns about the level of perimeter security at our Nation's airports, we write to request GAO conduct a review of the efficacy of TSA's perimeter security activities, including the security assessments, enforcement actions, and stakeholder collaboration on perimeter security. This review should also evaluate perimeter security technologies, with a focus on our capabilities to detect and prevent perimeter security breaches.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact I. Lanier Avant at lavant@mail.house.gov or (202) 226-2616. I appreciate your time and attention to this matter.


Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member



Cedric L. Richmond
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Transportation Security



William R. Keating
Member

cc: *Stephen M. Lord: GAO, Director of Homeland Security and Justice Issues*