



U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Washington, DC 20515

Don Young
Chairman

James L. Oberstar
Ranking Democratic Member

April 26, 2005

Lloyd A. Jones, Chief of Staff
Elizabeth Megginson, Chief Counsel

David Heymsfeld, Democratic Chief of Staff

The Honorable Richard L. Skinner
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Street S.W. – Bldg. 410
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Mr. Skinner:

I have recently reviewed your January 26, 2005 testimony before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. On page 8 of your prepared statement, you note that “the ability of TSA screeners to stop prohibited items from being carried through the sterile areas of airports *fares no better than the performance of screeners prior to September 11, 2001.*” I found this difficult to believe. After September 11, we enacted the *Aviation and Transportation Security Act* with the complete overhaul and federalization of airline passenger and baggage screening, including better training and equipment for the screener workforce. It is hard to accept that these improvements did not enhance screener performance.

On the basis of subsequent briefings and reports, it is my impression that you have never done an analysis comparing screener performance before September 11, 2001, with recent performance. Moreover, any such comparison would be misleading, since the tests of screeners performance before September 11 was based on a less rigorous test than is now used. If screeners are detecting at the same rate in the rigorous test now used as they did in the easier pre September 11th test, this would be an improvement.

Accordingly, I request that you advise me whether you continue to believe that screener performance today is no better than screener performance pre September 11th.

Thank you for your assistance with this matter. If you have any questions related to this request, please contact Stacie Soumbeniotis, Democratic Staff Director, Aviation Subcommittee, at (202) 225-9161.

With all best wishes.

Sincerely,

James L. Oberstar
Ranking Democratic Member

JLO:ss

*Office of Inspector General*U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528**Homeland
Security**

May 2, 2005

The Honorable James L. Oberstar
Ranking Democratic Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Oberstar:


This is in response to your letter regarding my prepared testimony submitted on January 26, 2005, to the Senate Committee on Homeland Security. The testimony contained the statement that "...the ability of TSA screeners to stop prohibited items from being carried through the sterile areas of airports fared no better than the performance of screeners prior to September 11, 2001." You requested that I advise you whether I continue to believe that statement.

I regret to say that the quoted statement was an inadvertent error. Our data shows that there has been no overall improvement in screener performance at passenger check points since the Department of Transportation (DOT) OIG conducted similar tests "after September 11, 2001, but prior to federalization."

The tests performed by the DOT OIG, with which we first compared our results, were conducted between November 2001 and July 2002. We have never done an analysis comparing screener performance before September 11, 2001, with recent performance. The Federal Aviation Administration conducted penetration tests prior to September 11, 2001, but they used procedures far less rigorous than those used by DOT OIG or DHS OIG, and any comparison with the FAA results would have been misleading.

I apologize for the misunderstanding. Should you have any further questions regarding this matter, please call me, or your staff may call Richard Berman, Assistant Inspector General for Audits, at (202) 254-4100.

Sincerely,


Richard L. Skinner
Acting Inspector General