Rep. Phil Gingrey
Opening Statement for Aviation Security R&D Hearing
Subcommittee on Technology & Innovation
April 24, 2008

Good afternoon, Chairman Wu. Thank you for holding this important hearing today on the Department of Homeland Security's aviation security programs. Aviation security is an issue that affects every Member of Congress as passengers across the country put their faith in the Transportation Security Administration to have the technology in place to keep them safe as they travel.

We have an excellent opportunity today to discuss how best to put the immense creative talent of our country's scientists and engineers to use to prevent acts of terrorism in our airports and skies.

Aviation continues to be a target, as evidenced by the publicized liquid explosives plot from 2006 and the attempted attack by "shoe bomber" Richard Reid in 2001. A successful attack like the tragic one that occurred on September 11, 2001 would yield an immediate and catastrophic loss of life, and create economic losses throughout the aviation industry and possibly beyond.

But there is no easy, all-encompassing solution. Against a guileful and committed enemy, we must continually review and refine our defenses and seek out new ideas and technologies that will better nullify the threats against us. We must also recall that this is but one challenge to implementing an effective, efficient, and evolving defense of our homeland. I am eager to hear what the witnesses have to say about this challenge and how we can improve our current aviation security efforts.

Mr. Chairman, we must also ensure that our substantial investments in R&D and new aviation security technologies work as advertised, are coordinated throughout the government, and include appropriate university researchers and private sector companies. To that end, I am particularly interested in hearing our TSA and Transportation Security Lab (TSL) witnesses describe their relationship and plans for the future.

Formerly part of TSA, the Transportation Security Lab became part of the Science and Technology Directorate of DHS in 2006. The lab possesses many of the world's foremost experts on all kinds of aviation security technology and supports research, development, test, and evaluation activities based on the requirements and priorities of TSA.

Within the wider aviation security industry, some have had difficulty understanding the roles and responsibilities of TSA and TSL and how other institutions like universities, national labs, or private companies can best contribute. I hope that our witnesses today will be able to clearly and concisely lay out who is developing our aviation security strategy and how that strategy is being implemented.

How can a university researcher determine what TSA's most pressing basic research needs are? How can a private company translate broad equipment requirements to technical specifications that can lead to a commercially available product?

Is there a standard process for test and evaluation of new technologies? Answers to these questions will lessen confusion outside of DHS and allow TSA to create more successful partnerships.

Again, I look forward to hearing from our distinguished panel and with that Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.