

ROBERT MENENDEZ  
NEW JERSEY

COMMITTEES:  
BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN  
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# United States Senate

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January 11, 2010

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As I am sure you are aware, on Sunday January 3, 2009, a man was able to take advantage of lax security at a Newark Liberty International Airport terminal exit point and illegally enter a secure area. Thankfully, this man was not a terrorist and did not seek to do others harm, but his actions have revealed serious flaws in security at Newark Liberty – flaws that could be a valuable research tool for terrorists. As we know, our security system has to be successful 100 percent of the time, while terrorists only have to be successful once to cause untold casualties, damage and fear. Thus, it is imperative that every point of weakness we find is quickly and permanently fortified.

Since last week's incident, I and my staff have visited the airport, spoken extensively with airport security personnel, and communicated separately with officials from the Transportation Security Administration, the Port Authority of New York/New Jersey and Continental Airlines. This is a major international airport through which more than 30 million passengers per year from all corners of the nation and world travel, which is why security at Newark Liberty is an important national security issue. I have repeatedly urged TSA to undertake a series of immediate security upgrades to reinforce security at Newark Liberty and restore public confidence, but have yet to receive any response. However, it is clear to me that there are a number of quick and uncomplicated steps that can be taken in order to make this busy airport many times safer.

I urge the administration to help Newark Liberty undertake a crucial and overdue security technology upgrade. It is 2010, and there is no reason that one of our nation's busiest international airports should rely on security technology that belongs in the last century. A series of simple but vital technology enhancements would have helped to prevent the breach, the delayed security response and the hours that it took for the airport to recover. They will help make Americans safer and will be relatively cost-effective – particularly when you consider how devastating a terrorist attack would be.

I urge you to include in your FY2011 budget request to Congress the following items at Newark Liberty:

- Replacement of the current video surveillance system with a new one that is not prone to malfunctions and can automatically notify the TSA and Port Authority Police Department in the case of operational glitches.
- Networking the primary video surveillance system at Newark Liberty so that the PAPD is able to monitor the camera feeds from its main security center.
- Installation of the requisite number of additional cameras in the requisite locations to ensure that the entirety of the airport terminals are under continuous video surveillance.
- Installation of motion sensor technology at all secure area exit points to ensure that an alarm is automatically triggered should someone illegally enter a secure area.

I urge you to confer with the TSA and Port Authority as to the exact cost of these particular upgrades and to include them in your budget request. The only silver lining to last week's breach was that we are now fully aware of this gaping hole in security technology at Newark Liberty. To not act immediately and decisively would be damaging to our security and disheartening to the public, who rightly expects us to heed the lessons of every security issue that we face.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests, and I look forward to continuing to work with you to make our nation as safe as possible.

Sincerely,



ROBERT MENENDEZ  
United States Senator

CC:

Ms. Gale D. Rossides  
Acting Administrator  
Transportation Security Administration

Mr. Michael A. Fedorko  
Superintendent of the Police  
Port Authority of New York & New Jersey Police Department