

Opening Statement
The Honorable Adrian Smith, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Technology and Innovation
Committee on Science and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives

*Passenger Screening R&D: Responding to President Obama's Call to Develop and Deploy
the Next Generation of Screening Technologies*

February 3, 2010

Thank you, Chairman Wu, for calling today's hearing on developing and deploying the next generation of passenger screening technologies. The attempted Christmas Day bombing of Northwest Airlines Flight 253 was yet another reminder that Al Qaeda and its affiliates continue to pursue all means to attack innocent Americans, and that we must continue using all means available to us— military, intelligence, and technological – to remain ahead of this threat.

I would also like to join the Chairman in welcoming today's distinguished panel. You all are at the forefront of this necessary research, and I look forward to learning more about ongoing research and expected developments in this field, as well as the potential positive and negative implications of this work for all Americans.

While it is vital we continue seeking the most effective technological means to ensure Americans remain safe from attack, we must also ensure that new technologies don't needlessly intrude on passengers' privacy. There are more than 700 million airline passenger boardings in the United States every year, and we must find the best possible means to ensure the interdiction of all those who would do us harm while continuing to protect the privacy of the vast majority who are innocent.

One particular technology which has received widespread coverage in light of the Christmas incident, and which I have heard concerns from numerous constituents about is whole-body scanners, which allow airport screeners to see concealed contraband underneath passengers' clothes. While the desirability of this technology is understandable from a security standpoint, I look forward to learning how technological advances in other fields such as explosives detection and behavioral sciences will mitigate the need for these intrusive scanners.

Thank you, again, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back the balance of my time.