TSA Airport Credentialing Process Overlooks Terrorists, Criminals, and Illegal Aliens on a Large Scale

Dan Cadman writes for the [here](#) and ["Securing Our Skies: Oversight of Aviation Credentials"](#). Nothing in his testimony makes me believe that TSA has shown itself up to the task of controlling identification credentials granting access to airport secure areas.

> According to Roth's testimony, during the course of an audit, IG officers discovered that, since its inception in 2003, TSA was obliged to direct airport authorities to deny *or revoke* 58 airport badges; in addition, auditors discovered an additional 73 individuals with terrorism-related category codes who *also had active credentials*.

> Roth also testified that there was over-reliance on individuals self-attesting to having criminal histories (something they are, of course, disinclined to do):

> > *TSA also did not have an adequate monitoring process in place to ensure that airport operators properly adjudicated credential applicants' criminal histories. While TSA facilitated the CHRC [Criminal History Records Check] for aviation worker applicants, over 400 commercial airports maintained the ultimate authority to review and determine whether an individual's criminal history contained disqualifying crimes under Federal law. TSA officials informed us that airport officials rarely or almost never documented the results of their CHRC reviews electronically. Without sufficient documentation, TSA cannot systematically determine whether individuals*

with access to secured areas of the airports are free of disqualifying criminal events.

Finally, Roth testified that TSA oversight of aliens' work permits was inadequate.

Airport operators are required to ensure that aviation workers are authorized to work in the United States prior to sending their information to TSA for review. TSA then verifies that aviation workers have lawful status to be in the United States. However, our review of TSA data showed that TSA has had to send nearly 29,000 inquiries to credential applicants regarding their lawful status since program inception in 2004. Of those individuals, over 4,800 were eventually denied credentials because TSA determined that they did not prove lawful status even after appeal. This occurred despite the fact that these individuals had previously received clearance from the airports as being authorized to work.

Calculating those figures, it means that more than 16 percent of the individuals who were subjected to these secondary inquiries (which represent only a small fraction of the workforce) — and, as Roth notes, already recipients of airport clearances — were illegal aliens with no right to work. What's more, Roth also notes that airport authorities routinely fail to annotate their security credentials with the expiration date of aliens' employment authorization documents, meaning that such persons are routinely employed in sterile areas long past their legally authorized right to work.

Which raises the question: Why have rules not been written that simply preclude individuals with limited time authorizations on their work permits or, better yet, who are not legally authorized to live in the United States on a permanent basis, from being employed in secure areas of

airports? Is this so onerous, given the importance of securing the safety of the traveling public?

But back to the immediate issue of TSA and its oversight of airport authorities doing the credentialing. There is obviously something seriously amiss.

Why, for instance, is E-Verify not being used *in each and every application for credentialing*?

And as to the criminal history checks: The capability for biometric matching of fingerprint submissions is well established — witness, for instance, the ICE Secure Communities program (now discontinued at the direction of DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson). Although that program matched fingerprints of individuals arrested for criminal offenses, its "job applicant" parallel is the FBI RapBack program mentioned by Roth, which he says will only be initiated by TSA on a trial basis this year.

Yet RapBack [profiled by police](#), and as they are alleged to have done with [commit a terrorist attack within the United States](#) (and do so using refugees, who presumably would be entitled to work in the secure areas of airports)? One can only speculate. The mental picture is horrifying.