

Congressman John Carney, Statement for the Record

Rules Committee, May 11, 2011

Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on behalf of my amendment to the Intelligence Authorization Act.

Over the past week, officials have announced that preliminary intelligence gathered from Osama bin Laden's Pakistan hideout shows that Al-Qaeda had been plotting a terrorist attack on our nation's rail system. While roughly 1.7 million passengers ride in domestic and international flights daily, every weekday, 34 million Americans ride on trains and transit systems. The issue of rail security is more relevant now than ever. I am here today to argue for making rail security a national intelligence priority.

On March 11, 2004, nearly 200 people were killed in Madrid as a result of a terrorist bombing while riding the commuter rail to work. In 2005, over 50 people were killed and 700 injured on the London transit system in a series of explosions during morning rush hour. Between 2004 and 2008, over 500 terrorist attacks were waged worldwide against mass transit and passenger rail targets, resulting in over 2,000 deaths and over 9,000 injuries. An attack on our rail system here in the United States would be devastating, and would almost certainly result in loss of life.

Clearly, terrorist organizations around the world have made rail systems a target. I strongly believe that we need to address the vulnerabilities in our rail system by ensuring that rail security is one of our nation's top intelligence priorities. That's why I offered this amendment directing the intelligence community to include rail and subway transit security in its transportation security plans and budgets.

The 9/11 Commission Report found that over 90 percent of the nation's annual investment in transportation security is spent on aviation security. While addressing security vulnerabilities within aviation is critical, this allocation leaves too little for surface transportation security, particularly on our rail systems.

Earlier this year, Congress passed the Department of Defense and Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act of 2011, shrinking the Transportation Security Grants Program by \$50 million – that's 20 percent – below the enacted level for FY 2010. Transit agencies use this federal money to hire law enforcement officers, acquire bomb-sniffing dogs, and install explosive screening devices. They also use this money to finance capital projects that keep riders safe, such as strengthening tunnels, installing surveillance systems, and establishing perimeter security controls.

While the bill before the Committee today does not address security appropriations, I bring these matters up because they are relevant to the information gathered and synthesized by the intelligence community as part of our broader effort to combat terrorism. We need to ensure coordination between government agencies, and a shared sense of priorities.

“For now, riding trains is safe.” That's how Transportation Secretary LaHood described the state of our rail system in light of the intelligence found in Osama bin Laden's compound. We need to do better than that. As a near daily rider of Amtrak myself, I want to know that the United States government is doing all it can to keep my fellow passengers safe.

I urge the Rules Committee to allow a floor vote on my rail security amendment so that our intelligence community is able to identify and prevent a terrorist attack on our rail systems.

Thank you for your consideration.