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SCHUMER: DA THOMPSON'S RECENT BUST OF ATLANTA-NY GUN SMUGGLING RING EXPOSES GAPING & DANGEROUS LOOPHOLE IN NEW YORK - AND NATIONAL AIRPORT SECURITY, ALLOWING ERRANT AIRLINE EMPLOYEES TO SMUGGLE GUNS, DRUGS & EXPLOSIVES ONTO PLANES - AMAZINGLY, MOST EMPLOYEES ARE EXEMPT FROM GOING THROUGH METAL DETECTORS; SCHUMER, THOMPSON DEMAND TSA REQUIRE EACH AIRPORT DEVELOP COMPREHENSIVE SCREENING PROCESS FOR ALL EMPLOYEES

Lack of Physical Security Checks Allowed Gun Running Ring to Board Nearly 20 Flights Undetected In 2014 Alone, Smuggling Over 150 Firearms Straight to NY Streets – Schumer, Thompson Call For Action to Protect Against Potential Acts of Terrorism, Future Crime

While Pilots & Flight Crew Must Pass Through Metal Detectors Each Day, Employees Who Clean & Repair Planes, Load Luggage & Work In Terminals Past Security Check Points Do Not; Schumer, Thompson Say TSA Must Require Airports to Upgrade Unique Airport Security Plans to Include Physical Screening– Astoundingly, this is Not Currently a Requirement

Schumer: Millions of Gov't Employees in Courthouses, the Pentagon & Federal Offices Pass Through Metal Detectors Each Day - Errant Airport Employees With the Potential to Perpetrate Acts of Terror on Airplanes Should Be Physically Screened As Well

In the wake of D.A. Ken Thompson's exposure of a highly disturbing gun running scheme, U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer today called on the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to immediately implement a national requirement that all airports physically screen airline and airport employees each day before they enter secured areas of airports. Currently, pilots and flight crew pass through metal detectors, but amazingly, most employees that repair and clean planes, load luggage, and work in the terminal post-security checkpoints are exempt from this physically screening. Schumer and Thompson said this gaping and dangerous loophole in airport security plans allowed an expansive gun running scheme to smuggle 153 firearms into New York, when a former Delta Airlines employee carried backpacks and carry-on baggage full of guns and ammunition on nearly twenty commercial flights in 2014 from Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport to New York. Four men have been charged by Thompson for allegedly conspiring to sell these firearms, destined for the streets of Brooklyn. After Thompson notified federal authorities, a fifth man was charged by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia with a firearms trafficking offense and violating airport security requirements. Schumer said that like airplane passengers, flight crews and millions of private and government employees in courthouses and elsewhere, all commercial airport employees should be physically screened before entering secure areas, as a requirement of each airport's unique Airport Security Plan (ASP). While Schumer made clear that while the vast majority of airline

employees are honest, upstanding citizens, it takes one person to exploit the system and smuggle guns, or worse, explosives onto a plane and cause huge damage.

“When guns, drugs, and even explosives are as easy to carry on board a plane as a neck pillow, then we have to seriously - and immediately - overhaul our airport security practices,” **said Senator Schumer.** “In this day and age of terrorism, rampant drug dealing and gun smuggling, we just can't be too careful. DA Thompson's groundbreaking investigation underscores that clearly, the TSA should require all airline employees to be physically screened each day before entering secure airport areas. The vast majority of airline employees are good, hard-working people, however, in order to limit the chance of weapons and other dangerous contraband from making it into our overhead compartments, all airline employees should pass through metal detectors.”

“The ease by which airport employees are able to smuggle weapons and other contraband onto our commercial airliners is troubling and warrants immediate scrutiny and inspection,” **said District Attorney Thompson.** “Our investigation, in cooperation with the NYPD and our federal law enforcement partners, identified gaping holes in our nation's airport security. In this age of terrorism, basic protections such as screening airport employees, is critical to the safety of our country. Moreover, these loaded weapons were intended for the streets of New York where they could have been used to kill our residents or police officers. The majority of airport personnel are good, hardworking employees but there are bad apples in every workplace. By screening everyone – not just passengers and flight crews – TSA will be able to identify and remove offending employees before they have the opportunity to spoil the whole apple cart.”

According to DA Thompson's groundbreaking investigation, defendant Mark Henry made 17 trips between New York airports and Atlanta, Georgia between May 8, 2014 and December 10, 2014. Mark Henry worked as a Delta ramp agent between 2007 and 2010 so he was aware of weaknesses in the system. He would pass weapons to Eugene Harvey, who was working as a Delta ramp agent, outside of the airport. Mark Henry then proceeded through security to the boarding areas. Eugene Harvey was not required to go through security at Hartsdale's Atlanta airport, so he simply took the bags of weapons through the employee entrances and into the secure areas of the airport. Once Mark Henry cleared security, Eugene Harvey would go inside the airport and allegedly give him back the guns in exchange for cash.

Schumer explained that each airport has a unique Airport Security Plan (ASP), which is developed in conjunction with the TSA to fit that specific facility's layout, size, number of entrances, number of employees and other unique factors. Nationwide, there are very few, if any, airports that require airport employees, like those working in post-security terminals at gates, on the tarmac and ramps and at vendors, to pass through metal detectors before work each day. Schumer explained that astoundingly, in the recent bust by DA Thompson, it seems the two defendants did not break a single airport rule in terms of airport screening. Atlanta's airport's ASP did not require physical screening of employees before entering secured areas, which demonstrates a need for serious security overhauls nationwide. At New York area airports, employees are physically screened in some cases but not in every instance - the rules vary by employee and terminal.

Ironically, the TSA does require that flight crew and pilots be screened, and Schumer and Thompson said that there is no reason that other employees aren't physically screened as well. Schumer and Thompson did highlight the important fact that the TSA does currently require an employee's background to be screened before they are hired, and the TSA continues to check whether those employees are added to the terrorist watch list daily. But, the lawmakers noted that given the recent arrests, these security steps are insufficient on their own.

Schumer today said that the TSA must implement a national requirement that all airline employees be physically screened as part of an airport's Airport Security Plan. Schumer today said that each airport can determine the most cost-effective and efficient ways to screen each employee, whether it be at existing employee screening lines for flight crew, or by placing new metal detectors at other employee entrances. Regardless of the method, anyone entering the secure airport areas should be screened, whether they are an employee or a passenger, Schumer and Thompson said.

A copy of Schumer's letter to TSA Director Pistole appears below:

Dear Director Pistole,

Thank you for your continued efforts to keep our nation and the traveling public safe. I'm sure you were as alarmed as I was to hear the news, following a case brought by Brooklyn District Attorney Kenneth Thompson, that an airline worker smuggled dangerous, sometimes loaded, weapons and ammunition through the Atlanta airport and onto planes destined for New York City.

The investigation by DA Thompson has determined that this gun-smuggling ring operated without impediment for almost six months. Fundamental to their scheme was the lack of airline employee physical screening that allowed an airline employee to carry numerous lethal weapons into the theoretically secure passenger boarding area, where they were handed off to a passenger who brought them aboard a plane as carry-on luggage.

This lack of physical screening of employees is not limited to Atlanta; in fact, once most employees submit to background checks and security threat assessments, they are cleared for access to secure areas in airports across the country. One can easily imagine terrorists employing similar techniques to the Atlanta criminals, in order to get loaded weapons onto planes, and this is simply an unacceptable risk.

The security breaches that occurred at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta National Airport are a frightening wake-up call that must be heeded with all due speed. Thankfully, this employee and his co-conspirators have been arrested, but this incident has exposed a gaping loophole in airport security that must be promptly addressed and eliminated.

As head of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), I ask that you implement a national requirement that airline employees go through physical screening each and every time they enter the secure areas of an airport. Each and every airport nationwide should be required to develop a comprehensive physical screening procedure for employees as soon as possible. Though I realize this may seem to be a burden to some, we know well from prior tragedies that

security is of paramount importance. The 9-11 attacks on New York City and other parts of the country were tragic examples of what can happen when security breaches occur in airports, and we must do everything in our power to prevent similar tragedies. Under your leadership, the TSA has done an admirable job of screening all the passengers on airlines, providing background screening of employees at airports, and developing physical security plans at every airport. DA Thompson's case has revealed that we must do a little bit more: everyone entering an airport should be subject to physical screening, regardless of whether they are a passenger or employee.

Thank you, and I look forward to working with you on this important issue.