

Congress debates new ways to prevent future terrorist attacks

Days after the 15th anniversary of the 9/11 attack, the house Homeland Security committee held a hearing to do a check up on security on Wednesday. Topics covered everything from combating terrorist travel, visas, refugees. Witnesses said the battle for resources has made some issues challenging to tackle.

Homeland Security committee Chairman Michael McCaul recalls he was with his daughter when the second tower hit on that somber day.

“In the aftermath of 9/11, we made a solemn pledge, ‘never again’,” he said.

Although, steps were taken and advances in technology have been implemented to battle against terrorism since 2001, terrorism threats seem to be getting worse.

“Today’s jihadists are using encrypted apps to hide their communications and recruiting operatives with ease of a tweet,” McCaul said.

Meanwhile, recent attacks against aircraft and airports in Egypt, Belgium and Turkey raised the question of aviation security and what that means for safety.

“We are taking aggressive steps to enhance aviation security here at home and around the world,” Hon. Francis Taylor, undersecretary of office of intelligence and analysis, testified.

To maximize aviation security, the Transportation Security Administration or TSA has retrained the Transportation Security Officer workforce, while increasing the use of

explosive trace detectors, and tested the capability of screening equipment.

“With your support, we are surging resources and adding personnel to address the increased volume of travelers,” he added.

The U.S. recently accepted record number of Syrian refugees to the country. The security agencies, however, said that they put in place a stringent security screening process through which each refugee must successfully complete.

“Syrian refugees undergo an additional layer of screening referred to the Syrian enhanced review,” Taylor said.

Better technology to be able to track down fake passports was also discussed. Rep. Jeff Duncan, R- S.C., said Syrians were recently apprehended in Honduras trying to come to U.S. using fake Greek passports.

“We know that Syrians are traveling to Turkey and for as little as \$600 can change their identity with fake passports,” Duncan said.

Rep. Martha McSally, R- A.Z, was particularly interested in directing DHS to review and consider investing in deception detection technology.

“This technology can easily and cheaply detect interviews. We’re moving at the speed of bureaucracy when the bad guys are moving at the speed of broadband,” she said.

A year after the first-ever congressional hearing in New York was held, where a comprehensive report on terrorist travel since 9/11 commission was released, Wednesday’s hearing concluded with many questions still unanswered.

McMaul is expected to release a new, national counterterrorism strategy that highlights the issue and explains how to best rollback Islamist terrorists worldwide.