SMC Draft Statement

Opportunities to Improve Technology in the
Screening of Personal Electronic Devices

Background:

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has identified a new threat whereby terrorists could use personal electronic devices, such as laptops, tablets, e-readers, etc., to hide explosives. DHS has promptly reacted to the threat by banning these electronics in the cabin of flights to the U.S. that originate from 10 countries. These devices are required to be packed with checked baggage at these airports. Reports indicate that the ban on personal electronic devices in the aircraft cabin may expand to other countries, including the E.U., and possibly the U.S.

The members of the Security Manufacturers Coalition (SMC) share the Government's concern about these new threats and stand ready to assist in mitigating the threats. Technology exists that have substantially improved detection and performance capabilities, and can do a much better job identifying prohibited items and explosives for both checkpoint and checked baggage systems. A major obstacle in responding to the persistent threat to global commercial aviation and upgrading existing technology or transitioning to new technology is the absence of a comprehensive system design and requirements process as well as the often-lengthy TSA test and evaluation process, which can take five or more years to reach final acceptance and approval.

SMC Recommendations:

In the light of new and evolving threats, this situation must change. Government must embark on a focused, requirements-driven, appropriately -resourced, multi-year program that will immediately accelerate the deployment of upgrades to existing equipment and the development, testing and deployment of the next generation of capabilities for checkpoints and checked baggage systems. The consequences of not acting could affect the way Americans travel domestically and internationally, and could have substantial impacts on the global economy.

- ❖ Develop a comprehensive aviation security system design describing the capabilities required to deter, detect, and disrupt introduction to the sterile area the items on the prohibited items list.
  - o Publish a requirements document with system design capabilities clearly defined.
  - o Align the Five-Year Technology Plan to requirements identified in the system design.
- ❖ Ensure appropriate funding provided for checkpoint and checked baggage technology development and deployment over the next five years.
  - o Cease the diversion of a portion of the Passenger Security Fee now dedicated for deficit reduction.

- o Provide multi-year funding under a checkpoint equipment capital fund, similar to the checked baggage program, to provide consistent availability of resources for technology acquisitions.
- o Require an annual update to the TSA Five-Year Technology Investment Plan that is tied to the budget cycle.

❖ Reconstitute the equipment test and evaluation process with a target goal of reducing the timeframe to no more than one year from the date of laboratory certification.
- o Develop a "red team" of government technology acquisitions experts to review the equipment test and evaluation process and detail recommendations for a new process within 90 days.
- o Provide resources to hire additional testing experts.
- o Formalize and allow OEMs to streamline the qualification process by utilizing and accepting independently verified and validated third-party testing results.
- o Accept the vast amounts of data that is being captured from higher-capability equipment that is under testing or deployed at international airports.
- o Accelerate efforts to develop common detection, testing and certification protocols with international regulators.

❖ Expand the TSA Innovation Task Force (ITF) program to demonstrate new technology capabilities and inform the development and acquisitions process.
- o Dedicate increased and consistent funding for the ITF program and staffing.
- o Expand innovation lanes in terms of number of airports and variety of equipment demonstrated in checkpoints.
- o Within 90 days, detail the process by which the ITF will inform, support and accelerate the formal equipment acquisitions process.
- o Explore spiral development concepts and practices to mature technology while it is in the field.