

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:  
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND  
TRANSPORTATION  
FOREIGN RELATIONS  
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE  
SMALL BUSINESS AND  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

September 19, 2016

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama,

You and your administration's lack of concern for the American people's safety – as evidenced by allowing commercial, non-charter flights between the U.S. and Cuba to commence without the presence of federal air marshals, and lying about it to Congress – is further proof that you are putting your legacy ahead of the safety and security of the American people, including the people of Florida.

During a House Homeland Security Committee hearing last week, Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Deputy Administrator, Dr. Huban Gowadia, confirmed that there are currently no federal air marshals on commercial flights between the U.S. and Cuba. This admission contradicts earlier claims by your administration that the federal air marshal agreement was finalized and they would be on commercial flights. Simply put, your administration has been caught in a bold-faced lie that has put American lives at risk.

It was incumbent upon your administration to finalize a federal air marshal agreement before U.S.-Cuba commercial flights first departed on August 31<sup>st</sup>. However, TSA officials have now publicly admitted the Castro government has not yet signed the document you submitted. In my view, Cuba remains a state sponsor of terrorism that is allied with some of the most despicable regimes in the world, including Iran to North Korea, and it is astonishing that the administration has allowed hundreds of U.S. passengers to board flights to and from Cuba under the false pretense that there would be federal air marshals on board. You have created an opportunity for our worst fears to become reality, just as they did on September 11, 2001.

In addition to this troubling news, you have refused to share with Congress key documents detailing the Cuban government's vetting of airport workers and security procedures. Given your administration's pattern of secrecy, misinformation and dishonesty on this matter, I believe the information in these apparently secret documents will likely further validate my concerns. I respectfully request that you provide the answers to the following questions:

- Why did the TSA lie to the American people and announce a federal air marshal agreement had been reached with the Cuban regime?
- When do you expect the Cuban regime to approve the agreement?
- Are there any flights between the U.S. and another country operated by a U.S. air carrier in which federal air marshals are not allowed on the flights? If so, which countries?

- In the meantime, what is the TSA doing to mitigate security risks associated with the lack of federal air marshals on these flights from Cuba to the United States?
- Did any White House official or officials instruct the TSA to proceed with allowing commercial flights between the U.S. and Cuba before appropriate security procedures were in place? If so, please provide their name or names.

Please also provide copies of the draft federal air marshal agreement with the Cuban regime, and the document detailing the Cuban government's vetting of airport workers and airport security procedures.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter, and I look forward to a timely response.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'MR', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Marco Rubio  
United States Senator