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July 21, 2006

<http://markudall.house.gov/HoR/Co02/home>

Honorable Michael Chertoff  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff,

I write to express my concerns about yet another report on the problem of anonymity of federal air marshals aired on Denver's 7NEWS on July 20. I enclose the transcript with this letter.

As you know, for at least several years federal air marshals have expressed concerns – many doing so at considerable risk to their own careers – that procedures required by the Federal Air Marshal Service (FAMS) put their anonymity in jeopardy. The gravity of this problem was clearly detailed in a report issued in May by the House Judiciary Committee, "Plane Clothes: Lack of Anonymity at the Federal Air Marshal Service Compromises Aviation and National Security."

The Transportation Security Administration responded to the Judiciary Committee's report, saying it will continue to remedy any outstanding issues. TSA further stated that the report references numerous FAMS policies that are no longer applicable, such as dress code and grooming, lodging policy, and employee standards of conduct.

Yet the 7NEWS report aired yesterday pointed out that 17 air marshals in four states – including Colorado – continue to speak out about many of the same problems, saying that there has been no noticeable impact of the House Judiciary Committee report on FAMS practices.

One marshal noted in the news broadcast, "The procedures we're required to follow right now make us stick out like sitting ducks. Any trained terrorist organization will have absolutely no problem determining who we are and how best to defeat our tactics."

It is clear that exposing the identity of our Federal Air Marshals risks not only their safety but also the safety of air passengers, and risks another 9-11. We must do more to ensure their anonymity. Therefore I request a timely response from your office detailing your responses to criticisms included in the 7NEWS report and detailing steps that TSA and FAMS are taking to revise relevant policies and procedures to respond to this serious problem.

Sincerely,

Mark Udall