

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-3001**

PLEASE REPLY TO:  
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November 30, 2017

U.S. President Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Secretary Elaine C. Duke  
The U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
3801 Nebraska Ave NW  
Washington, D.C. 20016

The Honorable Administrator David P. Pekoske  
The U.S. Transportation Security Administration  
601 12<sup>th</sup> Street South  
Arlington, V.A. 20598

Dear President Trump, Secretary Duke and Administrator Pekoske,

Following the release of a publication with detailed instructions for a terrorist rail attack in America by Al Qaeda,<sup>1</sup> as well as the reported alert to mass transit, passenger and freight train operators by U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officials,<sup>2</sup> I write to you today with deep concerns about the safety of our country's rail systems. Specifically, I urge you to conduct an immediate review of all terrorist attack readiness for our country's rail and mass transit systems, take all necessary steps to protect passengers and commuters, and commit additional security resources from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to combat this threat.

Rail and mass transit systems have been key targets for terrorist organizations, such as Al Qaeda, as well as lone-wolf terrorists. Examples include the March 11, 2004 attack on the Madrid, Spain rail system; the July 7, 2005 attack on the London, England mass transit system; the July 11, 2006 and November 26, 2008, attacks on the Mumbai, India rail system; the March 29, 2010 attack on the Moscow, Russia mass transit system; the December 1, 2015 attack on the Istanbul, Turkey rail system; the March 22, 2016 attack on the Brussels rail system; the March 7, 2017 attack on Pradesh, India rail system; and the September 3, 2017 attack on the St. Petersburg, Russia rail system.

In July of this year, Al Qaeda's "Inspire" magazine featured an article on train attacks with a step-by-step, how-to manual on derailing trains. While the magazine is a clear propaganda publication, the content must be taken seriously as it, unfortunately, inspires terrorist attacks and the methodologies thereof. For example, the October 11, 2010 premier issue of "Inspire"

<sup>1</sup> Zelin, A. Y. (2017, August 14). Aaron Y. Zelin. Retrieved November 29, 2017, from <http://jihadology.net/category/inspire-magazine/>

<sup>2</sup> Goudie, Chuck. "TSA cautions train systems on new terror claim." ABC7 Chicago, 1 Nov. 2017, [abc7chicago.com/tsa-cautions-train-systems-on-new-terror-claim/2307369/](http://abc7chicago.com/tsa-cautions-train-systems-on-new-terror-claim/2307369/)

featured a Ford truck with the headline “Ultimate Mowing Machine.” The piece suggested radical followers weaponize personal vehicles to mow down innocent civilians and create mass casualties. Since then, dozens of weaponized-vehicle attacks have occurred.

In the derailment article, “Inspire” lists popular train routes in the U.S., with cited security gaps along 100,000 miles of railways in America. Many of the specified routes, with the alleged security gaps, are in the Northeast Corridor (NEC), which serves almost 12 million people on Amtrak per year and 750,000 commuters per day.<sup>3</sup> If there were an attack on the NEC, the damage done to both American civilians and our regional and national economies would be catastrophic.

In addition to passenger trains, freight rail is also a viable targets for terrorists. Freight trains transport materials that could be dangerous if mishandled. Attacks intended to cause toxic spills near dense population centers would have long-lasting, harmful effects. Even without a spill, a freight train derailment creates havoc – whether in lives lost, economic harm or both. To make matters worse, if there were a series of derailments in close proximity to one another, they could disrupt trade, travel and communication for weeks.<sup>4</sup>

Derailing or bombing a train is a horrific thought, but one that we must be prepared for and secure ourselves against. We must ensure the traveling public is safe, and prevent the disruption of rail lines critical to our regional and national economies. The 2017 holiday travel season is in full swing, and millions of Americans will be using trains to visit their loved ones. The TSA and DHS must take every possible precaution to keep these Americans safe. Please make a commitment, backed up with departmental resources, to bolster the security of our rail and mass transit systems from terrorist attacks.

Sincerely,



Donald Norcross  
Member of Congress

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<sup>3</sup> “Amtrak Page.” Amtrak National Facts | Amtrak, [www.amtrak.com/national-facts](http://www.amtrak.com/national-facts).

<sup>4</sup> “Terrorism and Rail Security.” RAND Corporation, [www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/2005](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/2005).