

For Immediate Release:
February 13, 2007

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TEAMSTERS TESTIFY TO CONGRESS ON LACK OF RAIL SECURITY FUNDS, SAFETY TRAINING

Concerns Detailed By Teamster Official About Woeful Rail Security

(Washington D.C.) —The director of the Teamsters Rail Conference told the House Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection today that rail employees are inadequately trained to deal with emergency situations and that rail security funding is completely eclipsed by funds allocated for airline security, despite rail being the more heavily used transportation mode.

“Each and every day we are on the front lines of the nation’s transportation system and see the woeful lack of security on our railroads,” said John Murphy, Director of the Teamsters Rail Conference and Teamsters Vice President. “This lack of security is tragic because we have seen the damage that can be done by railroad accidents. We need to look no further than England and Spain to see how terrorists use railroads as weapons.”

The Department of Homeland Security and the Transportation Security Administration spend \$9 per airline passenger on security, but only 1 cent per rail and mass transit passenger. This disparity is especially egregious given that five times as many people each day travel by rail and mass transit.

The gap in funding between rail and airlines is symptomatic of the lack of attention paid to rail security. Teamster rail members report that they still have not received adequate, quality emergency preparedness training in the aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks.

“The rail corporations claim that they have security plans, but they won’t share them with their employees or the unions that represent them,” Murphy said. “We can only conclude that the rail corporations have no plans.”

More than 80 percent of rail workers surveyed by the Teamsters reported that they had received no additional security training, and more than 70 percent reported regularly seeing trespassers in the rail yards. The findings were published in the Teamsters Rail Conference Report, “High Alert.”

“We welcome and support legislation that would increase rail security funding and mandate quality comprehensive security training for rail employees,” Murphy said. “Pamphlets and 10-minute video presentations are inadequate substitutes for live drills on evacuation methods, learning about the appropriate use of emergency escape apparatus; understanding the special handling of hazardous materials and knowing the roles and responsibilities of rail employees within the railroad’s security plans.”

The Teamsters Rail Conference represents more than 70,000 locomotive engineers, trainmen and maintenance of way employees on freight, passenger and commuter rail lines across the United States.