

Statement of

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss

United States Senator
Georgia
April 22, 2004

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Opening Statement
Immigration Subcommittee Hearing
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I'm glad we're able to have this hearing today, and I appreciate Sen. Sessions' efforts in this area, along with the efforts of my Georgia colleagues, Sen. Miller and Rep. Norwood. This is an important topic that covers both our anti-terrorism efforts and the changes needed in our immigration system. In the post- 9-11 world, it is critical for us to think about immigration and national security with a consistent approach.

I think there's a consensus that our immigration laws are in dire need of reform, and today's hearing is another step toward a comprehensive review. The system we have in place today lacks incentives for immigrants to come to the United States following the legal process in place. It also lacks enforcement against those who choose not to follow the legal process. It is my hope we may continue the open dialogue that the President has advanced, and all Senators will continue to work on the policies we've been addressing so far this Congress.

There are some disturbing facts that show just how serious the lack of immigration enforcement can be. Three of the September 11 hijackers were stopped by state or local law enforcement officials in routine traffic stops in the weeks leading up to the attacks on our nation. In August 2001, an Arlington, Virginia police officer stopped Hani Hanjour for going 50 miles an hour in a 30 mile-per-hour zone. He was driving a van with New Jersey license plates and produced a Florida driver's license to the officer. Hani Hanjour was aboard American Airlines flight 77, which crashed into the Pentagon.

On September 9, 2001, Maryland State Police stopped Ziad Jarrah for driving 90 miles an hour in a 65 mile-per-hour zone in a rural section of I-95 near the Delaware state line. A videotape of the stop shows the state trooper approaching the car, obtaining the driver's license and registration, and returning to his patrol car for a radio check of the credentials. Jarrah, who was on a CIA watch list, was given a ticket and allowed to go. The registration showed the car Jarrah drove that night was owned by Garden State Car Rental at Newark, New Jersey's International Airport. The car was found at the airport after the September 11 hijackings with the citation received by Jarrah still in the glove box. Jarrah had boarded United Flight 93 that crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

Finally, Mohammed Atta was stopped by police in Tarmac, Florida in July 2001 and was ticketed for having an invalid license. He ignored the ticket and a bench warrant was issued for his arrest. He was stopped a few weeks later in a nearby town for speeding and the officer, unaware of the bench warrant, let him go with a warning. Hijacker Mohammed Atta is believed to have piloted American Airlines Flight 77 into the World Trade Center's north tower.

There is clearly a seriousness to today's discussion. We need the laws to curb illegal behavior and to stop the bad guys. We also need laws that can be enforced and will be enforced. I am eager to begin that discussion and I appreciate our witnesses being here today.