

(Washington, D.C.) – U.S. Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) today issued the following statement in response to press reports that files seized in Osama bin Laden’s Pakistani compound indicated Al Qaeda’s intent to target U.S. passenger railways:

“Although Osama bin Laden’s plan to attack U.S. railways was apparently in an early and incomplete stage, we know from bitter experience in Madrid, London, and Mumbai that passenger trains are a favored Al Qaeda target. The Department of Homeland Security and New Jersey transit authorities have prudently stepped up security measures in the wake of bin Laden’s death, but we must ensure that they have the resources to protect our rail system over the long term.

“Unfortunately, America still has not invested in rail security in a way commensurate with the threat, nor in a way that recognizes the critical role that railways play in uniting our nation and sustaining our economy.

“Since 2006, I have been successful in advocating for doubling federal rail security funding to \$300 million. The increase has helped, but even \$300 million is a drop in the bucket compared to the \$5.2 billion spent each year on aviation security.

“It is unfortunate and alarming that the House budget passed earlier this month would reverse years of progress by cutting \$50 million from rail security. It would be deeply irresponsible if, in its zeal to slash federal spending, Congress left America’s families and vital infrastructure vulnerable to attack. I hope that House and Senate leaders will act quickly to prevent these reckless cuts and provide not less than \$600 million per year, as President Obama has requested.”

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