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Washington, DC - Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) tonight offered an amendment to the homeland security component of the Supplemental Appropriations bill. Rothman delivered the following remarks on the House floor about his amendment, which called for tighter airspace restrictions over New York City during the war. The restrictions would mirror the ones already in place for Washington, DC.

house"Mr. Chairman, under current Transportation Security Administration (TSA) restrictions, no general aviation aircraft can fly within 15 miles of the Washington Monument. So why then does New York City, the other target of the worst terrorist attack in the history of the United States, not have the very same safeguard being provided to it by the Transportation Security Administration against general aviation aircraft within 15 miles of Washington, DC?

house"Before I continue, I want to make it clear to my colleagues that I am not talking about commercial aircraft - the 737's, 767's and so forth that so many Americans depend on each day for travel into our nation's major airports.

house"What I am talking about are the smaller, private aircraft that primarily operate out of smaller general aviation airports, such as Teterboro Airport in my Congressional District in New Jersey. Those airports do not have the same Transportation Security Administration security procedures that the major airports have.

house"And while these general aviation aircraft by themselves, because of their size, may not seem to be able to inflict a great deal of damage even if they were to be diverted into a building, if they were filled with chemical or biological agents, they could potentially cause a tragedy greater than the one we had on September 11th.

house"The restrictions that I am calling for, which would be the same restrictions as the ones already in place for Washington, DC, would keep general aviation aircraft from flying within 15 miles of New York City, the other major target of al Qaeda. That would mean that no general aviation aircraft would be able to fly over Times Square, fly over the Empire State Building, over Giants Stadium in New Jersey, or over the Continental Arena.

house"There would be exemptions provided, and if one was provided to a general aviation aircraft -- and by the way, these same exemptions are available here in Washington, DC, it simply requires those general aviation aircraft to fly into what is called a "gateway" airport outside of the 15 mile restricted zone. There, the plane, pilot, passengers, and luggage would be inspected by Transportation Security Administration officials before these general aviation aircraft would be allowed to continue on to Teterboro or the other airports within 15 miles of New York City such as JFK, Newark, or LaGuardia. Again, these same restrictions are now in place for Washington, DC, but not New York City.

house"I urge my colleagues to stand with me and support my call on Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge and the Bush Administration to immediately put into effect these new restrictions and protect the people of the New York metropolitan area just as they have chosen to protect the people of Washington, DC.

house"Government's number one responsibility is to protect the people. Security is the reason why general aviation aircraft are restricted in coming into airports within 15 miles of Washington, DC. My amendment would make the same restrictions for general aviation aircraft who would seek to fly in without first being inspected outside the 15 mile zone for flying into New York City.

house”Mr. Chairman I regret that the Chair will rule that this amendment is not in order to be voted on tonight, and so I will, for this evening, be withdrawing my amendment. But let it be clear, Mr. Chairman, that I will continue to press my case and press for the Transportation Security Administration, the Bush Administration, and the Department of Transportation to protect the people of the New York metro area by enacting the same restrictions that they have deemed necessary over Washington, DC.

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[Go back](#)