

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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### MEMORANDUM

June 21, 2019

**To: Members of the Committee on Oversight and Reform**

**Fr: Majority Staff**

**Re: Hearing on “Identifying, Resolving, and Preventing Vulnerabilities in TSA’s Security Operations”**

On **Tuesday, June 25, 2019, at 10:00 a.m., in room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building**, the Committee will hold a hearing with the Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the Office of Inspector General at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) regarding TSA’s security operations.

#### **I. BACKGROUND**

TSA is responsible for security screening operations at approximately 440 federalized airports, serving approximately 23,000 domestic flights and 2,600 outbound international flights per day. TSA personnel screen approximately 2 million passengers and 5.5 million carry-on items every day.<sup>1</sup>

In April 2019, GAO issued a declassified report in response to a bipartisan request made more than two years ago by then-Ranking Member Cummings, then-Subcommittee Ranking Member Tammy Duckworth, and other Members of Congress.<sup>2</sup> The report found that TSA’s Office of Security Operations did not use a risk-informed approach to guide its covert tests and that “TSA has limited assurance that Security Operations is targeting the most likely threats.” GAO also found that, of the “nine security vulnerabilities identified through covert tests” by TSA since 2015, “none had been formally resolved” as of September 2018.

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<sup>1</sup> Transportation Security Administration, Department of Homeland Security, *TSA By the Numbers* (online at [www.tsa.gov/sites/default/files/resources/tsabythenumbers\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www.tsa.gov/sites/default/files/resources/tsabythenumbers_factsheet.pdf)) (accessed June 20, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Government Accountability Office, *TSA Improved Covert Testing but Needs to Conduct More Risk-Informed Tests and Address Vulnerabilities* (Apr. 2019) (GAO-19-374) (online at [www.gao.gov/assets/700/698202.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/assets/700/698202.pdf)).

In 2017, the DHS Inspector General issued a classified report that “identified vulnerabilities with TSA’s screener performance, screening equipment, and associated procedures.”<sup>3</sup> Last fall, the Inspector General issued an additional classified report on the operations of the Federal Air Marshals Service (FAMS) entitled, “FAMS’ Contribution to Aviation Transportation Security is Questionable.”<sup>4</sup> In February 2019, the Inspector General issued another classified report that “identified vulnerabilities with various airport access control points and associated access control procedures.”<sup>5</sup>

## **II. PURPOSE OF THE HEARING**

The hearing will examine: (1) TSA’s progress in addressing known vulnerabilities and outstanding recommendations issued by GAO, the DHS Inspector General, and TSA’s own internal inspectors; (2) TSA’s response to GAO’s report on the agency’s covert testing procedures; (3) the need for legislation to require TSA to ensure its covert tests are risk-informed and can yield statistically valid results and that the agency is tracking progress toward resolving vulnerabilities identified through such tests; and (4) the extent to which diversions of TSA officials to the southern border may be creating risks in transportation security operations.

## **III. WITNESSES**

### **The Honorable David P. Pekoske**

Administrator, Transportation Security Administration  
Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Deputy Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

### **Charles M. Johnson, Jr.**

Managing Director, Homeland Security and Justice Issues  
Government Accountability Office

### **Don Bumgardner**

Deputy Assistant Inspector General  
Office of Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Staff contacts: Lucinda Lessley and Courtney French at (202) 225-5051.

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<sup>3</sup> Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, *Covert Testing of TSA’s Screening Checkpoint Effectiveness, Unclassified Summary* (Sept. 27, 2017) (OIG-17-112) (online at [www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2017/OIG-17-112-Sep17.pdf](http://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2017/OIG-17-112-Sep17.pdf)).

<sup>4</sup> Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, *FAMS’ Contribution to Aviation Transportation Security is Questionable* (Oct. 24, 2017) (online at [www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2017-10/OIG-18-04-UNSUM-Oct17.pdf](http://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2017-10/OIG-18-04-UNSUM-Oct17.pdf)).

<sup>5</sup> Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, *Covert Testing of Access Controls to Airport Secure Areas, Unclassified Summary* (Feb. 13, 2019) (OIG-19-21) (online at [www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2019-03/OIG-19-21-Feb19.pdf](http://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2019-03/OIG-19-21-Feb19.pdf)).