



CITY OF ORLANDO

POLICE DEPARTMENT



Statement of Scott R. Smith

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Before the

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Subcommittee on Transportation and Protective Security

Concerning

“Innovations in Security: Examining the Use of Canines”

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Good afternoon. I would like to thank the Subcommittees for the invitation to testify before you today. My name is Scott Smith, and I am a Lieutenant with the Orlando Police Department in Orlando, Florida. I have been in law enforcement for the past twenty five years. Throughout my career I have had the opportunity to hold a variety of jobs within the department, but by far the most rewarding was supervising the canine unit in our agency. I would like to take the next couple of minutes to explain the makeup of our unit and discuss the unique security concerns in the Central Florida Region which benefit from the use of these canines.

The Orlando Police Department utilizes fourteen full service canines in our day to day operations. These full service canines are primarily used to support patrol personnel in the search and apprehension of criminals. They are trained and tested in disciplines such as area searches, building searches, tracking and apprehension. In addition to the above functions, each of these canines also possess a secondary specialty and are trained in either narcotics detection or explosive detection. Over the years, as the paradigm has shifted from a war on drugs, to a war on terror, so too has the focus of our police working canines. In the early years of our canine program, almost all of our canines were trained for narcotics detection. Now, in the aftermath of such events as the '93 World Trade Center bombing, Manchester Arena bombing, the Brussels Airport bombing and the coordinated terrorist attacks in Paris, France that used numerous suicide vests, the Orlando Police canine unit concentrates heavily on the explosive detection specialty. In addition to the fourteen full service canines above, the Orlando Police Department also utilizes four single purpose explosive detection canines. These four canines are only trained on explosive odor and were specifically purchased to bolster the security measures at Orlando International Airport. They maintain a visible presence throughout the airport and actively sweep passengers in common landside areas, such as ticketing, baggage claim and food and retail.

As has been demonstrated by past terror events, whether it is ISIS, the Taliban or a sole extremist taking credit, mass transit facilities such as an international airport are a favorite target. It can shut down an entire transit system as well as ensure a large amount of casualties. Due to the unique tourism industry of Central Florida, the Orlando International Airport has continued to grow and has set daily passenger records throughout 2017. In addition, the Orlando International Airport is currently in Phase 1 of a brand new International Terminal scheduled to open in 2020. With the expansion of the airport, and the increased passenger numbers it will bring, the demand for security screenings will only increase. Local and Federal agencies will be forced to grow in order to support these security demands. By utilizing canine assets, agencies can offset manpower demands and screen a

wider number of people, faster.

In addition to our international airport, Central Florida is home to several of the top tourist destinations in the world. For the past three years, the Central Florida Region has surpassed its tourist numbers, from 62 million in 2014 to 68 million in 2016. On a daily basis, local law enforcement canine teams are patrolling theme parks such as Walt Disney World, Universal Studios and Sea World. At times, one theme park in particular can generate at least a quarter of a million guests in their parks in a single day. Due to these numbers, some of these theme parks even supplement the law enforcement canine teams with their own supply of explosive detection canines. Although these personnel are not sworn law enforcement, it enables the theme parks to show a greater presence and screen a greater number of visitors at their turnstiles. On top of the concentration of theme parks in Central Florida, Orlando is host to a number of collegiate and professional athletic events. Our explosive detection canines sweep 41 home games for the Orlando Magic, 19 home games for Orlando City Soccer, 12 home games for Orlando Pride as well as three NCAA bowl games. Orlando is also the current host city for the NFL Pro Bowl. Attendance at these games can range from five thousand to seventy thousand. Numbers like those seen at theme parks and sporting events are often too tempting to ignore for an extremist group or individual. The visible presence and active screening of canine teams at choke points at these venues is an invaluable deterrence to the safety of the visitors.

Our canine teams are also frequently involved with the security of Presidential candidates. Florida has generally been a hotly contested state in recent elections. Due to this, candidates from both parties make frequent visits to the State of Florida, to include the Central Florida Region. During the last election, the Orlando Police Department conducted explosive sweeps for no fewer than 25 campaign visits. These sweeps can range from simple arrival and departure areas to more complicated motorcade and site security sweeps, depending on a candidate's itinerary.

Lastly, as everyone knows, on June 12, 2016 Orlando fell victim to the largest terrorist attack on U.S soil since 9/11. A self radicalized extremist murdered 49 victims at a small nightclub just outside downtown Orlando. The terrorist boldly made claims of possessing suicide vests as well as having a car bomb parked outside. Several canine teams from different agencies across Central Florida responded to the scene to assist. The suspect's car was swept as well as key areas around the nightclub, such as command posts and staging areas. Ultimately, his claims of explosives proved to be false, but the use of these responding canine teams helped alleviate the concerns of on scene first responders about secondary devices and allowed them to concentrate on the terrorist himself.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the ever changing tactics used by extremist groups who frequently seek out “soft” targets with large numbers of victims. The threat to these targets can greatly be mitigated by the use of explosive detection canines. The simple sight of a “K9” vehicle, or a canine team patrolling a choke point, can deter even the most dedicated terrorist if they believe they will be detected before they can cause the greatest amount of damage. Those that seek to harm us need to know we will use the best assets available to prevent their attacks and preserve life.

I would like to thank the Committee for taking the time to listen to my opening remarks and look forward to answering any questions you may have.