

**Office of the Sergeant at Arms  
Operational Priorities**

**Statement of the Honorable Paul D. Irving  
Sergeant at Arms  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Before  
The Committee on House Administration**

Good morning Chairperson Lofgren, Ranking Member Davis, and Members of the Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to present the Office of the Sergeant at Arms' operational priorities. It is an honor and a privilege to serve this institution, and I look forward to continuing to partner with the Committee on these priorities as this year progresses.

Since 1789, the daily responsibilities and expectations of the Sergeant at Arms have changed significantly. Within the last few years, the Sergeant at Arms Office has reexamined the security needs of the institution and transformed its mission, response and character. Members of Congress now receive an unprecedented number of threats and threatening communications, which mandate a proactive approach to our security posture.

I would like to highlight and update the Committee on a few initiatives that are either in place or in a planned implementation phase.

The Sergeant at Arms, in conjunction with the Capitol Police, has enhanced security services to include screening prior to entry of our buildings, developed an enhanced security focus to assist Members in this increased threat environment, expanded security services into District offices and District-based events, and is moving the Capitol complex closer to 100% screening by bringing the House Office Buildings into the secure perimeter.

Screening of visitors outside our buildings is designed to identify and mitigate threats before they reach the interior of our buildings. Physical security planning for the Capitol complex starts with pre-screeners at the outer perimeter and moves inward. In response to global terrorist threats, we have significantly enhanced the K-9 teams and officer pre-screeners outside the building entrances. I am working with the Architect of the Capitol on a planned Capitol South Door Screening Kiosk to move visitor screening outside the Capitol and into an appropriately sized screening kiosk adjacent to the Capitol. Not only will this kiosk ensure that all visitors are

screened outside the Capitol building, it will also provide the thousands of visitors to the House Chamber an indoor waiting area that will greatly enhance their experience. The ongoing design phase is a collaboration with the Architect of the Capitol, the Sergeant at Arms office, and the Capitol Police.

Many Members receive threats and direction of interest communications that raise concerns for the Members, their families, and staff, but do not equate to the requirement of a Capitol Police protective detail. The number of threatening communications has increased three-fold over the past few years. In light of this increase, my office interfaces with Members' offices seeking security coordination for off-campus events in the Washington, DC area or elsewhere across the country. Upon receiving a request for law enforcement support, the Sergeant at Arms will request the Capitol Police conduct a security survey and/or risk assessment to determine what protective services are needed and if those services will be provided by Capitol Police and/or cooperating federal, state and local law enforcement partners. Furthermore, I have tasked my office to provide a level of protective support that is based on a proactive set of criteria which forms the basis of an enhanced level of support, such as an increased public profile on social media platforms. Protective services can range from a notification to local law enforcement, to additional assistance to the Member's District Office staff, to a Capitol Police deployment.

The Office of the Sergeant at Arms continues to build upon the success of our District Office Security Program that was launched in the summer of 2017. To assist in the facilitation of our District Office Security Program, I established the District Security Service Center. The District Security Service Center serves as a "one stop shop" for all district security matters. Since its inception, the program has assisted 390 district offices with the installation of intrusion detection security alarms, cameras and panic buttons. In addition, my office continues to pay for security upgrades at one district office per Member and pays for the alarm system monitoring fees for multiple offices. I would like to thank the Committee for its ongoing support of this vital security program.

Since the start of the 116th Congress transition, we have assisted each freshman Member in evaluating their security options for new district offices. 88 freshman Members have made a decision on security upgrades for at least one district office and, we are working with the remaining offices to assist them in evaluating their security options.

During New Member Orientation, the SAA and CAO, with support from the Committee, encouraged Member-elects to select their predecessor's space whenever possible. As a result, nearly one third of district office spaces acquired to date are spaces already containing a House installed security system. The District Security Service Center has assisted in the completion of approximately 50 new security assessments with an additional 10 to be completed in the coming days and weeks. Security upgrades have been completed at 15 district offices.

In conjunction with the CAO, the District Office Security Center coordinates and distributes mail hoods to district offices. The mail hoods allow a Member's district office to improve the safety and security of their office by providing a more secure method to open mail. In response to offices continuing to receive suspicious and/or threatening mail, we increased our allotment of mail hoods by 10% to support additional interest in the program and replace damaged/aging units. Increasing participation in our mail hood program has been a primary goal during this transition. Similar to the security systems, this program is opt-in meaning the Member district must inform us as to which office we should send the mail hood. Additionally, throughout the year, we conduct periodic outreach to Member offices to ensure that they are aware of the program and to provide reminders to practice safe mail handling procedures. To date, 386 mail hoods are in use with 26 of these hoods in freshman Member district offices.

Last year, the District Office Security Service Center, in conjunction with Office of the Sergeant at Arms Police Services staff, helped to coordinate local law enforcement support for nearly 450 public events and town halls across the country. Since its inception, the District Office Security Service Center has documented nearly 13,000 outreach interactions with Members and their offices. While many of these interactions are at the request of the Member, the District Office Security Service Center is also proactive in its outreach. For example, we performed outreach following an active shooter incident in Thousand Oaks, California; the synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; the series of package bombs in and around Austin, Texas; and most recently, the active shooter incident in Aurora, Illinois. This outreach ensures all staff are accounted for, provides guidance on protective actions, and disseminates pertinent contact information should any security related questions or concerns arise. The District Office Security Service Center team also proactively reaches out to district offices to educate staff on security

related information that is available to them. For example, this past year we reached out to each Member office that had not previously utilized our program to coordinate law enforcement support for public events. We recently launched two online webinars, one for active shooter training and one for safe mail handling procedures.

My office also conducts security awareness briefings in conjunction with the Capitol Police for District Offices. We will conduct these briefings in the district and we attempt to coordinate these briefings to maximize the number of offices that can be covered. The topics covered include the security resources available to congressional offices, event security and law enforcement coordination, threats and concerning communications, suspicious activity and protests, and district office security considerations. We have conducted 21 of the briefings in the last year.

Focusing on the Capitol complex, our largest Capitol security initiative is the Garage Security Enhancement Project, which will bring the entire Capitol complex closer to 100% screening by bringing the House Office Buildings into the secure perimeter and in line with the Senate Office Buildings and the Capitol. The Office of the Sergeant at Arms continues to work with this Committee, the Architect of the Capitol and the Capitol Police to implement screening in the House garages, so that all personnel entering the House Office Buildings from within the garages will be screened as those entering the buildings from the street. This will ensure the same level of screening whether using the pedestrian entrances or the garages to all House (and Senate) Office Buildings and the Capitol. I am proud to say that we will complete this initiative and be ready for screening from the Rayburn and Cannon Garages in June of this year.

The addition of the garage screening will eventually allow Members and staff to move from the House Office Buildings to the Capitol without additional interior magnetometer screening in the Rayburn and Cannon tunnels. I will continue to work with the Capitol Police and the Architect of the Capitol to minimize the inconvenience and impact of this project on Members, staff, and others who work in the House Office Buildings.

I am very proud of the work that has gone into these initiatives and the services my team provides to the House community.

In addition to these important ongoing projects, I would like highlight other operational security projects that my office is undertaking.

I am presently undertaking a shared effort with the Senate Sergeant at Arms, Architect of the Capitol, and Capitol Police to replace the aging wireless emergency annunciator system. The existing wireless annunciator system was introduced as a temporary measure following the events of 9/11. The system components of these pager-like devices (located in all DC offices) are beyond their end-of-life dates, the technology is old, battery components are no longer produced, and system support by the vendor is limited. 17 years after implementation, I am working with our security partners to procure a new joint audible warning system (JAWS), with encrypted transmission capabilities, and new devices for all offices in the House. It is critical for us to replace the system components, including the 2,500(plus) devices currently in every office, every hearing room, meeting room, and work area in the House-side of the Capitol, Capitol Visitor Center, and all five House Office Buildings.

With the new JAWS system, emergency voice notifications will be sent via secure radio frequency to all offices and meeting spaces throughout the campus. This radio frequency system will not rely on cell towers or IP-based networks and will provide a separate and critical system that will work in parallel with the other systems in place, to provide critical life-safety information to everyone in the House. Importantly, the encryption capability will help ensure messages are sent from trusted, authorized officials to verified devices.

The JAWS effort, in conjunction with other existing notification capabilities – the Joint Emergency Mass Notification System (or House Alert currently available on desktops and cellphones) and the Public Address System (the loud speaker system in office hallways) – will provide notification resiliency. Collectively, they will use multiple delivery methods - including email systems, cell towers, network systems, and soon radio frequencies - to send emergency messages to Members and staff.

Another important initiative for our office is the Safe Program. In 2017, the Committee shifted the management of GSA-approved safes from the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer to the Office of the Sergeant at Arms. This program includes the secure management, storage, training, and record keeping for close to 300 GSA-approved safes used in Member and

Committee offices in the House. Our office has inventoried and created a secure database to track and monitor the GSA-approved safes currently in use. Over half of these safes still utilize an analog combination lock, which has proven to be difficult to open and unreliable over time. For FY20, I have requested funding to purchase new safes, with digital combination locks that adhere to the U.S. Government's highest security standard, to protect classified and sensitive information in Member and Committee offices in the House Office Buildings.

Employees of the Sergeant at Arms Office are our strongest assets. I would like to thank the Committee for helping to establish positions throughout the Office of the Sergeant at Arms so that we can increase the level of service we provide to Members.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to appear before the Committee. I am so appreciative for the Committee's unyielding support and partnership as we strive to maintain the delicate balance between strong security measures and free and open access to the Capitol complex. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.