Testimony

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Chairman Hudson, Ranking Member Richmond and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding explosives detection canine teams and transportation security. The mission of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is to protect the nation's transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce. TSA's National Explosives Detection Canine Team Program (NEDCTP) trains and deploys both TSA-led and state and local law enforcement-led canine teams in support of day-to-day activities that protect the transportation domain. These highly trained explosive detection canine teams have proven to be a reliable resource at detecting explosives and provide a visible deterrent to terrorism directed towards transportation systems. TSA canine teams are also considered a timely and mobile response for support facilities, rail stations, airports, passenger terminals, seaports, and surface carriers. They are a key component of TSA's risk based security model and an important layer of TSA's multi-layered security program. The success of the NEDCTP is

a prime example of federal, state, and local governmental entities working together with a common goal — to help secure our nation's transportation system.

TSA's NEDCTP has a storied history, beginning in 1972 with the creation of a unique federal program, which established the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Explosives Detection Canine Team Program. The FAA program was designed to place certified teams at strategic locations throughout the nation, so any aircraft receiving a bomb threat could quickly divert to an airport with a canine team. The FAA program was transferred to TSA in 2002, shortly after its formation, and has continued to expand. Congress has recognized the value of TSA's National Explosives Detection Canine Team Program through continuous funding which has resulted in the largest explosives detection canine program in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the second largest in the federal government behind the Department of Defense (DoD).

Today, 985 funded National Explosives Detection Canine teams are stationed at more than 100 of the nation's airports, mass-transit, and maritime systems. TSA trains canine teams to operate in the aviation, multimodal, maritime, mass transit, and cargo environments. The majority of canine teams working in the aviation environment are comprised of a dog and a local or state law enforcement officer. For these teams, TSA provides and trains the dog, trains the handler, provides training aides and explosive storage magazines, and conducts annual on-site canine team re-certifications. TSA partially reimburses each participating agency for operational costs associated with maintaining the teams, including veterinarians' fees, handlers' salaries, dog food, and equipment. In return, the law enforcement agencies agree to use the canines in their assigned transportation environment at least 80 percent of the handler's duty time. State and local law enforcement participation in the program is voluntary, and they play a critical role in

TSA's mission to ensure the safe movement of commerce and people throughout the nation's transportation security environment.

Passenger Screening Canines (PSCs) and Managed Inclusion (MI)

TSA's Transportation Security Inspectors (TSIs) also lead canine teams. Approximately one-third of current canine teams are led by TSIs, including every one of the 144 funded Passenger Screening Canine teams, which are specifically trained to detect explosives' odor on passengers in the checkpoint environment in addition to their conventional role.

As a result of their proven effectiveness, Passenger Screening Canine teams play a unique role in Risk-Based Security at TSA. In 2013, TSA expanded the TSA Pre✓™ population through the use of real time threat assessments in an initiative known as Managed Inclusion. By combining existing layers of security in the passenger queue, including Passenger Screening Canines, TSA is making real-time threat assessments of the passenger base as they present for screening. This enables TSA to more fully utilize TSA Pre✓™ screening lanes in airports where they are not able to operate at their full TSA Pre✓™ capacity. Currently, TSA Passenger Screening Canine teams operate at more than 25 airports as part of Managed Inclusion and are deployed to operate during peak travel times, where they will have the opportunity to screen as many passengers as possible, helping to reduce wait times.

In addition to deployments at the checkpoints supporting the Managed Inclusion process, all TSA and law enforcement-led teams conduct a variety of search and high visibility activities that address potential threats in the transportation domain. For example, canine teams play a role during Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response (VIPR) operations. VIPR teams can include a variety of federal, state, and local law enforcement and security assets as well as TSA

personnel including Federal Air Marshals, Transportation Security Specialists-Explosives, Transportation Security Inspectors, and TSA-certified explosives detection canine teams.

At airports, TSA-led canine teams conduct risk-driven operations to address potential vulnerabilities in aviation security that are airport-specific, including no-notice plane-side screening of cargo, gate screening, and employee screening at high-volume secured area access points. These vulnerabilities are often identified through coordination with local or national security partners, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, local law enforcement, and the National Targeting Center for Cargo.

Canine teams have been proven to be one of the most effective means of detecting explosive substances. Canine teams complement other technologies that offer expanded capabilities in terms of detecting other prohibited items, including firearms.

Deployment, Acquisition, and Training

TSA allocates canine teams to specific cities and airports utilizing risk based criteria that take into account multiple factors, including passenger throughput and threats to transportation security in the immediate geographical area of a transportation domain.

With increasing demand for high quality explosive detection dogs, particularly those best suited for passenger screening, TSA must ensure a reliable and adequate supply of canines. The primary source for TSA canines is through an Interagency Service Support Agreement (ISSA) with the DoD. Pursuant to the terms of the ISSA and as a result of our strong relationship with DoD's 'Working Dog Program,' approximately 230 canines are supplied to TSA each year. TSA's Canine Training and Evaluation Section (CTES) partners with DoD during the canine selection and evaluation process with both state side vendors and overseas buy trips, ensuring

TSA's needs are met. TSA is well-positioned to procure, train, and continue to deploy highly effective canine resources.

NEDCTP deploys single purpose explosive detection canines that are trained on a variety of explosives. The types of explosives are based on intelligence data and emerging threats. Conventional explosives detection canine handlers undergo an intensive 10 week training course, and passenger screening canine handlers undergo a 12 week training course, all held at the TSA Canine Training Center at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, TX. This course of instruction is a "co-located course," managed by TSA's CTES, whereby TSA shares the use of the U.S. Air Force training facilities on base. However, TSA controls the course curriculum and the certification of the teams to TSA-certification standards. The training course and facilities in San Antonio, Texas, are considered to be the "Center of Excellence" for explosives detection canine training in the United States.

Canine teams graduate from the TSA canine course after demonstrating proficiency in various venues inclusive of all transportation environments including airport, terminal, freight, cargo, baggage, vehicle, bus, ferry, and rail. Once a team graduates from the training program, they return to their duty station to acclimate and familiarize the canine to their assigned operational environment. Approximately 30 days after graduation, an Operational Transition Assessment (OTA) is conducted to ensure each team demonstrates operational proficiency in their environment. OTA assessments include four key elements: the canine's ability to recognize explosives odors, the handler's ability to interpret the canine's change of behavior, the handler's ability to conduct logical and systematic searches, and the team's ability to locate the explosives odor source. Upon successful completion of the OTA, NEDCTP canine teams are then evaluated on an annual basis under some of the most stringent certification standards.

International Security Programs

In 2013, TSA established and implemented a formal process for evaluating and recognizing National Explosives Detection Canine Security Programs (K9 SPs) in foreign countries for use in aviation security, checked baggage, and accessible property. Recognition of K9 SPs has several benefits; it allows for greater facilitation of goods, commerce, and people between countries and eases the burden on industry by lifting, where appropriate, duplicative or redundant measures while still ensuring the highest levels of security. TSA has conducted formal document reviews of several international partners to include New Zealand, the European Union, and South Africa. In order to recognize national canine security programs as commensurate with the components of the TSA canine program, TSA employs a system-to-system approach when reviewing a canine security program. This system-to-system approach involves analysis of a host country's security program using a framework of five fundamental security criteria: explosive detection certifications, training, utilization, explosives training aids, and oversight and compliance. The approach ensures that the combination of the components that make up a host country's security program provide a level of security that is commensurate with the components of the TSA Canine Program's own security system. To date, TSA continues to receive requests for recognition from international canine programs.

Third Party Canine

Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007 directed DHS to examine the use of third party explosive detection canine teams for air cargo screening. In 2011, TSA, in coordination with the DHS Science and Technology Directorate (S&T), conducted a Third Party Pilot Assessment to examine the use of these teams in the cargo environment. TSA and DHS

S&T analyzed current industry detection canine capabilities through a pilot to determine the degree of modification to industry programs needed to adopt and implement TSA screening standards. The assessment revealed inconsistent results of industry programs due to unsatisfactory odor recognition and performance. However, TSA remains open to future proposals on third party canine use.

Industry Collaboration

TSA has partnered with the National Security Staff Transborder Security Sub-Interagency Policy Committee on Working Dogs to establish a baseline standard for federal, state, local, and private sector explosives detection canine assets to enhance interoperability of standards for explosives detection canine team programs. Currently, the committee is working towards a final timeline for final coordination, clearance, and limited publication of the draft guidelines in the Federal Register.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the National Explosives Detection Canine Program provides highly trained canine teams focused on furthering TSA's mission to secure the nation's transportation systems. They are instrumental in risk-based security and offer a unique capability to deter and detect explosives throughout transportation venues. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this important issue with you today.