

Testimony

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Good morning Chairman Katko, Ranking Member Rice, and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. The mission of the Federal Air Marshal Service (FAMS) is to detect, deter, and defeat criminal and terrorist activities that target our Nation's transportation systems. As Director of the FAMS, I am responsible for leading the thousands of men and women who have taken an oath to prevent and disrupt acts of terrorism within the transportation domain. We perform our core mission by deploying Federal Air Marshals on United States-flagged aircraft throughout the world, 365 days a year, utilizing a comprehensive Concept of Operations that aligns with TSA's Risk Based Security (RBS) strategy. In addition to deploying the Federal Air Marshals onboard aircraft, FAMS assigns Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response (VIPR) teams at a variety of locations to augment the visible presence of law enforcement and security personnel in all modes of transportation.

FAMS is comprised of law enforcement officers who receive specialized initial and recurrent training to prepare them for the challenges associated with a very unique operating

environment. In addition to their initial training, all Federal Air Marshals receive 20 training days per year and are required to maintain a high firearms proficiency standard. As you know, Federal Air Marshals in the aviation sector operate at 30,000 feet, in tight quarters, remain vigilant, and are prepared to react to a wide spectrum of criminal and terrorist events and activities.

The Federal Air Marshals are an integral part of RBS where they serve within a matrix of security layers, and often as a last line of defense. Federal Air Marshals serve as a deterrent to those with intent to do harm, and their presence helps to sustain the confidence of the traveling public. The FAMS is unique in its flexibility and ability to re-deploy thousands of law enforcement officers rapidly in response to specific threats or incidents in the transportation domain. For example, following the 2006 UK liquid explosives plot and the December 25, 2009, failed bombing of Northwest Flight 253 bound for Detroit by Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, Federal Air Marshals were immediately deployed in response to the evolving threats. FAMS also assisted in security efforts during the evacuation of U.S. citizens from the island of Cyprus following the unrest in Lebanon in July of 2006. As a risk-based organization, FAMS is responsive to current intelligence, threats and vulnerabilities. Mission coverage goals are adjusted continually in response to emerging and evolving threats. Additionally, Federal Air Marshals have leveraged their basic emergency response training to intervene successfully in thousands of in-flight medical emergencies and non-terrorist incidents involving unruly passengers.

Concept of Operations (CONOPS)

In consultation with the Department of Homeland Security, FAMS recently completed an updated CONOPS for mission deployment addressing risk mitigation and incorporating randomness and unpredictability. While the focus remains on the highest risk flights, the new CONOPS ensures adversary uncertainty and deterrence through potential deployment on any domestic flight. A “risk by flight” methodology is currently under development which incorporates mission planning based upon passenger travel patterns, assessed passenger risk, and consideration for locations with known vulnerabilities.

Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response (VIPR)

The FAMS manages the VIPR Program, which consists of teams of Federal Air Marshals, Behavioral Detection Officers, Transportation Security Specialists-Explosives, Transportation Security Inspectors and Canine teams who work closely with federal, state, and local law enforcement partners and stakeholders in the aviation and surface transportation sectors.

Surface transportation offers an attractive target for our adversaries, as we learned from the subway bombings in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005. Through a joint planning process, TSA works with local law enforcement to plan operations that leverage existing resources to provide enhanced detection capabilities and a visible deterrent to terrorist activity. In 2014, VIPR teams conducted approximately 14,000 operations at transportation venues nationwide, to include National Security Special Events (NSSE) and Special Event Assessment Rating (SEAR) activities such as the Super Bowl, NCAA Final Four, and State of the Union. The 2014 NFL Super Bowl in the greater New York City area presented a unique set of challenges based upon the heavy reliance on mass transit to attend all the events surrounding the big game. Our VIPR

teams successfully worked side by side with our local, state and federal law enforcement partners to ensure the safety and security of the traveling public attending that week's festivities.

Workforce Engagement

TSA sets high standards for the code of conduct for all of our employees, especially law enforcement personnel. Professionalism and integrity on and off duty is expected of all Federal Air Marshals. Since becoming the FAMS Director in June 2014, I have implemented several initiatives to promote the highest level of integrity, professionalism, and accountability. Over the past year, my Deputy and I have embarked upon an aggressive workforce engagement campaign, convening nearly 50 office visits and "Town Hall" sessions across the country. I have personally visited the headquarters sites and most field offices. We meet with personnel at all levels of the organization to communicate expectations, gauge concerns, and answer questions. I have applied a multi-pronged approach to ensure robust communications and feedback through all levels of the organization.

During these site visits, I discuss my appreciation to the workforce and specifically address the ongoing "Thank You Campaign", wherein hundreds of employees have received letters of commendation for noteworthy accomplishments. I also recently implemented a "Director's Award," which honors one non-supervisory employee at each office location who demonstrates the highest level of integrity and serves as a role model to their colleagues. We have also launched a new product on the FAMS internal website homepage entitled "In the Spotlight" where employees are recognized for civic related activities and accomplishments.

Additionally, FAMS has a number of programs to provide our workforce with the resources and support they need to carry out their mission. As part of our efforts, FAMS

maintains a robust system of both medical, including mandatory physicals, and psychological assistance programs which are available to the workforce and their families. The FAMS Medical Programs Section is staffed with a physician and other full time medical professionals who are available to FAMS personnel 24/7 and upon request. FAMS also has a Critical Incident Response Unit that provides guidance and support to assist FAMS employees and their families in the event of a critical or traumatic incident. This unit provides guidance and support to assist FAMS, along with other offices within TSA, in the event of a critical or traumatic incident. For example, shortly after the LAX shooting, members of the FAMS Los Angeles Field Office mobilized to offer assistance to all affected.

Further, FAMS contracts with a professional counseling team with licensed mental health professionals that provides services to employees that are free and confidential. Finally, FAMS employees can contact TSA's Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which provides short-term counseling and resources, and referral services at no cost to employees and family members.

Workforce Realignment

In order to maximize organizational effectiveness and efficiency, FAMS completed a staffing and field office assessment to ensure that FAMS are located in offices that are positioned in a risk-based manner to cover the most critical flights. As a result, six offices will be closed: Cincinnati, Cleveland, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, San Diego, and Tampa. As of today, we have closed four of these offices, with the final two slated to close next summer. Personnel were reassigned to our most critical offices, namely those offices which serviced the highest risk flights. Despite these closures, Office of Law Enforcement (OLE)/FAMS will continue to maintain a presence in these locations. OLE/FAMS will maintain an Assistant Federal Security Director for Law

Enforcement at each location and FAMs assigned to the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force will not be affected. While personnel will be reassigned to other offices, these closures will not adversely impact our ability to maintain coverage onboard flights at these airport locations. Additionally, though VIPR team personnel will be transferred to other offices, operations involving specific events and infrastructure will remain unaffected.

Conclusion

FAMS is a strong counterterrorism layer in the security TSA provides to the traveling public. We take our mission seriously and our workforce is dedicated to preventing and disrupting acts of terror onboard aircraft. I appreciate this Committee's partnership in our efforts and support for this critical mission.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and I will be happy to answer any questions.