

**Statement of**  
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**before the**  
**United States House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Homeland Security**  
**Subcommittee on Transportation Security**

**October 26, 2016**

Good morning Chairman Katko, Ranking Member Rice, and other members of the Subcommittee. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today.

On November 1, 2013, Transportation Security Officer (TSO) Gerardo Hernandez was shot and killed at his post at a Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) Transportation Security Administration (TSA) checkpoint. Officer Hernandez had worked for TSA since 2010 and leaves behind a wife and two children. Behavior Detection Officer (BDO) Tony Grigsby, Security Training Instructor (STI) James Speer, and a passenger were also wounded in the shooting.

On March 21, 2015, Supervisory TSO Carol Richel was attacked by an assailant with a machete at the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport (MSY). Officer Richel was

grazed by a bullet as a Jefferson Parrish Sheriff's deputy fired shots during the attack. The assailant also sprayed wasp repellent at three other TSA officers.

While our officers showed bravery and commitment in the face of great tragedy, these incidents demonstrate an alarming trend of continued and persistent threat of "lone wolf" individuals bent on harming our nation's transportation systems and its workforce.

### **Lessons Learned and Follow-up Actions**

Following the events at LAX, then-Administrator Pistole convened a working group to address vulnerabilities highlighted during the incident. The group included representatives from law enforcement agencies and associations, labor groups and industry associations, TSA employees, and other federal, state, and local agencies. Out of these discussions, TSA conducted a national review focusing on the following areas: training and communications; emergency response equipment and technology; and law enforcement officer (LEO) presence at checkpoints and response to emergencies.

#### *Training and Communications*

The Los Angeles and New Orleans incidents raised concerns about the adequacy of training for TSA employees responding to emergency scenarios such as an active shooter. Historically, active shooter training had not been a primary focus, but was available to employees through two optional online courses. As of March 31, 2014, all TSA employees have completed this training, which is now mandatory for our workforce on an annual basis. At the time of the attack at LAX, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) had its own active shooter training video, which was shared immediately with TSA employees. TSA then

created its own training video, specifically focused on the airport environment. This new airport-specific video is shared with all TSA employees. We also regularly conduct mandatory emergency response training and exercises for TSA personnel at airports, and with our airport and law enforcement partners to ensure seamless coordination and preparation in the event of an emergency situation.

TSA also requires all worksites to develop and implement active shooter tactical response plans to include the designation of evacuation routes and establishment of rendezvous points. In March 2014, TSA issued an Operations Directive requiring that all TSA Federal Security Directors (FSDs) at airports conduct mandatory evacuation drills twice a year. In addition, TSA recommends that airport operators conduct active shooter training and exercises twice per year. In the case of New Orleans, an active shooter scenario drill was conducted not long before the attack, and included multiple airport stakeholders such as the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office, the airport Fire Department, and airport management.

TSA participates in annual tabletop exercises/briefing for disaster response every May. These exercises facilitate the coordination among TSA, the airport, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and State and local law enforcement first responders. Many airports are also going above and beyond by conducting training and exercises dealing with scenarios such as hostage situations and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices. TSA's tactical response plans detail actions required by field personnel in response to natural or man-made threats. In addition to the annual active shooter requirement, local TSA leadership coordinates tactical response exercises on such scenarios as security checkpoint breach, air piracy, and natural disaster response.

Officer safety has been a recurring theme in TSA's communications to frontline employees. Through daily shift briefings and internal communications, we continue to engage our officers on the importance of remaining vigilant and alert. Other actions taken include:

- Requiring all TSA devices to be programmed with alternate airport emergency phone numbers;
- Encouraging field employees to program their personal phones with airport emergency phone numbers; and
- Highlighting the active shooter threat with a focus on reinforcing secure area access control measures, challenging individuals without proper identification in secure areas, maintaining good situational awareness, and reporting any suspicious activity.

#### *Emergency Response Equipment and Technology*

The national review following the LAX shooting indicated that many airports needed improvements to their alert notification systems, such as ensuring that duress alarms are present at all screening locations, including at terminal lobbies. TSA conducted a survey of screening and other locations and found that several of these locations did not have alert notification capability. In response, TSA procured 5,500 additional duress alarms for critical locations where our officers perform security screening operations. We also conducted a survey of all existing duress alarms to determine if they were fully functional. Ninety-eight percent of the existing alarms were deemed fully functional, and we took corrective action to fix the remaining alarms. TSA employees are now required to conduct weekly tests with our airport partners to test the alert notification systems.

### *Law Enforcement Officer Presence Response to Emergencies*

In accordance with a pre-existing Security Directive, TSA requires all airports to either post a law enforcement officer (LEO) at the screening checkpoint or incorporate maximum LEO response times in their Airport Security Programs (ASPs). Following the LAX incident, TSA conducted a thorough review of all ASPs to ensure that these requirements were appropriately documented. These response times can vary by airport to ensure they are both practical and appropriate, as we recognize the importance of allowing discretion in these determinations. However, ensuring that all airports adopt clearly articulated maximum response times in their ASP is critical. TSA continues to monitor and enforce airports' compliance with the response times defined in their respective ASPs, as well as additional requirements to maintain sections in their ASPs for contingency planning and incident management.

Additionally, TSA has issued recommended standards for increased law enforcement presence during peak travel times at checkpoints and high traffic lobby areas such as ticket counters to provide visible deterrence and faster response times, and supports this effort through a partial reimbursement agreement program that assists airports with payment towards dedicated law enforcement officers working in and around the passenger screening checkpoints during operational hours. We have strongly encouraged airports to adopt these measures. In the wake of the LAX attacks, TSA increased the percentage of Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response (VIPR) deployments conducted in commercial aviation locations—a measure that remains in place today. TSA's VIPR teams include Federal Air Marshals (TSA's law enforcement element), and VIPR operations are planned in cooperation with state, local, and/or federal law enforcement organizations and transportation stakeholders.

TSA maintains 101 Assistant Federal Security Directors for Law Enforcement (AFSD-LE) at 275 airports across the nation. The primary duty of each AFSD-LE is to establish and maintain liaison relationships with local, state, and federal law enforcement authorities on behalf of TSA. An organized and structured liaison program is a critical component to the overall transportation security mission, including the law enforcement response strategy for incidents. The liaison relationships with local, state, and federal law enforcement organizations insure that the AFSD-LE has constant contact with these partners, enabling a coordinated response to incidents.

**The Gerardo Hernandez Airport Security Act of 2015 (P.L.114-50)**

TSA greatly appreciates the support of Congress in these endeavors – from the Subcommittee’s hearings on LAX lessons learned in the last Congress, to visiting LAX and meeting with Officer Hernandez’s widow, your Members have been great partners in reducing the likelihood that situations like the LAX shooting or New Orleans attack will be repeated. TSA also values the Committee’s direction through the Gerardo Hernandez Airport Security Act of 2015 (Public Law 114-50), which requires us to conduct a series of reviews and outreach measures aimed at improving security incident response, including outreach to airports and high-risk surface transportation stakeholders to verify they have plans in place to address security incidents. This law codifies many of the lessons we learned in our after-action report following the LAX shooting, and enables us to continue that work. TSA has been coordinating extensively with aviation and surface stakeholders on active shooter drills, emergency response planning, and training, and we look forward to continuing that effort.

## **Conclusion**

The tragic shooting of Officer Hernandez and attack of Officer Carol Richel were horrifying and heartrending. TSA has taken a series of positive steps to prevent such tragedies from occurring again. I want to thank the Subcommittee for your support as we seek additional ways to improve officer safety and security, and airport security generally.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to answering your questions.