



Testimony

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Good afternoon, Chairman Gimenez, Ranking Member Thanedar, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to testify on port security, specifically the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) role in vetting maritime transportation workers for the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) program. My testimony will highlight TSA's security responsibilities and achievements in the maritime environment and how TSA is working to enhance transportation security while bolstering customer service and supporting the flow of commerce.

TSA's Role in Securing the Maritime Environment

TSA is committed to securing the Maritime Transportation System (MTS), including waterways, ports, and land-side connections, against evolving and emerging risks, such as physical and cyber intrusions. TSA partners with public and private sector stakeholders, such as U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), port owners and operators, and national trade and labor associations, to secure the MTS from potential security threats.

TSA's Enrollment Services and Vetting Programs (ESVP) office administers TSA's enrollment, vetting, and credentialing programs, including the end-to-end program management and oversight of the technology, operations, and resources that support TSA's Security Threat Assessment (STA) programs. The TWIC program is an STA program designed to mitigate insider threats. These vetting programs are the foundation for identifying potential threats to U.S. critical infrastructure, and TSA prioritizes the vetting and adjudication of its worker populations to minimize impediments to the economy, industry, and the workforce. Specific to maritime security, TSA vets over 2.2 million maritime transportation workers, such as longshoremen, merchant mariners, truck drivers, engineers, and individuals in other occupations who require a TWIC STA for access to secure areas of port facilities and vessels.

TWIC Overview

The TWIC program is a fee-based Department of Homeland Security (DHS) security program mandated by the *Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002* (MTSA), which mandates that individuals requiring unescorted access to MTSA-regulated facilities and vessels

must be issued a biometric transportation security card once the individual is determined not to pose a risk to transportation or national security. TWIC, jointly administered by TSA and USCG, is one of several layered security measures incorporated by federal, state, and local partners to prevent potential security breaches and incidents targeting U.S. critical and maritime infrastructure. Since the TWIC program was established in 2007, TSA has enrolled over seven million transportation workers.

TWIC and the Security Threat Assessment Process

TSA is responsible for enrolling and vetting applicants, adjudicating the STA, and issuing the biometric credential. The USCG administers the security program and TWIC access control standards for facility and vessel owners and operators to implement. Facility and vessel operators determine who is authorized to access secure areas of their MTSA-regulated facilities or vessels and verify that each individual holds a valid TWIC. Authorized access requires three functions to be performed: verification that an individual has undergone an STA, identity management, and establishment of the individual's business purpose.

TSA and its enrollment provider oversee more than 570 enrollment centers nationwide, including all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories. Following the collection of biometric (i.e., fingerprints and facial photograph) and biographic information, TSA creates a TWIC record in its case management system and performs the vetting of applicants for criminal history, intelligence/ties to terrorism, and lawful presence. Based on the vetting results, TSA adjudicates the case based on the interim and permanent disqualifying factors listed in TSA's regulations in 49 CFR Part 1572.

TSA's case management system adjudicates most TWIC applicants—approximately 60 percent of total enrollments—within 24 hours and an applicant receives their TWIC card via mail within seven to 10 business days. Approximately 40 percent of enrollments are considered complex cases due to a potentially disqualifying factor. Processing these cases may take TSA up to 30 to 60 days to make a determination. While most of these cases will ultimately result in the applicant receiving a TWIC, some applicants will be notified that they have been potentially disqualified. All TWIC applicants are afforded an opportunity to participate in the TSA redress process, which allows individuals to appeal TSA's initial decision or request a waiver.

TWIC Contributions to the Movement of Commerce

TSA mitigates security risks to maritime transportation by recurrently vetting TWIC holders to ensure individuals who pose a potential threat to transportation and national security cannot access secure areas. TSA continually strives to enhance its identity management and vetting capabilities. For example, in 2021, TSA began subscribing all new TWIC holders in Federal Bureau of Investigation Rap Back Services. This automation provides TSA with more accurate and real-time information on TWIC holder criminal activities after enrollment.

To facilitate the movement commerce, TSA has partnered with supply chain and maritime stakeholders to alleviate potential bottlenecks where TWIC or other TSA vetting programs could impede such movement. For example, in 2021, DHS and TSA contributed to the White House Supply Chain Disruptions Task Force and met with representatives at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, California, to discuss strategies to support essential workers accessing port terminals. TSA took immediate steps to address the needs of its maritime partners, including expanding enrollment center operations, expediting the vetting of mission-critical transportation workers, and reducing the time and burden associated with obtaining a TWIC.

Customer Experience

Customer service and engagement are critical success factors for TSA's STA programs. TSA recognizes transportation worker populations require efficient services from TSA to obtain and retain certifications, occupations, and professions. TSA is focused on enhancing the security value of its program while reducing the burden of obtaining a TWIC.

In 2009, TSA implemented TWIC One Visit which enables eligible workers to receive their TWIC card at a designated address instead of returning to an enrollment center for pick-up and activation. Today, 91 percent of total TWIC applicants receive their card via mail. In August 2022, TSA implemented a new online renewal capability for most TWIC applicants who maintain or previously maintained an active TWIC STA. Approximately 54 percent of active TWIC cardholders enroll for a new TWIC after their STA expires five years from the date of issuance. Of those workers renewing a TWIC, nearly 80 percent are using TSA's online renewal capability, thereby eliminating the cost and time burden associated with traveling to a physical

enrollment center. TWIC One Visit and online renewal grant maritime workers their TWICs faster, allowing them to fulfill their roles in transportation security more expediently.

In addition, due to the reduced costs associated with the online transaction, TWIC applicants now pay a reduced fee when renewing their credentials online: \$117.25, compared to the in-person fee of \$125.25. Since TSA issued the first TWIC in October 2007, TSA has not increased the enrollment fee for TWIC applicants.

Conclusion

TSA continues to work to improve and enhance maritime security through its TWIC program. Chairman Gimenez, Ranking Member Thanedar, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.