

Statement of
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And
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Good morning Chairmen Hudson and Duncan, and Ranking Members Richmond and Barber. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) role in promoting a strong counterterrorism workforce to safeguard the traveling public and secure our Nation's transportation systems. TSA appreciates the Committee's interest in helping TSA achieve the highest professional standards for our workforce.

Both in the field and at headquarters, the TSA workforce is vigilant in ensuring the security of people and commerce that flow through our Nation's vast transportation networks. TSA employs risk-based, intelligence-driven operations to prevent terrorist attacks and to reduce the vulnerability of the Nation's transportation system to terrorism. Our goal at all times is to

maximize transportation security to stay ahead of evolving terrorist threats while protecting privacy and facilitating the flow of legitimate travel and commerce. TSA's security measures create a multi-layered system of transportation security that mitigates risk. We continue to evolve our security approach by examining the procedures and technologies we use, how specific security procedures are carried out, and how screening is conducted.

The TSA workforce occupies the frontline in executing the agency's transportation security responsibilities in support of the Nation's counterterrorism efforts. These responsibilities include security screening of passengers and baggage at 450 airports in the United States that facilitate air travel for 1.8 million people per day; vetting more than 14 million passengers and over 13 million transportation workers against terrorist watch lists each week; and conducting security regulation compliance inspections and enforcement activities at airports, for domestic and foreign air carriers, and for air cargo screening operations throughout the United States and at last point of departure locations internationally.

TSA also ensures the security of surface transportation operations. To date, we have conducted more than 29,000 Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response or VIPR operations in surface transportation. We have 37 multi-modal VIPR teams working in transportation sectors across the country to prevent or disrupt potential terrorist planning activities. Since 2006, TSA has completed more than 290 Baseline Assessments for Security Enhancement for transit, which provides a comprehensive assessment of security programs in critical transit systems. We are seeing the benefits of how these important steps — combined with our well-trained and highly-motivated workforce and our multiple layers of security including cutting-edge technology — keep America safe every day.

TSA is committed, not only to improving the effectiveness of security, but to doing so in the most cost-effective manner possible. Through advancements in workforce efficiency, TSA has been able to accommodate the increased workload that has accompanied the current practice of many airlines to charge fees for all checked baggage, the restrictions on liquids aerosols and gels we had to implement to counter a known terrorist threat, and the screening required for the significant increase in the number of laptops carried by passengers. By employing smarter security practices in developing and deploying our people, processes and technologies we are delivering more effective security in a more efficient manner, and we will continue to do so.

Maintaining a Workforce of the Highest Caliber

A dedicated TSA workforce assures the traveling public that they are protected by a multi-layered system of transportation security that mitigates risk. An effective workforce must be properly trained while good management and appropriate pay are key ingredients in preserving a motivated and skilled workforce. To this end, TSA has implemented employee development initiatives like the Leaders at Every Level (LEL), through which TSA identifies high-performing employees and fosters commitments to excellence and teamwork, and the Associates Program, which builds morale and provides the workforce an opportunity to enhance technical and non-technical skills through formal training and education programs. The implementation of a new four-tier performance management program for non-Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) enables the workforce to actively engage in developing their annual performance goals in collaboration with their supervisors, while promoting two-way communication between employees and their supervisors throughout the performance year. Providing a mechanism to proactively identify opportunities to improve their performance has increased employee morale.

As public servants, TSA employees must adhere to the highest ethical and personal conduct standards. All aspects of our workforce regimen—hiring, promotion, retention, training, proactive compliance inspections, investigations, and adjudications—are driven by adherence to the highest ethical standards. In 2011, Administrator Pistole established two new offices within TSA—the Office of Training and Workforce Engagement (OTWE) and the Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR). In order to strengthen training and ensure that it continues to receive the appropriate level of attention, OTWE oversees the development and delivery of training, learning, formal development, and workforce engagement programs for employees. New hire training modules feature an introduction to TSA’s employee responsibilities and conduct while leadership training is designed to prepare candidates to address conduct issues through required rotations in the Office of Inspection (OOI) and OPR.

Through a series of town hall meetings with field employees, TSA recognized the need for consistent application of the agency’s disciplinary process. As a result, Administrator Pistole established OPR to ensure that allegations of misconduct are thoroughly investigated and that discipline is appropriate, consistent, and fair across the agency. In addition, OPR developed a Table of Offenses and Penalties in September 2011, which is available to all TSA employees and identifies TSA policies and possible consequences of violation including penalties for each type of offense. OPR also promotes greater efficiency for disciplinary actions by implementing and tracking timelines for adjudicating allegations of misconduct. OPR officials are required to issue closure letters, corrective actions and proposal notices within 30 days from receipt of the report of investigation, and OPR must issue a decision within 21 days from receipt of the employee’s reply.

'Insider Threat' Program Addresses Potential Vulnerability

While the vast majority of TSA employees are hard-working, professional and abide by the highest ethical standards, a single bad act by one employee can create a security vulnerability. TSA has also developed and implemented an Insider Threat Program aimed at deterring, detecting and mitigating insider threats to TSA's personnel, operations, information and critical infrastructure. The Insider Threat Program conducts a multi-layered approach to gather and analyze information identifying possible vulnerabilities involving personnel or information systems; coordinates with DHS and other counterintelligence programs to assess and mitigate allegations of insider threat activity; and conducts employee awareness training to educate TSA personnel and airport stakeholders regarding insider threats. TSA employees are encouraged to report any suspicious encounters, activities or behaviors that might constitute an insider threat to their immediate supervisor or through an available Insider Threat Program website or phone number.

GAO Review of TSA Employee Misconduct

A recent audit by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) reviewed data from TSA that found a total of 9,622 cases over a three-year period (Fiscal Years 2010 through 2012) where individuals failed to meet TSA's standards of conduct. It is important to note the report covers a broad range of misconduct ranging from tardiness to serious security risks. Of the total cases reviewed by GAO, 3,117 involved attendance and leave, which are issues that challenge all employers in both the public and private sectors. The most serious categories including neglect of duty, integrity and ethics, and falsification represented 11% or 1,122 cases. TSA investigates all allegations of misconduct and takes appropriate action, which can include referral to law

enforcement and termination of employment. In the most serious cases of screening workforce misconduct involving drugs, theft, and intentional security breaches, TSA uses an expedited removal process while ensuring due process.

The majority of misconduct cases are handled by the Office of Security Operations (OSO) management officials at the airports. These cases include attendance and leave, security and screening violations, and alcohol-related violations involving TSOs, Lead and Supervisory TSOs, Transportation Security Managers, Transportation Security Inspectors, Behavior Detection Officers, and other airport staff. TSA responds to instances of misconduct through a series of actions, ranging from Letters of Reprimand to suspension from work, and in instances where the nature of the misconduct is egregious, removal from the TSA workforce. Generally, to effect these actions, TSA management officials issue a Notice of Proposed Action and provide the employee the opportunity to review the evidence supporting the charge and the opportunity to respond orally and/or in writing. Management officials then consider the input from the affected employee prior to issuing a written decision.

Conclusion

As we review and evaluate the effectiveness of TSA's aviation security enhancements, we must always be cognizant of the fact that these enhancements are only as good as the people who operate, staff and manage them. As we strive to continue strengthening transportation security and improving, whenever possible the overall travel experience for all Americans, we must always remember that our success is defined in the final analysis by our people. Whether it is for business or for pleasure, the freedom to travel from place to place is fundamental to our way of life, and to do so securely is a goal to which everyone at TSA is fully committed.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I will be happy to address any questions you may have.