

Statement of Patricia F. S. Cogswell
Acting Deputy Administrator
Transportation Security Administration
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
before the
United States Senate
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
September 11, 2019

Good morning Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Cantwell, and distinguished Members of the Committee. Thank you for inviting me to testify about the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the work we are doing to keep the nation's transportation system secure. On behalf of all TSA employees, we appreciate the continued support of Congress and are grateful for the productive relationship we have with this Committee as well as the authorities provided to the agency through the *TSA Modernization Act of 2018*, the first reauthorization of our critical security agency.

On September 11, 2001, nearly 3,000 people died as a result of the worst act of terrorism ever committed on American soil. From that tragedy, we, as Americans, renewed our dedication to the ideals and freedoms that define our great nation. The world changed that day, and seemingly remote dangers proved their destructive power here in our homeland. In the days immediately following the attacks, our nation rallied around accounts of the courage and heroism of first responders, emergency personnel, and everyday citizens who risked everything to save others. Not only was 9/11 an attack on our freedom, but it was also an attempt to alter America's way of life. It did not succeed.

In the months and years since, helplessness and fear became hope and resolve. 9/11 changed us all. It also defined what TSA does. With the goal to never again face such an attack on our soil, Congress created the TSA just two months after the attack. Since its creation, TSA's ongoing commitment to ensuring safe travel has allowed Americans to continue traveling securely and freely.

Eighteen years have passed since the horrific events of September 11, 2001, and many Americans, including some of TSA's current employees, are of such an age that they do not have a vivid recollection of that day. While memories for some do not exist or may have faded, we must remember the reality that aviation and transportation hubs remain highly-valued targets for terrorists, whose methods of attack are more decentralized and opportunistic than ever before. Rest assured, the passage of time since 9/11 has not weakened our resolve to secure vital transportation modes, nor do we underestimate the persistent nature of our adversaries.

The reality is that every day, TSA is challenged by a pervasive and constantly evolving threat environment, both in the physical and cyber realms, and one that now includes the potential use of unmanned aircraft systems. We must never forget the lessons of 9/11, and must ensure we continue in our resolve to protect the nation. As such, the importance of TSA's mantra, "Not On Our Watch," rings as true today as it did every previous anniversary of 9/11.

As we discuss TSA's work, it is particularly important to emphasize that we all share the goal of protecting travelers, commerce, and the transportation system itself, in order to protect our economy and the American way of life. We also recognize that we can never be satisfied with the status quo and must also always be looking for innovative ways to improve our people, procedures and technology.

TSA's most important asset is its people. I am extremely proud of the 63,000 dedicated professionals who make up TSA's workforce, share our core values of integrity, respect, and commitment, and provide security for millions of individuals using our transportation systems each and every day. Exemplary of their dedication to the mission, earlier this year Transportation Security Officers (TSOs), Federal Air Marshals, vetting and intelligence personnel, Transportation Security Inspectors, canine handlers, and support staffs worked for 35 days under extraordinarily challenging circumstances during the lapse in appropriations. Many of those individuals, and in particular our TSOs, who are in lower pay bands, continued to report to work despite suffering financial hardships. While TSA leveraged the flexibility provided by our authorities and appropriations to use prior year carry-over funding to mitigate the adverse financial effect on our workforce, the impact was real. We are hopeful that such circumstances can be avoided in the future and look forward to working with Congress to develop and implement such a solution.

Securing the Nation's transportation system, which is complex, expansive, and interdependent, requires a collective effort; it is not something that the government can accomplish alone. To that end, TSA recognizes the critical importance of partnering with stakeholders in developing transportation security solutions. In particular, we appreciate the authority provided by the *TSA Modernization Act* to establish a Surface Transportation Security Advisory Committee, which has since been created and held its first meeting in July. TSA also receives invaluable insights from stakeholders through the Aviation Security Advisory Committee, DHS Critical Infrastructure Partnership Advisory Committee's Transportation Systems Sector Coordinating Council, and other forums. The discussions, feedback, and input provided by those entities, as well as new congressionally-created working groups focused on

explosive detection canine capacity, are facilitating better information sharing between all transportation security stakeholders as well as the development of various types of best practice guidance for countering determined adversaries.

The U.S. transportation system accommodates approximately 965 million domestic and international aviation passengers annually – this equates to the screening of 2.8 million passengers, 1.4 million check bags, and 5.1 million carry-on bags each day. In surface transportation, there are more than 10.1 billion passenger trips on mass transit per year, approximately 600 million passengers traveling over-the-road buses each year; and more than 1 million hazardous material shipments on trucks every day. Beyond those usage numbers associated with a relatively open network of transportation modes, the physical scope of the system encompasses approximately 138,000 miles of railroad tracks; 4.2 million miles of highway; 616,000 highway bridges; 503 road tunnels; and nearly 2.7 million miles of pipeline.

While the scope of our transportation system is significant, it is critically important from a planning and execution perspective to also recognize that demands are increasing. For instance, the last twelve months represent the highest volume of air travelers in the agency's history and we just completed the busiest summer travel season ever, screening more than 262 million aviation passengers and crew between Memorial Day and Labor Day. These increased numbers will likely continue as aviation industry estimates anticipate annual growth of 4.5 percent for passenger travel and 2.5 percent for cargo over the next 20 years. Thanks in part to the support of Congress, TSA has been able to take measures to address the recent increases in volume, with current staffing levels at 2,100 more full time employees than last year as well as a 20 percent increase in the allocation of overtime to ensure airports have the flexibility to schedule officers during peak times.

TSA's continued success is contingent upon our ability to rise to the challenge of outmatching dynamic threats to our aviation and surface transportation systems and doing so within the parameters of fiscal reality. Traveler volume and expectations for a positive, seamless experience are trending up. We must continue to work hard, but also need to work smarter, more strategically, and in innovative ways to stay ahead of the threat and remain a global leader in transportation security. Further, we must also continue to build resiliency in our organization so that we are prepared and able to respond to significant national crises like those caused by a natural disaster or currently being experienced on the southwest border.

Resiliency is reflected in TSA's people, structure, and doctrine. Although Administrator Pekoske is currently dual-hatted, continuing to serve as the Administrator while also serving as the Department of Homeland Security's Acting Deputy Secretary, TSA, through its strong leadership corps and sound organizational structure, continues to implement the *TSA Modernization Act* and execute the 2018-2026 TSA Strategy and the Administrator's Intent that were put in place prior to him assuming that role.

The TSA Strategy ensures our focus on capability innovation and threat-informed, information-driven operations. The Administrator's Intent explains how we will execute the Strategy between now and 2020. The TSA Strategy and Administrator's Intent detail the three main strategic priorities for the organization and how we will accomplish them. Both documents are posted on our website for public review and transparency. The first priority is to improve security and safeguard the transportation system. Our second is to accelerate action. And the final priority is to commit to our people. These priorities reflect TSA's focus on preserving frontline operations, quickly transitioning to new solutions and capabilities, and creating efficiencies to optimize limited resources.

Improve Security and Safeguard the Transportation System

TSA's operational environment requires robust partnerships and effective security operations across all modes of transportation. We strive to strengthen our operational approach through a proficient and professional workforce, more effective threat detection capabilities, enhanced intelligence and vetting, and better communication and coordination with stakeholders. Simultaneously, we also strive to improve the passenger experience.

When Administrator Pecoske testified before this Committee last September, he explained the extraordinary efforts TSA was taking to test computed tomography (CT) screening systems and expand their use at airport checkpoints. CT technology allows TSA officers to more easily identify potential threats in a less invasive way and eventually may eliminate the need for passengers to remove liquids, electronics and food items from carry-on passenger bags. This technology both enhances the effectiveness of TSA's security screening process and improves the passenger experience. Thanks to the support of Congress, TSA recently awarded a contract for 300 CT units. The deployment of this technology along with Credential Authentication Technology (CAT), which improves and automates identity verification and validation, is transforming the effectiveness and efficiency of our checkpoint screening process.

TSA has explored a number of other ways to improve performance, manage risk and use resources more effectively. Consistent with the *TSA Modernization Act* requirement to limit the use of TSA Pre✓® lanes to only individuals with Known Traveler Numbers, which represents approximately 20 percent of domestic travelers, we successfully conducted pilots at two airports; demonstrating that TSA can achieve higher throughput for "pure Pre✓®" lanes. In addition, we also sought to test our Future Lane Experience (FLEX) model, at two airports to assess throughput when we provide alternate procedures for processing passengers identified as lower

risk; this screening is not as streamlined as what a TSA Pre✓® member would receive, but more efficient than standard processing. TSA used CAT units for these pilots.

Similarly, TSA has conducted joint pilots with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), using the facial recognition system and photo galleries CBP built to meet its biometric entry-exit program mandate, to assess how facial recognition technologies could be used to potentially automate Travel Document Checker (TDC) functions at our checkpoint. TSA is also currently carrying out a pilot at Las Vegas McCarran Airport, adding an automated facial matching capability to existing CAT systems, to assess operational effectiveness for matching a traveler's image to the photos on the ID they present to the officer at the TDC. In carrying out these efforts, which are designed to find ways to both improve security effectiveness and enhance the passenger experience, TSA is also committed to ensuring appropriate privacy and data integrity protections are in place.

TSA is also using risk-based decision making with regard to deployment of Federal Air Marshals as well as their seating on flights to provide better tactical position based on the potential threat. Finally, TSA has continued to expand participation in the TSA Pre✓® program through marketing and partnership, with the current number of airlines participating in TSA Pre✓® standing at 73 domestic and international carriers representing 95 percent of passengers traveling to or within the U.S. All of these efforts are focused on examining how TSA can more effectively use technology and its personnel to reduce risk, provide better security faster, and enhance the traveler experience.

Looking abroad, for the last two years, TSA has implemented enhanced security requirements for all commercial flights to the United States. Those measures include enhanced screening of passengers and electronic devices, and heightened security standards for aircraft and

airports. These new security measures have been implemented at 283 last points of departure airports in 106 countries. These airports service approximately 338 U.S. and foreign airlines, transporting an average of 375,000 passengers on 2,100 flights daily. While those actions are effective in the near term, TSA is focused on raising the global baseline for aviation security through long term partnerships and cooperation. To that end, earlier this year TSA conducted a Global Aviation Security Review, as mandated by the *TSA Modernization Act*, and identified a number of best practices related to enhancing collaboration with foreign partners on aviation security capacity. Additionally, TSA performed focused audit visits to determine compliance with TSA Security Directives/Emergency Amendments. TSA is using that review to advance the improvement of international aviation security standards for passengers.

TSA also continues to improve air cargo security. Earlier this year, per the *TSA Modernization Act*, TSA established an air cargo division, reviewed the effectiveness of the certified cargo screening program, and conducted a feasibility study of the potential use of CT systems for screening air cargo. Consistent with the *TSA Modernization Act* requirement as well as the results of that study, TSA is partnering with an all-cargo entity to conduct a pilot program to test the effectiveness of CT for screening in such a setting. As threats continue to evolve, TSA, in cooperation with partners world-wide, will work to improve intelligence sharing and standardize best practices, while also pursuing technological security advancements.

In addition to our aviation passenger screening mission, TSA continues to oversee the security of the surface transportation system. On a daily basis, TSA assists surface stakeholders through conducting vulnerability assessments, analyzing security programs across the surface sector - from pipelines, to mass transit, to freight rail, to over-the-road bus entities - providing training and exercise support, sharing intelligence information, and executing collaborative law

enforcement and security operations – such as those operations conducted the Visual Intermodal Prevention and Response teams. Since December 2018, TSA, in partnership with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, has conducted four Validated Architecture Design Reviews, which are in depth cybersecurity assessments, at select pipeline companies and has four additional assessments scheduled. We also conducted 18 ISTEP exercises this fiscal year in surface transportation modes. In an effort to improve the support and services we provide, over the last several months TSA has elevated the Surface Operations leadership position, realigned resources to focus on surface inspections, established the Surface Transportation Security Advisory Committee, and will distribute a survey to more than 3,000 surface transportation stakeholders next week to better assess their needs.

Finally, TSA continues to work to address current and evolving threats by looking at emerging technologies, including from outside the transportation environment, to assess how they might be applied in the surface transportation environment. Through the process of establishing operational test beds, TSA works with surface transportation owners and operators to develop and deploy technology solutions to advance security for different modes of transportation (mass transit, highway motor carrier, pipeline, and freight rail). TSA does not procure the technology for surface transportation operators and owners. The test bed approach assists with development of their technology requirements, helps inform their acquisition decision making process, and enables TSA to share the results of the testing in government technology forums.

Accelerate Action

In many ways, 2019 represents a year of implementation of a number of initiatives that TSA accelerated last year – specifically, deployment of both CT and CAT technology at the

checkpoints. This year has also included a renewed focus on developing the next generation of Advanced Imaging Technology (AIT) devices. TSA is currently partnering with the DHS Science and Technology Directorate, the Department of Energy, and security stakeholders to assess next generation enhanced AIT systems. Through providing automated target algorithms with more data, these systems should increase detection performance and reduce potential false alarms. TSA will also continue to conduct airport trials of alternative AIT solutions designed to reduce processing times and improve performance accuracy.

By embracing emerging technologies, leveraging agile processes, and facilitating collaboration, TSA is positioning itself to keep pace with industry partners while advancing security across all modes of transportation. To that end, TSA has formalized a strategic management process that aligns strategy and policy to operations by leveraging risk assessment capabilities to inform budgeting and investment decisions. We used this approach in the development of the TSA Capital Investment Plan that was submitted to Congress earlier this year pursuant to the *TSA Modernization Act* requirement.

Commit to Our People

TSA recognizes that our strategic success depends upon our workforce. Our priority to Commit to Our People focuses on our ability to attract, hire, train, develop, promote, and equip our workforce at all levels of the organization. TSA commissioned a Blue Ribbon Panel comprised of public and private sector leaders with extensive human capital expertise to conduct a full review of the human capital service policy and delivery at TSA, including TSO pay and compensation, to identify ways we can improve as an organization. Among a number of findings, the Panel reaffirmed that TSA's authorizing statute, the Aviation Transportation Security Act (ATSA), provides TSA with greater authority and flexibility to manage our

workforce than the General Schedule. Working within that authority, TSA currently has a number of initiatives underway that are designed to enhance our ability to compete as an employer and attract and retain talent.

- Two-Tier Performance System – Based upon input from our workforce, we determined that the way we had implemented our multi-tier performance system was placing significant paperwork burdens on our employees and supervisors without providing meaningful distinctions between employees or benefits for their professional development. Beginning in October, TSA will shift to a simpler two-tier system for the screening workforce (e.g., meets standards/does not meet standards) that will streamline the process and significantly reduce subjectivity.
- Model Officer Recognition – Also beginning in October, TSA is implementing a new program that provides the agency with a mechanism to better recognize its top officers for the work they are doing throughout the year with monetary and non-monetary awards for special acts as well as pay increases.
- TSO Career Progression – This initiative provides a clearly defined and transparent career path for uniformed officers with pay increases tied to enhanced skills and training. The first phase of TSO Career Progression was implemented in August 2018, and TSA has updated and rolled out six new training classes this past year. The development of future phases is underway, and we look to expand this initiative to other segments of the workforce.

Over the last few years, TSA has seen significant improvements in the results of the annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS). While we are proud of these advancements and our FEVS improvements, we realize that as an Agency we must continue to

innovate and compete as an employer to ensure our workplace attracts, keeps, and develops great personnel. We are confident that the actions we have taken to improve employee communications with senior leadership through reestablishing the National Advisory Council and creating uniformed advisors to the Administrator, as well as the initiatives noted previously will advance our efforts towards that goal.

Conclusion

Despite the passage of eighteen years since the attacks on September 11, 2001, TSA is focused on two things - "Honoring the Memory, Protecting the Nation." Although the priorities of our Strategy are ambitious, they are necessary to stay ahead of persistent, determined adversaries while also preserving individual freedoms and the benefits of an open, efficient transportation system. We are resolute in our desire to ensure that a similar event never occurs in the future and are confident that through vigilance, collaboration with domestic and international partners, and the continued support of Congress and all of our stakeholders, such an attack will not occur on "Our Watch."

Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Cantwell, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am honored to serve in this capacity along with the dedicated men and women of TSA. I look forward to your questions.