



TESTIMONY OF

David P. Pecoske
Administrator
Transportation Security Administration

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ON

“The State of the Transportation Security Administration”

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Good morning Chairwoman Watson Coleman, Ranking Member Gimenez, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to testify on the President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Budget Request, which includes a \$9.7 billion request for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). I am honored to be here and am grateful for the longstanding and constructive partnership TSA enjoys with this Subcommittee and the support you have provided over the years.

TSA was established by the *Aviation and Transportation Security Act* in the wake of the September 11th attacks and given the urgent task of protecting our nation's transportation systems. From that day forward, we have remained steadfast in our commitment to providing the highest level of security across all modes of transportation and worked with our partners to stay ahead of evolving threats. In the years since 9/11 and specifically over the past fiscal year, TSA has not only had to address ever-present threats to aviation, but also dynamic and emerging cybersecurity threats to our nation's rail and oil and gas pipeline infrastructure, as well as the public health threats from COVID-19. Yet, even as the threats we face have multiplied and diversified, our fundamental mission to protect the nation's transportation systems and ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce has not changed. TSA works collaboratively with our partners to provide agile and responsive security across all modes of transportation through passenger and cargo screening; vetting and credentialing personnel in critical transportation sectors; law enforcement; regulatory compliance; and international cooperation.

Today, within the aviation network, TSA is responsible for the security of over 430 federalized airports, with screening services forecasted this summer servicing over 24,000 domestic flights (at pre-pandemic levels) and nearly 3,300 outbound international flights per day.

With travel volume rebounding, TSA routinely screens more than 2 million passengers and 1.4 million checked items daily for explosives and other dangerous items, and in many locations, passenger volume growth is expected to rapidly continue and will either approach or exceed pre-pandemic volumes over the coming months. We also ensure regulatory compliance in aviation through the work of more than 940 aviation and cargo transportation security inspectors.

In the surface transportation realm, TSA works closely with owners and operators to protect the critical surface transportation systems that connect cities, manufacturers and retailers and power our economy through more than 4 million miles of roadways; nearly 140,000 miles of railroad track; more than 470 tunnels; and over 2.8 million miles of pipeline. TSA's security inspectors conduct approximately 8,000 surface inspections annually in pursuing a risk-based approach for securing a large and complex network of transportation systems and critical infrastructure.

Since TSA's creation, the modes and methods of terrorist attacks have become more decentralized and opportunistic than ever before, and aviation and transport hubs still remain highly-valued targets. Threats to aviation and surface transportation remain persistent, pervasive, and they are constantly evolving, especially in the cyber realm. To meet these challenges, we must continue to innovate, rapidly deploy new solutions, and maximize the impact of our resources.

TSA's vision is to be an agile security agency, embodied by a professional workforce that engages its partners and the American people to address current and future challenges and threats to the Homeland. To that end, within the first year of my term as Administrator, I issued the "2018-2026 TSA Strategy" and established three strategic priorities to guide the agency's

workforce through its 25th Anniversary aimed to: (1) Improve Security and Safeguard the Nation's Transportation System; (2) Accelerate Action; and (3) Commit to Our People. I have twice published Administrator's Intent documents delineating and updating the short and medium-term objectives to achieve those priorities.

I want to thank Congress for the authorities it has provided to TSA through the *TSA Modernization Act of 2018* as well as previous appropriations that have enabled us to execute our mission and make progress on our strategic priorities. I also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the superior efforts of the entire TSA workforce, convey what they have accomplished, and explain our future goals and objectives. In FY 2021, TSA:

- Screened 585.3 million travelers, an average of about 1.6 million passengers per day, which represents 69 percent of pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels in 2019. On average, 97.6 percent of passengers waited less than 20 minutes at airport security checkpoints, while 96.2 percent of TSA PreCheck[®] passengers waited less than five minutes in those lanes.
- Deployed an additional 1,520 Credential Authentication Technology units and 320 Computed Tomography X-ray scanners, which significantly improve security while reducing physical contact.
- Enrolled seven new airlines and 1.8 million individuals in the TSA PreCheck[®] expedited screening program, bringing the total number of Known Traveler Number holders to over 27 million. These programs provide more efficient screening and a better checkpoint experience, while also maintaining the required level of security for passengers whose backgrounds are unknown.

- Prevented 5,456 firearms—a record number— from being carried into airplane passenger cabins or the secure area of airports, the majority of which were loaded (84%).
- Trained almost 1,500 flight crew members in Crew Member Self-Defense training to address increasing trends in unruly passengers and partnered with the Federal Aviation Administration to rescind TSA PreCheck eligibility for passengers who in violation of an FAA regulation are disruptive aboard flights or during security screening. TSA also expanded training capacity and access by launching Transportation Security Officer (TSO) new hire training at TSA Academy West adjacent to Harry Reid International Airport (LAS), which led to 500 new hires undergoing academy training in FY 2021.
- Issued the first ever cybersecurity-related Security Directives and Security Program Amendments that require mandatory incident reporting and the adoption of mitigation measures. TSA also published Information Circulars to Transportation Systems Sector stakeholders on cybersecurity-related threats and vulnerabilities.
- Published the Air Cargo Security Roadmap—a five-year vision and strategic plan for modernizing, streamlining and further securing air cargo transportation operations.
- Established several programs and initiatives to recruit and retain TSOs, including:
 - A rewards program called the Model Officer Recognition that provided monetary awards to more than 6,900 top performing TSOs in FY 2021;
 - A career progression plan that provides training in advanced skills and a one-time pay increase for more than 300 select E-Band officers that help to retain and promote the best-of-the-best;
 - Service pay increases for more than 35,000 TSOs that rewards commitment to service and professional excellence; and

- Authorized TSO retention incentives at 68 airports, benefitting more than 6,000 employees nationwide.
- Expanded digital identity technologies to enhance the passenger experience, including testing TSA PreCheck touchless identity solution, collaborating with Apple and other industry stakeholders to incorporate mobile Driver's Licenses (mDL) into security checkpoint operations, and publishing an Identity Management Roadmap which lays out a comprehensive end-to-end strategy for identity management at TSA.
- Established two unmanned aircraft system (UAS) pilot programs—one at Miami International Airport and the other at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX)—to test and evaluate detection, tracking and identification technology for UAS that enter restricted airspace.

We have also strengthened partnerships across the spectrum—from private industry, to foreign partners, to advisory committees, to academia, to state and local governments and our federal partners—to increase security and adapt to the new travel environment, while maximizing the customer experience and minimizing any negative impacts on travelers and commerce.

The FY 2023 President's Budget aligns with TSA's strategy to improve security and safeguard the nation's transportation system, accelerate action, and reinforce TSA's commitment to its people. Thanks to Congress' support for TSA through the FY 2022 appropriation, the FY 2023 Budget builds upon our progress by continuing to fund the recurring infrastructure backbone needed in TSA's 24/7 operational mission. The FY 2023 Budget honors commitments

to our workforce by providing more equitable compensation and other benefits while addressing capability gaps to ensure that the nation's transportation security remains the safest in the world.

TSA cannot be successful without our professional, vigilant, and engaged workforce. That is why "Commit to our People" is one of our three strategic priorities. Significant parts of our workforce are underpaid relative to other federal government employees and impedes our ability to improve the overall employee experience. Without pay equity, TSA will continue to struggle with recruitment, career development and retention. To address this long-term inequity, the FY 2023 Budget includes \$871M¹ to ensure TSA employees are paid at a level that is commensurate with their counterparts on the General Schedule pay scale. Further, an additional \$121M is requested to establish a labor relations support capability to manage expanded labor benefits for TSOs and the right for employees to appeal adverse personnel actions through the Merit Systems Protection Board.

TSA expects passenger volume to rival our FY 2019 levels, and on some days, possibly reach up to three million passengers per day, higher than the daily record of 2.8M in 2019. This Budget includes \$243M to enable TSA to continue to recruit and retain a workforce able to meet increasing demands of passenger travel volume, while also ensuring adherence to passenger wait time standards, and maintaining security effectiveness. TSA's pay equity plan provides that our TSO workforce, which has lagged behind its federal counterparts, will see an average 30 percent increase in base pay while federal air marshals will see an average 20 percent increase in their base pay. Other TSA employees, such as intelligence analysts, inspectors, canine handlers, and

¹ Assumes second quarter implementation.

non-screening administrative employees at our nation's airports will also see an increase in base pay commensurate with their federal colleagues.

A well-trained, appropriately compensated and sufficiently sized workforce will still only be successful if they have the right tools for the job. That is why TSA is also focused on accelerating action to strengthen checkpoint operations through development and acquisition of new technology. Access to technology helps our passenger screening workforce mitigate wait times by allowing them to assess potential threats quickly and efficiently. To that end, the FY 2023 Budget includes \$105M for the Checkpoint Property Screening System program and \$19M for On-Person Screening Algorithm Development to address capability gaps to detect new and evolving threats to civil aviation in current property screening technology reliably and efficiently, while improving the passenger experience.

Securing and safeguarding the Nation's transportation system requires innovative tactics to address cybersecurity threats and risks associated with the continued integration of advanced electronic and networked systems. The FY 2023 Budget requests \$23.5M to enable early detection and dramatically improve the cybersecurity of TSA networks and our ability to protect TSA's sensitive data. Across the transportation sector, TSA continues to help partners build cybersecurity resilience and improve incident response, focusing on the pipeline, rail and aviation sectors. With those stakeholders, TSA hosts a variety of planning meetings, intelligence briefings, and tabletop exercises. I have personally visited pipeline companies and other critical infrastructure operators to discuss the evolving cybersecurity threat, and to understand the challenges and successes of implementing the current security directives.

Finally, in conjunction with the FY 2023 President's Budget, the Administration offered two proposals to increase availability of funding to resource TSA's strategic priorities and help TSA address emerging threats. First, it includes a legislative proposal to terminate TSA's deficit reduction contributions from Passenger Fee collections, which, if enacted, will provide an additional \$1.5 billion to directly offset TSA's appropriated funding and return the funds to use for their intended purpose. Second, the Budget includes a legislative proposal to transition access control at exit lanes to airport authorities and commercial airports under federal regulatory authorities, which will result in a projected savings of \$94.1M and 1,090 full time employees in the first year. If approved, TSA will work with airports to integrate exit lane security into their perimeter security plans and assess those plans regularly. The proposal will enable TSA to better focus its resources on screening functions and risk-based security measures.

The Administration has also recently provided Congress with a legislative proposal requesting extension of the Department's countering unmanned aircraft systems authority, which includes a request to provide TSA with authority to mitigate drone activity in restricted airspace at airports and other transportation modes. If granted, this authority would empower TSA to take steps to prevent potential drone threats that could interfere with aircraft operations, jeopardize traveler safety, and undermine airport security.

Securing our nation's transportation system is a complex task that requires robust partnerships and a well-trained, dedicated workforce. Funding in the FY 2023 Budget will have a positive impact on all TSA employees – from uniformed officers, Federal Air Marshals, inspectors, canine handlers, analysts, and management to administrative and professional employees – as well as on transportation security and the passenger experience. To achieve the

priorities reflected within the FY 2023 President's Budget, we will continue to engage with industry and stakeholders, invest resources in our employees and technology, and encourage the public to be part of the solution. Finally, through constructive oversight and dialogue, we seek to continue to partner with Congress as we work to secure all modes of transportation for the public.

Chairwoman Watson Coleman, Ranking Member Gimenez, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I look forward to this discussion and your questions.