

**Statement of Erroll G. Southers
Nominee for Assistant Secretary
Transportation Security Administration
U.S. Department of Homeland Security**

**Before the
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate**

October 14, 2009

Good afternoon Chairman Rockefeller, Ranking Member Hutchison, and distinguished Members of this Committee. It is a privilege to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be Assistant Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). I am honored by the President's nomination and greatly appreciate Secretary Napolitano's support. I look forward to this opportunity to address your questions as you consider my nomination.

With the Committee's indulgence, I would like to thank my parents, James and Thelma, my wife, Caryn, and our children, James and Maia, for all their support during this process and throughout my career. I would also like to thank the fine men and women of the Los Angeles World Airports Police Department, some of whom traveled to join me here today.

I share the Secretary's vision that protecting our homeland from terrorism is a collective responsibility in which all Americans have a role to play. To protect our transportation systems, it is critical to work with all of our partners, including other federal agencies, state, local, and tribal governments, private industry, our international partners, and most important of all, the traveling public. By engaging these partners, we will more effectively protect the Nation's vital transportation systems to ensure the free flow of U.S. commerce and the free movement of the American people.

If confirmed, I know the honor of leading TSA will come with great challenges and responsibilities. TSA was created to respond to the threat of terrorism following the tragic events of September 11, 2001. I assure you that protecting our transportation systems from the ongoing threat of terrorism, while at the same time safeguarding the ability of all law-abiding Americans to travel freely, will remain my highest priority.

I have worked on public safety and counterterrorism matters at the federal, state, and local level for 30 years and, if confirmed, I look forward to bringing valuable experience and perspective to TSA. Since 2007, I have served as an Assistant Chief, commanding the Office of Homeland Security and Intelligence for the Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) Police Department, where I have enjoyed a valuable partnership with TSA in Los Angeles. I am currently responsible for all counterterrorism and security credential assets at the four airports under the

LAWA organization. The LAWA Police Department is the largest aviation law enforcement agency in the United States and has the largest airport explosives canine detection unit in the nation. I understand well the challenges of securing Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), one of the most complex airports in the United States, as well as general aviation airports in Palmdale, Ontario and Van Nuys, which is among the busiest general aviation airports in the nation.

Protecting America against an ever evolving threat requires an innovative and interdisciplinary approach to security. In my current position with the LAWA Police Department, I participated in the conceptualization of the pilot Assistant Randomized Motor Over Routes (ARMOR) program designed to detect and deter vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (IED). I am also involved with two DHS Chemical/Biological Operational Technology Development Pilot and Preventative Radiological Nuclear Detection Programs.

Since 2006, I also have served as the Associate Director for the Center for Risk and Economic Analysis of Terrorism Events (CREATE) at the University of Southern California (USC). I am responsible for the development and enhancement of education programs and special projects at CREATE, the nation's first DHS Center of Excellence, and I developed the Executive Program in Counter-Terrorism, designed to challenge international counter-terrorism leaders and enhance their analysis, coordination, and response capabilities.

My experience with LAWA and CREATE has afforded me the opportunity to collaborate with my international counterparts and other world experts in sharing best practices to combat terrorism. If confirmed, I will continue to draw on these relationships to benefit TSA's mission, understanding that a professional and effective workforce will help promote public confidence and lead to a more secure and more resilient America.

Prior to joining the LAWA Police Department, I served as the Deputy Director of the California Office of Homeland Security for Governor Schwarzenegger. I was responsible for post 9/11 counterterrorism policy and the protection of California's critical infrastructure. While serving in this capacity, I also had the opportunity to participate in the national working group responsible for developing the National Infrastructure Protection Plan (NIPP).

Secretary Napolitano has emphasized a "ground – up" approach to homeland security, an approach which epitomizes my professional development. During my career I have served as a Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. There I worked on foreign counterintelligence and terrorism investigations, and served as a member of the Bureau's SWAT Team. I began my law enforcement career as a police officer for the Santa Monica, California Police Department and I have been a faculty member and tactical officer at the Rio Hondo Police Academy.

If confirmed, I am committed to providing the TSA workforce with the necessary leadership and support to ensure TSA's ability to protect the American public. I witness the great work of Transportation Security Officers every day and know firsthand the challenges they face to protect our aviation system. I admire their professionalism and dedication and would be honored to serve as their Assistant Secretary.

I also believe that a close working relationship with Congress and this Committee is essential. I am fully aware that this Committee had a leading role in creating TSA, and has encouraged TSA to enhance security in surface transportation, while never losing focus on the continuing threat to aviation and the flow of goods. I fully recognize and understand that improving surface transportation security is a work in progress and one to be addressed with a strategy that is risk-based and intelligence-driven.

I have enjoyed the opportunity to meet with Members of this Committee and your staffs over the past few weeks. I welcome this Committee's expertise and important oversight function, and if confirmed I look forward to working closely with this committee to support TSA's mission.

In closing, I wish to again thank President Obama and Secretary Napolitano for their confidence in my ability to lead TSA. If confirmed, I will work to improve TSA's ability to counter the terrorist threat to our transportation systems, while also safeguarding and enhancing the travel of people and the flow of goods. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Hutchison, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and I look forward to answering your questions.