

STATEMENT

OF

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BEFORE THE

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION**

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21, 2010
2:30 P.M.**

**253 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and thanks very much for the opportunity to testify. My name is John O'Connor, and I am currently Vice President and Chief of the Amtrak Police Department; we have a total of 416 sworn officers. I have over thirty-seven years experience as a sworn police officer in the rail and mass transit environment. I joined Amtrak in 1998 after 25 years with the Long Island Rail Road, where I rose from Patrolman to Chief of Police.

I'm here today to discuss policing and security on surface transportation systems and the critical task we are facing in combating terrorism. The Administration has been studying this matter and has just released its "Surface Transportation Priority Assessment Report." We at Amtrak are in broad agreement with many of the overarching recommendations it contains, particularly those that deal with the allocation of resources to address likely threats, information sharing, and the need to fund a multi-year, multi-phase transportation security grant program. These are some of the major issues we have been dealing with as we work to identify likely threats and direct resources to meet them. While terrorists can employ many tactics, overwhelming historical evidence indicates that terrorist attacks on surface transportation will likely occur in three (3) forms:

- Use of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) on a train
- Use of an IED in a station
- Emerging threat of an active shooter

The reasons are simple and clear. Surface transportation systems are open and densely packed with people. These systems are a big part of people's daily routine. The whole point of terror is shock, and nothing produces shock like unexpected and horrifying attacks. The pattern is unmistakable. IEDs were used to attack trains in Madrid in 2004, London in 2005, Mumbai in 2006, and Moscow on several occasions, including last month, to name a few. Active shooters attacked a station in Mumbai in 2008, in each case with tremendous loss of life. And these are just the attacks that made the front page – there are an astonishing number of attacks on rail transit systems going on around the world. The Mineta Transportation Institute, which tracks attacks on public transportation worldwide, states it added 88 attacks per month to its database between November 2009 and February 2010. Obviously, some attacks are failures, such as the fizzled July 21, 2005 bombing attempt on the London Underground, and the numbers may also be slightly inflated by delays in reporting. But they are nevertheless an illustration of how attractive a target public transportation has become. Explosives are clearly the preferred tactic. Of the total attacks on public surface transport, 74% were either explosive or incendiary in nature; when passenger rail was the target, the number jumps to 83%.

There's a wide range of possible threats, obviously, ranging from cyber attacks up to the ultimate and scarcely imaginable possibility of nuclear terrorism. Our approach to these can range from "do nothing and hope for the best" to "spread your resources in an attempt to respond to every possible threat, at the risk of underpreparing for the most probable threats." Amtrak's position is that we must identify the most likely threats, assess the likelihood and possible consequences of an attack, and focus our efforts on defeating or deterring the most dangerous and likely terror tactics. We are working closely with countries around the world in the hopes

that we can share information and learn from their experiences. I recently traveled to Mumbai as part of a State Department initiative to exchange information with Indian Rail Officials and to collaborate on mutually beneficial counter-terror strategies and efforts. Amtrak has become the first American rail police department to become an associate member of RAILPOL, a European organization of rail and transit security agencies cooperating to share intelligence, coordinate activities and improve counter-terror capabilities. Structured like INTERPOL, this group embodies the type of multi-national surface transportation efforts needed to address the terrorist threat globally. These experiences have helped us to better understand the role and needs of surface transportation police and security and the need for more collaboration at all levels of government.

Today, the Amtrak Police Department is reorganizing to address these concerns. We have undertaken a number of measures designed to eliminate redundancy within the police and security functions and ensure our security needs are well represented at the top level of Amtrak. We have merged the two groups that were formerly responsible for security to eliminate some duplication of functions and allow better use of manpower and assets. Those two groups were OSSSO and APD, now simply APD. The Department has shifted its primary mission of customer-oriented policing to a blend of customer-oriented policing and robust counter-terrorism efforts. We have taken several steps to align our force to our new strategy, keeping in mind that we are operating in 46 states on a system that is very open. These steps fall into four specific categories of effort that we are now undertaking.

- 1) Growth of the Explosive Canine Detection Program

I am proud to say that Amtrak has more than doubled the size of bomb-detecting canine teams in the last few years. Canine assets are still one of the most accurate and useful tools for detecting and deterring explosive devices before they can be introduced on surface transportation systems. In 2005, the Department had about 20 canine teams, many of which were not trained to detect explosives. Today, there are 45 canine teams that are single-purpose dogs whose mission is bomb detection. Several of these teams are also “vapor wake” trained and can actually detect the presence of fumes left after someone passes through with an explosive device. Amtrak has moved to the forefront of the field with use of this canine application and continues to work to build this counter-terror capability.

2) Security Inspection Program

In 2008, Amtrak began a random baggage screening program similar to one pioneered by the NYPD. Using technology, screening teams deploy in an unpredictable fashion designed to make it harder for a terrorist to predict the level of security. To date, Amtrak has conducted hundreds of passenger screening operations during which thousand of trains were screened, resulting in tens of thousands of passengers being randomly selected for screening. Though an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act /Transportation Security Grant program (ARRA/TSGP) grant, Amtrak is expanding this screening program by adding three additional screening teams in the NEC and Intercity areas.

3) Collaboration with TSA

To address the chief terrorist threats, Amtrak has improved its working relationship with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). Beginning in December, 2007, Amtrak and TSA started joint deployments with TSA's "Visible Intermodal Protection and Response" (VIPR) team program, which was developed to augment the integral security operations of various transportation modes, such as the Amtrak Police or transit security. These provide a visible uniformed presence and can help dedicated law enforcement to deter or detect suspicious activity, and they provide the traveling public with a reassuring police presence. VIPR teams can include various useful capabilities, including air marshals, officers specially trained in behavior detection, and explosive detection. Included in the latter category are bomb-sniffing dogs, which are an important component of the overall security effort.

Our first VIPR exercise was held with the TSA at the Amtrak station in El Paso, Texas. These operations have basically involved the unannounced "surge" of TSA personnel onto Amtrak trains and stations at various points, and are designed to test the ability of TSA to flex support to surface transportation. A total of 328 VIPR operations have been held at various locations on the 21,100 mile Amtrak system, approximately 42% percent of them at stations off the Northeast Corridor.

In October, 2009, Amtrak requested that TSA expand the VIPR program to include a joint screening program with TSA, using additional TSA assets, including Bomb Appraisal Officers, Behavior Screening Officers and Surface Transportation Security Inspectors to augment our screening forces. We are very interested in expanding our partnerships and joint activities with

other transit and Federal law enforcement agencies, and we are hopeful that we will be able to obtain the resources we need to build the effective partnerships we will need to reduce gaps in our security coverage.

4) Corporate Security

Amtrak has leveraged the Transit Security Grant and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grant programs to improve protection for passengers, employees, and critical infrastructure. We will never stop assessing Amtrak's vulnerabilities. These build upon an earlier risk assessment performed for Amtrak and will be closely focused on addressing these individual vulnerabilities. Use of ARRA funds to install fences, close circuit TV and other security improvements is directly tied to Amtrak's commitment to let our risk assessments drive security investment. The majority of our ARRA funding efforts are being used to protect infrastructure we have identified as critical through vulnerability assessments designed to identify and implement risk reduction strategies. The security program is managed in part by Station Action Team personnel. They work closely with the Operations Department to ensure Amtrak security and emergency response policies are followed and coordinated as part of a larger risk reduction strategy that incorporates recovery and continuity of operations processes.

Amtrak employees and passengers will continue to be a key piece of our security strategy. They are very valuable sources of information that can "cue" the law enforcement system. Amtrak also benefits from the services and operational knowledge of upwards of 19,000 people who work on the railroad, and the hundreds of millions of passengers who pass through our

stations and over our tracks are also capable of noticing when something's not right, and reporting it to us so we can investigate it. We have seen plenty of examples where the vigilance and courage of citizens have helped prevent or thwart an incident in recent years, and we are doing everything we can to make sure they know who to contact if they see something suspicious – and that those employees know what to do once the matter has been brought to their attention. Over the past few years, the Station Action Teams and Regional Security Coordinating Committees have involved our station staffs in the security planning process. This integration has improved coordination and raised employee awareness of potential security threats. We have trained and continue to train our police officers in Behavior Assessment Security Screening (BASS) to teach them to recognize the behaviors that might signal an imminent attack, and front-line employees have been provided with a non-law enforcement version, to improve their awareness and maximize their value as intelligence resources.

As Amtrak has more than 500 stations, we are always resource-constrained. Consequently, we are enthusiastic about programs that help us to bring more people, technology, and animals to bear on the task of keeping our stations and trains secure. We are also working to extend and improve our cooperation with transit and commuter agencies, many of which share our facilities, to get rid of the gaps in coverage where systems meet. This is another crucial area because intermodal systems can create gaps for potential points of entry – and once you're on a rail or transit system, it tends by its very nature to carry an attacker to a point where people are most concentrated and vulnerability is at its highest. TSA is aware of the need for cooperation and coordination among all rail and transit stakeholders but this is an area where continued

improvement is the paramount need, because our opponents know how to exploit gaps – and they only need to get lucky once.

We are devoting our efforts to making it harder and harder for terrorists to use their preferred strategies to attack our stations, trains, and passengers. We will continue to devote the bulk of our efforts to defending against and deterring the most likely and dangerous forms of attack, which will continue to be IEDs and active shooters. We are, however, definitely concerned about the whole spectrum of cyber, chemical, biological and radiological threats, and we will continue to work with the Federal government to defend against them. We hope to obtain additional funding to expand aggressively our efforts to defend our system against the most probable and devastating methods of attack, and we will work with DHS, TSA and the Committee to identify other potential funding sources. In future budgets, we will submit funding requests that will detail our needs; we expect to fund the necessary programs out of our FY 2011 budget. The security of our system is our top priority, and I look forward to working with the committee in coming months to make sure that we have the resources, the people, and the intelligence we need to keep our system safe and secure.





You Use Your Instincts... She'll Use Hers.

SEE SOMETHING suspicious or unusual?
SAY SOMETHING! Contact Amtrak® Police at

1-800-331-0008

or call 911



K-9 Teams Vital Piece of Station and Train Security

Strategically deployed at stations throughout the system and involved in up to 1,000 train trips a month, the Amtrak Police Department K-9 teams provide a psychological and physical deterrent to potential threats from explosives. These teams are part of a collaborative interagency initiative that includes Transportation Security Administration, federal and state Departments of Homeland Security, and state and local law enforcement agencies.

"Our K-9 teams play a significant role in ensuring that we maintain safe and secure operations in our stations and aboard our trains," said Chief Operating Officer William Crosbie. "Chief [John] O'Connor's direction and support have really been instrumental in making Amtrak's K-9 program excel."

This first line of defense begins with specialized training and a strong bond between the dogs and their handlers.

For explosives detection, the teams undergo an 11-week training program at either the Auburn University Canine Detection Training Center in Alabama or the Transportation Security Administration facility at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas, where the dogs are trained in odor recognition. During that time, handlers are taught to recognize the changes in their dogs' behavior as a response to "alerting" on a potential threat. Part of the standard explosives detection training includes vapor wake training, which only occurs at the Auburn Training Center, where the dogs are trained to alert on scents left in the wake of a passing individual.

"These dogs even have the training to detect odors that have lingered in an area for 15 minutes, which is a proactive approach to dealing with and tracking potential suicide bombers," said APD Capt. William Parker, who was brought on board in 2007 to revamp the K-9 corps. "These dogs are the 'Michael Jordans' of what they do. They are among the most sophisticated in the country."

The Amtrak teams — the only K-9 units in the railroad industry with vapor wake capabilities — were honored last summer with top honors at the National Railroad Canine Competition in Allen, Texas.

Since coming to Amtrak, Parker, a 20-year U.S. Army canine handler/supervisor, has upgraded the K-9 corps from 24 teams to 45, and expects to further increase that number by the middle of next year. This expansion, Parker said, is the result of stimulus funds, TSA and Department of Homeland Security grants and the strong support of Amtrak leadership.

Parker has also instituted a certification standard not previously in place and ramped up the pace of training, using a number of scenarios, including live decoys, luggage and hidden backpacks to strengthen the K-9 corps' vapor wake and explosives detection capabilities.

"Training is paramount to ensure that the team is effective and proficient at doing its job," said Parker. "We take the protection of our employees, passengers and infrastructure very seriously. So, we put the teams through consistent, rigorous exercises. We try to make it as real as possible."

Having worked on last year's presidential whistle stop train tour into Washington, D.C., and being part of the security detail for the 2010 Winter



APD Sgt. Robert Smith and his canine partner, Zorro, patrol New York Penn Station.

Olympics, how does Parker measure their success?

"Nobody knows they're there unless something goes wrong, which is a testament to their ongoing efficiency," he said. "A successful search is one where we don't find anything. That means we're doing our job of deterring would-be terrorists and criminals."

Part of what makes K-9 teams effective is the

high visibility nature of the job, according to one K-9 handler.

"We're on the front lines at platforms and at gates to detect explosive materials and look for suspicious behaviors based on our training," according to APD Sgt. Robert Smith, New York Penn Station. "Because we're in New York City, we're constantly on alert. Even as things are happening, our proactive approach already puts us in the mix."

Smith and his Labrador retriever partner, Zorro, are rarely apart, even off duty, giving Smith ample insight into how to read his partner's moods and abilities to detect dangerous materials in and around the station.

"We train daily and at least three times a week on vapor wake, so I'm constantly learning things about him, how he reacts

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Operation ALERTS

Allied Law
Enforcement for Rail
and Transit Security



Amtrak, Police and Security, Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officials, and more than 100 police departments across 13 states and Washington, D.C., have mobilized today for Operation ALERTS (Allied Law Enforcement for Rail and Transit Security) – a joint, coordinated and synchronized rail security operation throughout the northeastern United States.

This train station is one of nearly 150 railway stations between Fredericksburg, Virginia and Essex Junction, Vermont involved in the operation.

Today's security deployment is NOT in response to any particular threat, but rather is part of an ongoing proactive approach to expand counterterrorism and incident response capabilities and enhance deterrence across Northeast Corridor railway systems.

During today's operation, passengers may notice enhanced security measures, including any of the following in stations or aboard trains:

- Uniformed police officers
- Uniformed TSA security officers
- Random passenger and carry-on baggage screening
- K-9 units
- Checked baggage screening
- On-board security checks
- Identification checks



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Security Matters



While on board, please remember:

- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Keep your personal items secure and in close proximity. Laptop computers, PDA devices, portable music players, digital cameras, etc., are easy targets for pickpockets.
- Do not approach or pet police dogs.
- Report any suspicious activity or unattended luggage by notifying Amtrak Police and Security, personnel or by calling 1-800-331-0008.

Please feel free to consult a member of the on-board crew if you have any questions or concerns about this security program or if you need assistance. We thank you for your cooperation in helping keep the rail system safe and secure.

SEE SOMETHING suspicious or unusual?

SAY SOMETHING! Contact Amtrak Police and Security at 1-800-331-0008. Or Call 911.

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