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Before the

Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Subcommittee on Aviation Operations, Safety, and Security

United States Senate

September 16, 2010

Good afternoon, Chairman Dorgan, Ranking Member DeMint, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) passenger screening operations at the Washington Metropolitan Area airports. I appreciate the Subcommittee's leadership in ensuring the security of our nation's aviation operations.

When TSA Administrator John Pistole appeared before the full Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee last June for his confirmation hearing, one of the major topics of discussion was the importance of TSA maintaining a passenger screening system that fully secures our nation's aviation network while maximizing efficiency and effectiveness and minimizing inconvenience to passengers. This is a critical component of TSA's mission, and one to which we adhere rigorously not only at the Washington Metropolitan Area airports, but at all of the more than 450 airports throughout the United States. We constantly strive to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our systems, as well as the performance of our personnel to ensure the safety and security of the traveling public in all modes of transportation, including aviation.

TSA's core mission is protecting the traveling public from the evolving terrorist threat, and we are constantly working to close vulnerabilities with new technology and new processes via a complex layered security network. We are often confronted with suspicious incidents and potential threats occurring throughout the worldwide aviation network, and we must be ready to respond to anything we might encounter. Our overall goals are to enhance human decision-making and to ensure that our personnel on the front lines of aviation security have the information, resources and skills needed to respond to any threat in the most effective manner.

Ninth Anniversary of 9/11 Attack Marked by Strong Workforce, Technology Advances

Only five days ago, we commemorated the ninth anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11th. The terrible images of that day are a constant reminder that we operate in a high-threat environment and must remain ever vigilant against those who would use our nation's transportation system to do us harm.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, this Committee played a critical role in developing and implementing the framework for a more secure national transportation system. In creating TSA, a dedicated workforce was put in place to provide a layered security network that now includes constant evaluation of intelligence information related to transportation security, close collaboration with industry and government partners, Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) at airport security checkpoints, Behavior Detection Officers assessing passengers that may pose a threat to aviation security, Federal Air Marshals traveling on domestic and international flights, canine teams providing visible deterrence and a reliable explosives detection capability, and Transportation Security Inspectors monitoring aviation, rail, and mass transit operations.

Additionally, TSA is constantly deploying the most effective technology to combat the evolving threat to the transportation sector. TSA has become a world leader in the deployment of Advanced Imaging Technology (AIT) that will strongly advance our ability to detect a wide array of threats in the aviation system. AIT enables TSOs to quickly identify potential security threats, both metallic and non-metallic, that could be hidden on a passenger's body. We are deploying AIT machines to airports throughout the country, and working to maximize threat detection and customer throughput, while also addressing concerns regarding safety, civil rights and civil liberties.

AIT is only one of many advanced technologies designed to improve our threat detection capabilities while minimizing passenger inconvenience. Through such technologies, TSA is equipping its workforce of 45,000 TSOs with the resources needed to safely process nearly 2 million passengers every day.

Security Operations at Washington Metropolitan Area Airports

TSA is an intelligence-driven agency that employs a risk-based strategy to secure U.S. transportation systems from the evolving terrorist threat, working closely with stakeholders in all transportation sectors. As technology advances and our screening protocols are constantly adjusted to safeguard the traveling public, we remain dedicated to keeping Americans safe while they fly, while also protecting the civil rights and civil liberties of passengers, maintaining quick passenger throughput at security checkpoints, and providing quality customer service. These issues are extremely important at all of our nation's airports, including Washington Dulles International Airport (IAD) and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA) – two of our country's busiest airports.

IAD averages 423 international departures and over 2,500 domestic departures per week and is serviced by 31 air carriers. There are 3 concourses, 143 gates, and 4 runways. IAD has 5 security checkpoints with a total of 34 lanes, and passenger and baggage screening is performed by nearly 700 TSOs. TSOs at IAD screen approximately 25,000 passengers and 20,000 pieces of checked baggage each day.

IAD will receive significant security and operational enhancements in the coming years: three terminals will convert to Inline Baggage Systems from 2011 to 2013, and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding will add an additional 300 closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras to IAD in February 2011. AIT units are scheduled for deployment to IAD beginning this fall.

Since opening two Mezzanine Security Checkpoint areas at IAD in September 2009, we have made dramatic improvements in wait times. The wait time for passengers going through security checkpoints at IAD has been less than 20 minutes for 99 percent of the traveling public during the current fiscal year. The addition of the security mezzanines, combined with the planned conversion to Inline Baggage Systems and the deployment of AIT equipment, will enhance both IAD's functionality and security posture.

DCA processes over 8 million departing passengers and 4 million pieces of luggage each year and is serviced by 12 airlines operating at 44 gates. DCA has three terminals and four security checkpoints, and passenger screening is performed by more than 580 TSOs. TSOs at DCA screen approximately 22,000 passengers and 11,000 pieces of checked baggage each day. The wait time for passengers going through security checkpoints has been less than 20 minutes for almost 100 percent of the traveling public during the current fiscal year.

DCA was the first airport to provide intelligence information to the workforce through TSA's Network Information Officer Program, and it was the first airport to screen 100 percent of cargo with Explosives Trace Detection screening, one of several allowable technologies utilized for screening cargo. DCA is the recipient of ARRA funds for the improvement of existing CCTV systems. And DCA also improved its passenger screening capabilities in July and August of this year with the installation of four AIT units deployed in the primary screening position.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee today to speak about TSA's passenger screening operations at our Washington Metropolitan Area airports. I appreciate your support in achieving our shared security goals, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.