

Statement of Erroll G. Southers
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U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Before the Committee on Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs
U.S. Senate

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Good morning Chairman Lieberman, Ranking Member Collins, and distinguished Members of the Committee. Before I begin, I would like to extend my most heartfelt sympathy and support for the victims of the shooting at Ft. Hood and their families.

I am honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to lead the Transportation Security Administration as Assistant Secretary. It is a privilege to be selected by the President and to receive the support of Secretary Napolitano. I look forward to the great challenge of continuing the exceptional work that the men and women of TSA do in protecting our homeland.

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 their love and support. I am so very pleased that Caryn and Maia are able to join me today. I also must thank and acknowledge the outstanding

officers and employees of the Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) Police Department and my esteemed colleagues at the University of Southern California.

I share Secretary Napolitano's vision that keeping our homeland safe from terrorism is a collective responsibility in which all Americans have a role to play. Protecting our transportation network requires the work of many hands – TSA, the unified resources of the Department of Homeland Security, other federal agencies, private industry, state, local, and tribal governments, our international partners, and most importantly, the traveling public. By engaging these partners, and with the oversight and guidance from Congress, we will more effectively ensure the free movement of the American people and the flow of commerce.

If confirmed, I know that the honor of leading TSA will come with great challenges and responsibilities. When Congress created TSA following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, you gave TSA the mission to provide for the security of all modes of transportation. While TSA has made great strides in fulfilling this responsibility, I fully understand that the work will never be complete. We are challenged by a dynamic threat and adaptive enemies who seek to harm Americans and our way of life.

I believe that I am up to the challenge of leading TSA. TSA, and its most valuable resource, its people, need leadership. I understand what type of leadership and support the front-line workforce needs to execute a security

mission. For the past thirty years I have dedicated myself to the mission of counterterrorism and public safety at the federal, state, and local levels. This has given me the important perspective to understand how partnerships are critical to success. The crucial need to effectively share information, be it threat information, intelligence, coordinated response planning, or best practices, is something that I have lived with, practiced, and experienced. If confirmed, I will bring this same dedication and commitment with me to TSA.

Since 2007 I have served as the Assistant Chief for Homeland Security and Intelligence for the Los Angeles World Airports Police Department. I am proud to wear the uniform of the airport police with the responsibility, in partnership with TSA and other agencies, to protect the people and goods that pass through one of the world's major airports, Los Angeles International Airport, as well as Van Nuys Airport, one of the busiest general aviation airports in the United States. LAX has the largest aviation law enforcement agency in the United States, with the largest complement of explosives detection canine teams of any U.S. airport. LAX is also an intermodal hub with an important nexus to surface transportation with its nearby light rail system and transit buses.

LAX has served as an interdisciplinary laboratory in a real world setting for advances in risk modeling and infrastructure protection. If confirmed, I will seek to further develop and deploy innovative security strategies and technologies to protect our transportation systems.

Since 2006, I have served as Associate Director of the University of Southern California's Center for Risk and Economic Analysis of Terrorism Events (CREATE), a DHS Center for Excellence. My responsibilities include the development and enhancement of special programs to provide the intellectual underpinnings for the fight against terrorism. At CREATE, I developed an Executive Program in Counterterrorism, designed to challenge international counterterrorism 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.

I also had the honor to serve Governor Schwarzenegger as the Deputy Director of the Office of Homeland Security for California. I was responsible for counterterrorism policy, the protection of California's critical infrastructure in the post-9/11 environment and participated in the development of DHS's first National Infrastructure Protection Plan.

If confirmed, I will serve as a key member of Secretary Napolitano's leadership team as she continues to forge a unified agency. Having served at both the operational level and as a stakeholder of the Department, I hope that I will bring a fresh perspective to fully integrating TSA operations as part of "One DHS."

Every day at LAX I witness firsthand the great work of the Transportation Security Officers and I understand the challenges they face. I would be honored to serve as their Assistant Secretary. I will provide them with an effective voice within TSA while fulfilling the agency's critical security mission. A professional, effective workforce will further promote public confidence in TSA while enhancing our country's resilience.

If confirmed, I hope to forge a close relationship with this Committee and with Congress. This is a partnership, and the threat the United States faces requires a unified effort.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Collins, and Members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to meet with you and your staff, and appear before you today. I look forward to answering your questions.