

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY  
TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Statement of

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COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY & GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

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Good morning Chairman Lieberman, Ranking Member Collins, and distinguished Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today to discuss the steps the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has taken in response to the attempted terrorist attack on Northwest Flight 253. I appreciate the Committee's leadership in the aftermath of the attack, and your steadfast efforts to ensure the security of the American people.

The attempted attack on Northwest Flight 253 on December 25 was a powerful reminder that terrorists will go to great lengths to defeat the security measures that have been put in place since September 11, 2001. As Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano has testified at recent hearings, this Administration is determined to thwart terrorist plots and disrupt, dismantle, and defeat terrorist networks by employing multiple layers of defense that work in concert with one another to secure our country. This is an effort that involves not just TSA, but components

across the Department of Homeland Security and many other federal agencies as well as state, local, tribal, territorial, private sector and international partners.

Today I want to describe the role that TSA currently performs in aviation security, how TSA responded in the immediate aftermath of the attempted Christmas Day attack, and how we are moving forward to further bolster aviation security.

### **TSA's Role in Multiple Layers of Defense**

Since 9/11, the U.S. government has employed multiple layers of defense across several departments and agencies to secure the aviation sector and ensure the safety of the traveling public. Different federal agencies bear different responsibilities, while other countries and the private sector – especially the air carriers themselves – also have important roles to play.

#### *Passenger Identity Verification*

As one critical layer of defense, DHS conducts pre-departure passenger identity verification in partnership with the airline industry and foreign governments in order to prevent known or suspected terrorists from boarding a plane bound for the United States or, as appropriate, to identify them for additional screening. DHS uses the Terrorist Screening Database (TSDB), managed by the FBI's Terrorist Screening Center, to determine who may board, who requires further screening and investigation, who should not be admitted, or who should be referred to appropriate law enforcement personnel.

Specifically, to help make these determinations, DHS uses the No-Fly List and the Selectee List, two important subsets within the TSDB. Individuals on the No-Fly List should not receive a boarding pass for a flight to, from, over, or within the United States. Individuals on the

Selectee List must go through additional security measures, including a full-body pat-down and a full physical examination of personal effects.

Through TSA's Secure Flight Program, the Department is making an important change to the process of matching passenger identities against the No-Fly List and Selectee List, and fulfilling an important recommendation of the 9/11 Commission. Previously, responsibility for checking passenger manifests against these lists rested with the air carriers themselves. Under the Secure Flight program, DHS began to transfer this responsibility to TSA in 2009, and the transition is targeted for completion by the end of this year. In addition to creating a more consistent matching process for all domestic and international travel to the United States and strengthening the effectiveness of redress in preventing misidentifications, Secure Flight will flag potential watchlist matches and immediately trigger law enforcement notification and coordination.

### *Screening Passengers and Baggage*

Another layer of defense in which TSA plays a critical role is the screening of passengers and their baggage. TSA screens passengers and baggage at airports in the United States, but not in other countries. Physical screening at foreign airports is conducted by the foreign government, air carriers, or by the respective airport authority.

Domestically, TSA employs a layered approach to security, which includes measures both seen and unseen by travelers. The 48,000 Transportation Security Officers at hundreds of airports across the United States screen 1.8 million passengers and their baggage every day using advanced technology x-ray systems, walk-through metal detectors, explosive trace detection equipment, trained canines, vapor trace machines that detect liquid explosives, Advanced

Imaging Technology, full-body pat-downs, explosives detection systems, Bomb Appraisal Officers, and Behavior Detection Officers – both at the checkpoint and throughout the airport. Through programs such as the Aviation Direct Access Screening Program, TSA also uses random and unpredictable measures to enhance security throughout the airport perimeter and in limited access areas of airports. The \$1 billion in Recovery Act funds provided to TSA for checkpoint and checked baggage screening technology have enabled TSA to greatly accelerate deployment of these critical tools to keep passengers safe.

### *In-Flight Security*

To support in-flight security, Federal Air Marshals (FAM) are deployed on high-risk domestic and international flights where international partners allow FAMs to enter their country on U.S.-flagged carriers. Thousands more volunteer pilots serve as armed, deputized Federal Flight Deck Officers on domestic flights. Additionally, armed law enforcement officers from federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies that have a need to fly armed provide a force multiplier on many flights.

### *International Screening Standards*

Because TSA does not conduct screening at international airports, TSA works closely with our foreign partners to ensure international screening standards are followed- particularly for flights bound to the U.S. TSA annually conducts approximately 300 airport assessments at foreign airports using International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards and inspections of foreign and U.S. air carriers that fly to the United States using TSA standards. If an airport does not meet these standards, TSA works with the host government to rectify the

deficiencies and raise airport security to an acceptable level. Ultimately, it is the foreign government that must work to address these security issues. If non-compliance with international standards continues long-term, TSA may recommend suspension of flight service from these airports to the United States.

In addition, TSA inspects all U.S. and foreign air carriers that fly to the United States from each airport that is a last point of departure to ensure compliance with TSA standards and directives. Should air carrier security deficiencies exist, TSA works with the air carrier to raise compliance to an acceptable level.

### **Response to the Christmas Day Attack**

Following the first reports of an attempted terrorist attack on Northwest Flight 253 on December 25, DHS immediately put in place additional security measures. TSA directed the Federal Aviation Administration to apprise 128 U.S.-bound international flights from Europe of the attempted attack and to ask them to maintain heightened vigilance on their flights. Increased security measures were put in place at domestic airports, including additional explosive detection canine teams, state and local law enforcement, expanded presence of Behavior Detection Officers, and enhanced screening. TSA conducted calls with all major airlines and the Air Transport Association, and issued Security Directives and Emergency Amendments for all international flights to the U.S., which mandated enhanced screening prior to departure and additional security measures during flight.

In addition to TSA's outreach, DHS was in close contact with Congress, our international partners, and state and local officials across the country. DHS and the FBI issued a joint bulletin on the attempted attack to state and local law enforcement throughout the nation and distributed

it to all Homeland Security Advisors, regional fusion center directors and Major City Homeland Security Points of Contact in the country.

On January 3, DHS/TSA issued a new Security Directive, effective on January 4 and still operational today, which includes security measures developed in consultation with law enforcement officials and our domestic and international partners. This Security Directive mandates that every individual flying into the U.S. from anywhere in the world traveling from or through nations that are state sponsors of terrorism<sup>1</sup> or other countries of interest will be required to go through enhanced screening. The directive also increases the use of enhanced screening technologies and mandates threat-based and random additional screening for passengers on U.S. bound international flights. These measures are being implemented with extraordinary cooperation from our global aviation partners

### **Steps Forward to Improve Aviation Security**

While these immediate steps helped strengthen our security posture to face current threats to our country, as President Obama has made clear, we need to take additional actions to address the systemic vulnerabilities highlighted by this failed attack. At President Obama and Secretary Napolitano's direction, DHS and TSA are pursuing five key objectives to enhance the protection of air travel from acts of terrorism.

#### *Watchlists*

First, DHS is working with our interagency partners to re-evaluate and modify the criteria and process used to build the TSDB, including adjusting the process by which names are added

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<sup>1</sup> The State Department currently lists Cuba, Iran, Sudan, and Syria as state sponsors of terrorism.

to the No-Fly and Selectee Lists. The Department's ability to prevent terrorists from boarding flights to the United States depends upon these lists and the criteria used to create them. As an entity that is primarily a consumer of this intelligence and the operator of programs that rely on these lists, DHS is working closely with our partners in the Intelligence Community to make clear the kind of information DHS needs from the watchlist system.

### *DHS/ DOE Partnership*

Second, DHS has established a new partnership with the Department of Energy (DOE) and its National Laboratories in order to use their expertise to bolster security. The Deputy Secretaries of Homeland Security and Energy are leading the effort to bring the paramount capabilities and critical resources of the DOE National Laboratories to bear on developing advance technical solutions to key aviation security challenges. This partnership will focus on advancing current technology, assessing system capabilities to determine gaps, and developing emerging technologies to fill those gaps in an efficient and effective manner.

Two years ago, DHS and DOE formed the National Explosive Engineering Sciences Security (NEXESS) Center, a consortium of National Laboratories including Sandia National Laboratory, Los Alamos National Laboratory, and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, to provide an agile and aggressive means to anticipate and understand explosive threats and to develop countermeasures to protect the homeland. The NEXESS Center provides informed scientific analysis for short- to mid-term priority assessments as well as mid- to long-term research and technology development. The Deputy Secretaries of both DHS and DOE are working collaboratively to strengthen these efforts in light of the December 25 attempted attack.

TSA is also working closely with the DHS Transportation Security Laboratory (TSL) in technology development. The TSL, operated by DHS Science & Technology, performs extensive qualification testing for all of TSA's explosives screening equipment.

### *Enhanced Screening Technology*

Third, TSA is aggressively pursuing the deployment of enhanced screening technology to domestic airports and encouraging our international partners to do the same. While no technology is a silver bullet in stopping a terrorist attack, a number of technologies, when employed as part of a multi-layered security strategy, can increase our ability to detect dangerous materials.

To this end, TSA will accelerate deployment of Advanced Imaging Technology to increase capabilities to identify materials such as those used in the attempted December 25 attack. These efforts are already well underway. TSA currently has 40 machines deployed at nineteen airports throughout the United States and purchased 150 additional AIT units last September under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. This year, TSA expects to deploy at least 450 additional units across the country. The Administration's Fiscal Year 2011 budget calls for purchasing and installing an additional 500 AIT units, which would bring the total number of AIT units to approximately 1,000. The detection capabilities of AIT units are one part of a successful technology security initiative, but it is also critical that TSOs have the necessary training to resolve an anomaly identified by the AIT operator. TSA is working to improve both the detection capability of the units and the ability of screening personnel to resolve an anomaly, while being respectful of personal privacy, dignity, and civil rights and



liberties. The Administration's Fiscal Year 2011 budget also includes additional personnel to operate these AIT machines.

DHS is also increasing assets in the area of canine teams, explosives detection equipment, and highly trained security personnel to strengthen our abilities to find dangerous materials and stop dangerous people from boarding aircraft. Nearly 950 Advanced Technology X-ray machines have been deployed to U.S. airports to enhance the screening of carry-on bags. Additional machines will follow this year and include automated detection software to improve their capability. TSA has expanded the random use of Explosive Trace Detection (ETD) machines, which can be effective against a wide scope of explosives, to screen both passengers and bags. The Administration's Fiscal Year 2011 budget request calls for \$60 million to purchase approximately 800 portable ETD machines. The FY 2011 budget also requests funding for a substantial increase of explosives detection canines by adding an additional 275 teams. Further, the budget seeks funding for an additional 350 Behavior Detection Officers.

#### *Aviation Law Enforcement*

Fourth, DHS will strengthen the presence and capacity of aviation law enforcement. Beginning this month, as an interim measure, we have deployed additional law enforcement officers from across DHS- including the Secret Service, Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the U.S. Coast Guard- to assist Federal Air Marshals. In January, these highly trained officers participated in an accelerated specialized training program led by the FAMS on the unique methods employed to protect and defend an aircraft. This will allow for an immediate further increase in FAMS coverage of international

flights. The President's FY 2011 budget request also increases funding to sustain long-term FAMS coverage on domestic and international flights.

### *International Partnerships*

Fifth, as mentioned earlier, DHS will continue to work with international partners to strengthen international security measures and standards for aviation security. Much of our success in ensuring that terrorists do not board flights to the United States is dependent on what happens in foreign airports and the commitment of our foreign partners to enhance security.

Last month, DHS leadership embarked upon an aggressive international outreach initiative to enhance international aviation security standards and practices- particularly for international flights bound for the United States. In early January, Deputy Secretary Lute and other senior Department officials traveled to Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Australia, and South America to meet with international leadership on aviation security. In these meetings, they reviewed security procedures and technology being used to screen passengers on U.S.-bound flights and worked on ways to bolster our collective tactics for defeating terrorists.

Later in January, Secretary Napolitano traveled to Toledo, Spain and Geneva, Switzerland to meet with her international counterparts and the private sector air carriers on aviation security. In Spain, at the invitation of the Spanish Minister of Interior, the Secretary participated in the first organizational meeting of the Spanish EU Presidency of Justice and Home Affairs ministers, a plenary of thirty-three countries. At this meeting, there was broad consensus and a clear sense of urgency to take immediate action to strengthen security measures, as the Secretary and her European counterparts signed a joint declaration affirming their collective commitment to strengthening information sharing and passenger vetting, deploying

additional proven security technologies, and bolstering international aviation security standards. There was similarly strong consensus in Geneva, where the Secretary met with the leaders of the International Air Transport Association, which represents approximately 230 airlines and more than 90 percent of the world's air traffic. They agreed that government and the private sector must work collaboratively both to develop enhanced international security standards and-most importantly-to implement them effectively.

These meetings were the first in a series to bring about international agreement on stronger aviation security standards and procedures. Over the next few months, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) will facilitate several regional aviation security meetings to build on the progress made in Toledo and Geneva. TSA, specifically, has also developed an aggressive timeline and corresponding strategy for international engagement and outreach through our Office of Global Strategies. Focusing on priority areas designed to affect the greatest change in international civil aviation security, TSA is boosting its work with foreign government counterparts and industry stakeholders to raise awareness of the threat and to encourage specific enhancements in security measures worldwide. These priorities include: developing a common view and understanding of the threat to civil aviation; enhancing international standards for civil aviation security through ICAO; conducting security audits and ensuring robust oversight; encouraging the use of technological and non-technological measures to prevent and deter terrorist activity in the civil aviation sector; developing cooperative agreements for information sharing with key foreign government partners; providing training and related technical assistance to develop and enhance sustainable security practices in partner countries; and working with appropriate foreign government counterparts to enhance their authorities in their national aviation security domain. This targeted coordination and

collaboration, through both bilateral and multilateral forums, will continue to advance our key security objectives and improve the overall level of security of international civil aviation while fostering our international partnerships and relations that are critical to this effort.

In all of these action areas to bolster aviation security, we are moving forward with a determination to safeguard the privacy and rights of travelers.

## **Conclusion**

In closing, Mr. Chairman, TSA is taking aggressive action in the wake of the failed Christmas Day bombing. We are expanding and improving the use of technology, strengthening aviation security protocols with our foreign partners, developing long-term law enforcement capacities in aviation security, collaborating across the Administration in developing the next generation of aviation security technology, working to streamline and improve the U.S. watchlist matching process for air travelers, and strengthening a TSA workforce that is highly trained, agile and dedicated to this mission. TSA and DHS are prepared to meet the challenge.

Thank you for your continued assistance to TSA and for the opportunity to discuss these steps with you today. I would be pleased to respond to your questions.