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LONG LINES, SHORT PATIENCE: THE TSA AIRPORT SCREENING EXPERIENCE

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

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LONG LINES, SHORT PATIENCE: THE TSA AIRPORT SCREENING EXPERIENCE

Wednesday, May 25, 2016

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:05 a.m., in Room 311, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Michael T. McCaul [Chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives McCaul, King, Rogers, Perry, Clawson, Katko, Hurd, Carter, Walker, McSally, Ratcliffe, Donovan, Thompson, Jackson Lee, Langevin, Richmond, Keating, Payne, Vela, Watson Coleman, Rice, and Torres.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Committee on Homeland Security will come to order.

Committee is meeting today to examine the security challenges brought forth by increased passenger screening, checkpoint wait times.

But before I begin my opening statement, I would like to take a moment of silence for the victims and their families of EgyptAir 804.

I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

Today we face a crisis at our airports. We have all read the headlines—3-hour-long security lines, 430 American Airlines passengers stranded overnight in Chicago O'Hare, travelers from Atlanta, Charlotte, and Alaska waiting forever to be screened, causing missing flights and further delays.

More than 3,000 bags have failed to get loaded onto planes in time to Phoenix. An 80 percent increase in wait times at JFK Airport compared to this time last year.

This is unacceptable, and it is time for Congress to act.

Administrator, the American people are angry and frustrated as we head into the busiest travel season of the year starting this Memorial Day weekend, and they deserve answers.

This crisis didn't just come out of nowhere. Airports and airlines have been sounding the alarm for months. There is no doubt that part of the challenge we face is a high terror threat environment, but wait times are not soaring simply because security is much tighter. It is because the TSA bureaucracy has gotten weaker.

The agency has struggled to keep up with the high demand and has been unable to put the right people at the right place at the right time. Change is not happening fast enough.

Admiral Neffenger, I know you are working hard to reform TSA's broken bureaucracy, and today I hope to hear how you will confront this crisis swiftly.

But Congress will not sit back as the situation gets worse, and that is why this committee and the House of Representatives passed legislation to fix this problem. I commend my colleague, Mr. Katko, for offering these bills.

Among other measures, our legislation would accelerate TSA's PreCheck program, which helps reduce wait times by putting low-risk travelers through expedited screening. Unfortunately, the Senate has failed to pass these bills, which in my judgment is unconscionable.

So today I would like to send my message to my colleagues in the other body—it is time to get moving, because the American people are fed up with this.

This week we will introduce yet another bill to attack this problem, and I hope that this time we can get it to the President's desk more quickly.

In the coming months, we will take a broader look at TSA, including first-ever authorization of the agency which will give us an opportunity to make wider reforms and long-term changes.

Additionally, we plan to take up legislation to enhance TSA's Screening Partnership Program. But as I noted, we must also take into account serious aviation threats that we face. I think the events of the Egyptian airliner demonstrate that.

Although investigators are still working to determine the cause of EgyptAir crash, one fact is clear: Terrorists are trying to bring down airplanes, and the aviation sector is their crown jewel target.

This month I led a Congressional delegation to the Middle East and northern Africa to examine the spread of terrorist safe havens, and we walked away concerned that screening is inadequate at some of these last-point-of-departure airports that have direct flights into the United States.

For instance, airports like Cairo lack full-body scanners to detect nonmetallic IEDs, and they lack access to comprehensive terror watch lists for screening their employees.

This is a concern we know because militants are trying to recruit insiders and inside jobs to take down passenger jets.

We have seen this twice in recent months, including an attack in Somalia and one against a Russian jet flying out of Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt.

But this is not just a problem in the Middle East or northern Africa. Just this past December, Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris, which has 50 direct flights into the United States every day, they fired 70 employees who were suspected of having extremist connections—70. We have to help our foreign partners weed out these extremists.

Again, the House and this committee passed 2 bills to ramp up security at overseas airports and yet again these bills are sitting in the Senate stalling, waiting for action. It is unconscionable. It is time for the Senate to act. The President will sign them into law. We cannot afford further delay because American lives are at risk.

As we adapt to the evolving threat, we must also make sure agencies like TSA adapt their business models to keep travel flow-

ing smoothly. Terrorists would like nothing more than for us to undermine our own economy by allowing air transportation to grind to a halt.

Admiral Neffenger, we have given TSA the resources it asked for to make screening more efficient. Congress even granted a recent request to reallocate $34 million to hire nearly 800 new TSA Officers before July and to pay for additional overtime for existing personnel.

Today, we expect you to tell us how you are putting these resources to work and how you are going to address the crisis at our airports once and for all.

I want to thank the admiral for being here today. I want to thank you for your service to our country.

[The statement of Chairman McCaul follows:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MICHAEL MCCAUL

MAY 25, 2016

Today we face a crisis at our airports. We've all read the headlines, and we know how bad it's gotten:

- Three-hour-long security lines.
- 450 American Airlines passengers stranded overnight in Chicago O'Hare.
- Travelers from Atlanta, Charlotte, and Alaska waiting forever to be screened, causing missed flights and further delays.
- More than 3,000 bags fail to get loaded onto planes in time in Phoenix.
- An 80 percent increase in wait times at JFK airport compared to this time last year.

Administrator, the American people are angry and frustrated as we head into the busiest travel season of the year, starting this Memorial Day weekend. And they deserve answers.

This crisis didn't just come out of nowhere. Airports and airlines have been sounding the alarm for months.

There is no doubt that part of the challenge we face is a high terror threat environment. But wait times are not soaring simply because security is that much tighter. It's because the TSA bureaucracy has gotten weaker.

The agency has struggled to keep up with high demand and has been unable to put the right people in the right place at the right time. Change is not happening fast enough.

Admiral Neffenger, I know you are working to reform TSA's broken bureaucracy, and today I hope to hear how you will confront this crisis swiftly.

But Congress will not sit back as the situation gets worse. That is why this committee and the House of Representatives passed legislation to fix the problem. I commend my colleague, Mr. Katko, for offering these bills.

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Unfortunately, the Senate has failed to pass these bills, which is unconscionable. So today I would like to send my message to my colleagues in the other body: It's time to get moving—because the American people are fed up.

This week we will introduce yet another bill to attack the problem, and I hope this time we can get it to the President's desk more quickly.

And in the coming months, we will take a broader look at TSA, including the first-ever reauthorization of the agency, which will give us an opportunity to make wider reforms and long-term changes.

Additionally, we plan to take up legislation to enhance TSA's Screening Partnership Program.

But as I noted, we must also take account of the serious aviation threats we face.

Although investigators are still working to determine the cause of the EgyptAir crash, one fact is clear: Terrorists are trying to bring down airplanes, and the aviation sector is still their crown-jewel target.

This month I led a Congressional delegation to the Middle East and North Africa to examine the spread of terror safe havens. And we walked away concerned that screening is inadequate at some airports which have direct flights to America.

For instance, airports like Cairo lack full-body scanners to detect non-metallic IEDs, and they lack access to comprehensive terrorist watch lists for screening their employees.

This is a concern because we know that militants are trying to recruit "insiders" to take down passenger jets. We've seen this twice in recent months, including an attack in Somalia and one against a Russian jet flying out of Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt.

But this is not just a problem in the Middle East or North Africa. Just this past December, Charles De Gaulle airport in Paris—which has 50 direct flights into the United States every day—fired 70 employees who were suspected of having extremist connections. Seventy employees.

We have got to help our foreign partners weed out extremists. The House has passed 2 bills from this committee to ramp up security at overseas airports, and yet again, they are sitting in the Senate waiting for action. We cannot afford further delay.

But as we adapt to the evolving threat, we must also make sure agencies like TSA adapt their business models to keep travel flowing smoothly. Terrorists would like nothing more than for us to undermine our own economy by allowing air transportation grind to a halt.

Admiral Neffenger, we've given TSA the resources it asked for to make screening more efficient. Congress even granted a recent request to reallocate $34 million to hire nearly 800 new TSA officers before July and to pay for additional overtime for existing personnel.

Today, we expect you tell us how you are putting these resources to work—and how you are going to address the crisis at our airports once and for all.

Thank you.

Chairman MCCAUL. With that, the Chair now recognizes the Ranking Member of the committee.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank you for calling today's hearing.

I would also like to welcome Administrator Neffenger and thank him in advance for his testimony.

To be clear, the flying public expects and deserves efficient, safe, secure, reliable air transit. The Transportation Security Administration finds itself at the center of the Federal Government's effort to ensure secure passage of passenger and cargo. As you know, Mr. Administrator, the importance of this role can hardly be understated.

The agency is at a critical point in its short history. TSA is still implementing reforms after covert testing last year revealed serious gaps in security screening. Now, long lines and record wait times at airport checkpoints are having spillover effects throughout our entire aviation system.

Passengers are understandably anxious as they hear stories about fellow passengers who despite their best efforts missed flights. Asking passengers to arrive 3 hours before a domestic departure is unacceptable.

In addition to the stress on passengers to wear the right clothes, decide whether to check a bag, pay exorbitant baggage fees, avoid packing prohibited items, and make tight connections, the stress on the flying public is felt most severely by airline and airport personnel. Unfortunately, it is the men and women who are the face of TSA who get blamed, the Transportation Security Officers.

Travel volume substantially increased this year. Yet, TSA has failed to keep pace with this growth. As a result, there is an insufficient number of Transportation Security Officers in our Nation's airports. The current situation where we have too few screeners and far more passengers did not occur without warning.

In fiscal year 2011, there were approximately 45,000 TSOs screening 642 million passengers. In fiscal year 2016, TSA had 3,000 fewer TSOs screening roughly 740 million anticipated passengers, almost 100 million more passengers and 3,000 fewer screeners. In the fiscal year 2017 budget, TSA requested funding to hire an additional 320 TSOs.

To those of us who are familiar with travel volume trends, this did not seem like enough. More recently, TSA, as the Chairman indicated, has announced its plan to on-board 768 TSOs by June 15. Increasing staffing resources is certainly a good thing, but only if the proper vetting and training occur before more TSOs are added.

Administrator Neffenger, I want to know if TSA has the money necessary to achieve its mission. At Secretary Johnson's request, Congress recently reprogrammed $34 million in TSA accounts to pay for overtime and other costs associated with responding to the wait-time crisis. While these funds will surely aid TSA in addressing staffing shortages in the short term, moving money around is not a substitute for infusing new money into an operation.

TSA should have access to all of the aviation security fees collected by the flying public to bolster security. Yet, the passage of the Budget Act of 2013, TSA is required to divert $13 billion collected in security fees toward the deficit reduction for the next 10 years. This year alone, $1.25 billion has been diverted.

Presently, I am working with Representative Peter DeFazio, the Ranking Member on the Transportation Committee, in his efforts to ensure that TSA can retain the fees it collects and put them back into our aviation system. In the absence of more money, new resources is absolutely important. Congress and TSA must resist Band-Aid fixes to complicated and—security challenges. Patching and plugging holes is not the answer.

Moreover, dismantling TSA is not the answer. Many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are calling for a return to the pre-9/11 privatization model. Mr. Chairman, as you have indicated also, after the downed Egyptian airliner, which is still under investigation, this would not be the way to go.

As one prominent airport commissioner recently acknowledged, the benefits of privatization are very marginal and there is a huge cost in time associated with the transition. We need to look for long-term solutions. One solution, as I have indicated and have written a letter to you, Mr. Administrator, is to assign the nearly 2,500 TSOs designated as Behavior Detection Officers to checkpoint screening operations.

As you know, the SPOT program has been subject to a GAO review. It is questionable about its success. But we have spent $1 billion on this program, and we could put that money to good use.

So I look forward, Mr. Neffenger. Look around the committee room here, all our Members use the airports to come to work every week. I am sure, like I, they are anxiously awaiting your testimony.

I yield back.

[The statement of Ranking Member Thompson follows:]

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER BENNIE G. THOMPSON

MAY 25, 2016

To be clear, the flying public expects and deserves efficient, safe, secure, reliable air transit. The Transportation Security Administration finds itself at the center of the Federal Government's efforts to ensure secure passage of passengers and cargo. As you know, the importance of this role can hardly be understated.

The agency is at a critical point in its short history. TSA is still implementing reforms after covert testing last year revealed serious gaps in security screening. Now, long lines and record wait times at airport checkpoints are having spillover effects throughout our entire aviation system.

Passengers are understandably anxious, as they hear stories about fellow passengers who, despite their best efforts, missed flights. Asking passengers to arrive 3 hours before a domestic departure is unacceptable.

In addition to the stress on passengers to wear the right clothes, decide whether to check a bag, pay exorbitant baggage fees, avoid packing prohibited items, and make tight connections, the stress on the flying public is felt most severely by airline and airport personnel. Unfortunately, it is the men and women who are the "face of TSA" who get blamed—the Transportation Security Officers.

Travel volume substantially increased this year, yet TSA has failed to keep pace with this growth. As a result, there is an insufficient number of Transportation Security Officers in our Nation's airports. The current situation where we have too few screeners and far more passengers did not occur without warning. In fiscal year 2011, there were approximately 45,000 TSOs screening 642 million passengers. In fiscal year 2016, TSA has about 3,000 fewer TSOs screening the roughly 740 million anticipated passengers. In its fiscal year 2017 budget, TSA requested funding to hire an additional 323 TSOs.

To those of us who are familiar with travel volume trends, this did not seem like enough. More recently, TSA announced its plans to on-board 768 TSOs by June 15. Increasing staffing resources is certainly a good thing—but only if the proper vetting and training occur before more TSOs are added.

Administrator Neffenger, I want to know if TSA has the money necessary to achieve its mission. At Secretary Johnson's request, Congress recently reprogrammed $34 million in TSA accounts to pay for overtime and other costs associated with responding to the wait times crisis.

While these funds will surely aid TSA in addressing staffing shortages in the short term, moving money around is not a substitute for infusing new money into an operation. TSA should have access to all of the aviation security fees collected from the flying public to bolster security.

Yet, with the passage of the Budget Act of 2013, TSA is required to divert $13 billion collected in security fees towards deficit reduction for 10 years. This year alone, $1.25 billion has been diverted. Presently, I am working with Representative Peter DeFazio, the Ranking Member on the Transportation Committee, in his effort to ensure that TSA can retain the fees it collects and put it back into our aviation security system.

In the absence of more, new resources, temporary fixes may be all that TSA can offer to address a challenge that will only intensify as the United States experiences more economic growth and more Americans travel via commercial aviation. Congress and TSA must resist Band-Aid fixes to complicated and well-understood aviation security challenges. Patching and plugging holes are not answers.

Moreover, dismantling TSA is not the answer. Many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are calling for a return to the pre-9/11 privatization model.

Mr. Chairman, after the downed Egyptian Airliner, which is still under investigation, and after your observations as you recently traveled abroad, you should know that any facet of aviation security that mirrors a pre-9/11 state should be reconsidered.

Furthermore, it is nonsensical to believe that reducing TSA's role would solve immediate problems. The amount of time and resources that it takes for an airport to transition would likely cause more havoc, delays, and frustrations for passengers. As one prominent airport commissioner recently acknowledged, the benefits of privatization are "very marginal and there's a huge cost in time associated with the transition."

We need to look for long-term solutions. One solution that could be implemented at little or no additional cost would be to assign the nearly 2,500 TSOs designated as Behavior Detection Officers to checkpoint screening operations. Alarmingly, while the number of TSOs has declined, TSA has spent close to a billion dollars on the Screening Passengers by Observation Techniques (SPOT) Program, a behavioral de-

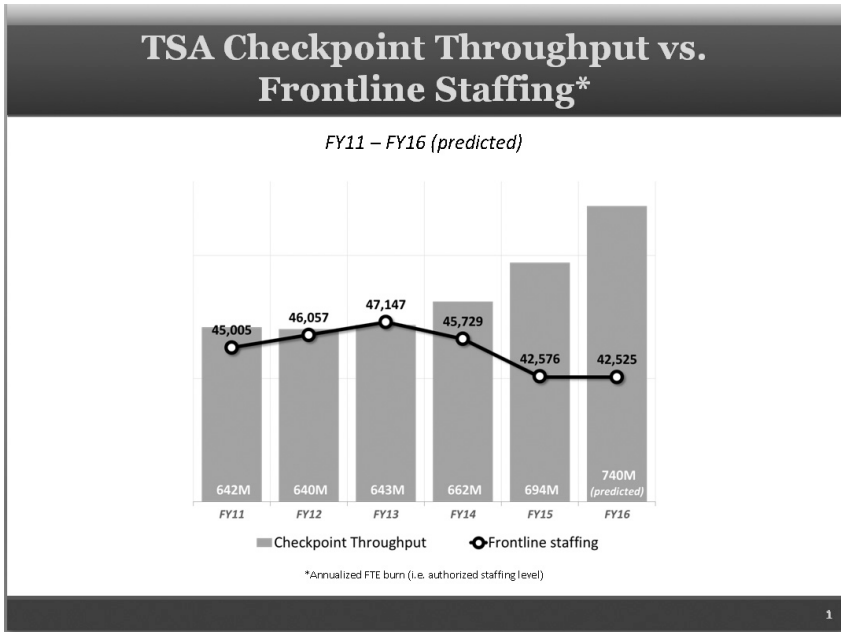
tection program that GAO has repeatedly said lacks scientific validation as an effective security program.

The program is known more for racial and ethnic profiling than detecting terrorist activity. The numbers prove this. Administrator Neffenger, I have written to you asking your strong consideration of reallocating Behavior Detection Officers to perform traditional screening functions within the current TSA Staffing Model. I would like to hear from you regarding my proposal.

Finally, I would caution you, Administrator Neffenger, to not lose sight of the need to enhance TSO training so that front-line workers can better balance security effectiveness and line efficiency. I commend your actions in the wake of last year's findings regarding deficiencies in the security screening process by standing up the TSA Academy program and ordering more training for TSOs.

TSA must also focus its attention on acquiring technologies of the future. We must make the investments now to ensure that the technology at our checkpoints achieves maximum effectiveness, thereby increasing efficiency.

We all have a vested interest in getting TSA on the right track. We travel weekly, our families and constituents are members of the traveling public. While we are pressing for solutions, we must ensure that they do not come at the expense of our security.



Chairman MCCAUL. I thank the Ranking Member.

Other Members are reminded that opening statements may be submitted for the record.

We are pleased to have here today Admiral Neffenger on this very important and timely topic. Admiral Peter Neffenger serves as the sixth administrator of the Transportation Security Administration, where he leads security operations at more than 450 airports within the United States and a workforce of almost 60,000 employees.

Prior to joining TSA, Admiral Neffenger served as the 29th vice commandant of the United States Coast Guard and the Coast Guard's deputy commandant for operations.

We thank you, sir, for being here today, and we also thank you for your service. Your full written statement will be appear in the record. The Chair now recognizes Admiral Neffenger.

STATEMENT OF HON. PETER V. NEFFENGER, ADMINISTRATOR, TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Admiral NEFFENGER. Thank you and good morning, Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, distinguished Members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I sincerely appreciate the committee's oversight of TSA's security operations, ensuring that our agency has the appropriate resources to accomplish its important counterterrorism mission.

Since taking the oath of office on July 4 of last year, I have traveled throughout the country and around the world to meet with employees at all levels of our agency, and they are truly impressive. Their patriotism, their sense of duty and their commitment to TSA's National security mission is exemplary.

But to ensure their success, we need a mature enterprise that delivers the tools they need to get the job done and unwavering support from their leaders.

Last week, EgyptAir Flight 804 crashed into the Mediterranean, and I wanted to express my sincere condolences to the families of the victims. It was a tragic loss of life. While we don't yet know what happened to that airplane, it is a stark reminder of the importance of TSA's daily mission.

First and foremost, our job is to protect the traveling public in what has become a very dynamic and challenging threat environment. The threat is very real. To that end, and in just 10 months, I have undertaken a systemic and deliberate transformation of TSA.

I set a renewed focus on security, revised alarm resolution procedures, made investments in new technology and have retrained the entire workforce. We are holding ourselves accountable to high standards of performance, and I am supporting our front-line officers in their critical mission.

We have reinvigorated our partnerships with the airlines, with airport operators and the trade and travel industries, and are working closely with Congress and this committee to address our security mission.

I am investing in our people. With the help of Congress, I directed a complete overhaul of our approach to how we train our workforce at all levels of the agency. We established the first ever TSA academy on January 1 of this year. This intensive training will enable us to achieve consistency, develop a common culture, instill our core values and raise performance across the entire workforce.

I also ordered a review of all personnel policies and practices. This has led to a number of significant changes—elimination of the arbitrary use of directed reassignments, restrictions on permanent change of station relocation costs, and significant controls on bonuses at all levels.

We are overhauling management practices, conducting an independent review of acquisition programs, building a planning, pro-

gramming, budgeting and execution process, and building a human capital management system to address recruitment, development, promotion, assignment, and retention.

The screening mission requires a similar fundamental reassessment. This year, we project our checkpoints Nation-wide will screen some 740 million people. By comparison, in 2013, TSA screened 643 million people. That is an increase of 100 million people in just 4 years, while our full-time workforce has reduced by more than 12 percent.

That and our renewed focus on security, are significant contributors to the situation we face today. So we have a challenge this summer, which we are aggressively meeting head on. Among other things, we have established a National Incident Command Center to specifically monitor checkpoint screening operations on an hourly basis.

We are tracking projected volume, staffing, and lane availability, actual wait times, which will allow us to address critical concerns in real time. This command center includes staffing from airlines and critical industry associations, and they are conducting daily calls with the busiest airports and major airlines to plan that day's operations in what we foresee in the coming days.

Our goals are to ensure effective screening and to maximize our screening capacity to achieve shorter line waits.

Additionally, we are providing more overtime and 768 new TSA Officers. We are also converting, with the help of Congress and the reprogramming request, our front-line officers from part-time to full-time, as necessary, to increase—immediately increase screening capacity and help improve retention and morale. I thank you for supporting these efforts.

I have given Federal security directors the flexibility to redeploy Behavior Detection Officers to perform additional screening functions, and they have done so and they have pushed the Behavioral Detection Officers back into the screening checkpoints.

We have deployed additional canine teams and activated our National volunteer deployment force to be available to move to areas of greatest need.

Finally, we are now seeing enrollments in TSA PreCheck that are averaging more than 15,000 new enrollments a day. That is more than almost 3 times what we saw last year at this time.

To intensify our agency-wide focus on mission effectiveness, I have brought in new staff from outside the agency. I have a new deputy administrator, a new chief of staff, a new chief of operations, a new head of intelligence, and other key positions.

I have also directed several leadership and operational changes at the National, regional, and airport levels.

At Chicago O'Hare, a new leadership team is now overseeing screening operations, and with the support and hard work of the talented workforce at O'Hare, immediate adjustments, in addition to some infusion from the reprogramming have dramatically improved passenger through-put, even as volume has increased beyond 90,000 passengers each day.

I have directed a fundamental review of the staffing structure of our screening operations. We must match operational capacity to the demands of projected and real screening volume, and we are

continuing to work closely with the Department and to Congress to adjust our appropriations to allow us to match resources with mission demands.

Finally, in aggressively pursuing long-term solutions to the growing volume of airline travel, we established an innovation task force earlier this year to explore and develop new approaches to airport security.

One example is a public-private partnership in Atlanta, where the first 2 automated lanes became operational this week. Now, they are already vastly improving screening effectiveness and efficiency, and we look forward to the results of the first couple weeks of that operation.

We have similar projects envisioned for other major airport hubs across the country. The airlines and airports have been huge partners in these efforts. Clearly, this summer travel season is going to be busy, and in the short-term, TSA, airlines, airports, Congress and travelers working together can improve the passenger experience, while we maintain security that we need.

TSA is dedicated to ensuring better efficiency, while remaining acutely focused on our counterterrorism mission. We cannot and we will not compromise on the security of the traveling public.

My guiding principles, which I expressed in my administrator's intent, are focus on mission, invest in people, and commit to excellence. We are pursuing these objectives every day. As administrator, I will continue to do so until we achieve and sustain success in every aspect of this agency, in every mission, in every office, in every location where we operate, and with every single employee.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and for the committee's support, and I look forward to your questions.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you, Admiral. I now recognize myself for questions.

Let me just say first, that all Americans experienced the horror on 9/11 of airplanes being turned into cruise missiles and turned against us, bringing down the World Trade Center, hitting the Pentagon and attempting to hit this building.

It still remains the crown jewel of aviation. We know that al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is still intent on this. We know that ISIS in the Sinai was able to pull off Sharm El Sheikh, the downing of a Russian airliner.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, I recently had the experience to go to Northern Sinai where ISIS exists. I also looked at the Cairo Airport, which has a daily flight into JFK airport. I have to say, I am concerned about the state of security there.

I am also concerned with the state of security at Charles De Gaulle, where 70 extremists were weeded out of the process, and we have 50 flights per day flying into the United States.

This is the external operation that keeps me up at night.

Can you tell me, sir, what TSA is doing to protect these last-point-of-departure airports, particularly in these high-threat areas?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Like you, I am very focused on the safety of inbound flights to the United States.

So we look at—there are a number of things we do for last-point-of-departure airports. First and foremost is working through the international community to continually try to raise global standards to the highest possible level.

In addition, with respect to last-point-of-departure airports, we have put additional standards and requirements in place for any aircraft that intends to fly directly to the United States without any intermediate stops.

That includes screening of passengers, screening of cargo, screening of the aircraft itself, as well as vetting of any individuals that are on-board those flights coming to the United States.

In addition to that, following the Metrojet incident, we put a number of additional security measures in place at certain airports of interest and concern in the region, that have added significant additional requirements to aircraft and personnel intending to fly directly to the United States from those LPDs.

Chairman MCCAUL. Well, again, this legislation I mentioned that is sitting in the Senate that has not passed would help you and give you authorities to assist these airports overseas with flights coming directly into the United States, and yet, it has been stalled.

You know, when I didn't see full-body scanners in Cairo, that concerns me because of the non-metallic IED threat. Now, this can be fixed, and we can't even share proper intelligence with the Egyptians at that airport to properly vet their own employees and screen passengers.

I worry about this, sir, and I hope that I can work with you to expedite this process. I have met with the Egyptians, the President, and the ambassador, I am working with them. I think they are working in good faith with the United States to ensure the safety of Americans as well.

With respect to the lines, in the President's budget request, there is a request for an additional 350 screeners. However, 2 weeks ago, TSA came back to the Congress and asked to have $34 million reprogrammed, and we granted that request for 768 TSOs, which will come on-line, I think, by the end of June, I hope, or early July. But this was really not our first rodeo. Why didn't we see this coming?

Admiral NEFFENGER. That is a good question, and as you know, when I came on-board last year on the heels of the Inspector General's results, it was immediately apparent to me that one of the challenges we were going to have is enough screening staff to man the checkpoints effectively.

As you recall, we stopped a practice known as managed inclusion, which was the practice of randomly assigning people out of the standard lanes, unvetted individuals, just randomly assigned to the PreCheck lane.

One of the discoveries out of our root cause analysis in working with the Inspector General was that introduced unacceptable risk into the system. In doing that, I knew that that would dramatically increase the number of people back in the standard lanes, and we weren't staffed to the level we needed to man all the lanes possible.

So, I came to Congress, and Congress was very gracious in granting a request to halt any further reductions. We had planned to drop another 1,600 people in fiscal year 2016. Then when we got

the appropriations bill in December, we immediately began to do accelerated hiring.

The additional 768 is on top of what we have requested for fiscal year 2017 and, in my opinion, is necessary to meet the near-term challenge of the increased volume this summer and then moving forward.

So, we have been working very aggressively to move that, but as you know, there is a lag associated with getting the funding and then getting it hired, the——

Chairman MCCAUL. I agree with that, but you have a lot of part-time employees on staff.

Admiral NEFFENGER. We do.

Chairman MCCAUL. Do you intend to make a second request to reprogram monies that have already been appropriated to TSA to move part-time employees to full-time?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, I think it is important that we move more part-timers to full time because it drops my attrition rate dramatically and it is instant capability that I can put to use. We are working through the administration now on whether there is a need for a second reprogramming request. And——

Chairman MCCAUL. Well, I think about 20 percent of your employees are part-time. In my judgment, they are already trained to do the job. It seems to me that would cause, overnight would ramp up your personnel force to deal with the long lines. We know we anticipate those going into the summer season.

As I mentioned earlier, we plan to introduce legislation. We met with over 30 airline representatives. They expressed concerns that there was not the proper coordination at the local level with the field security directors at TSA, that they didn't have flexibility, that the staffing model didn't reflect the peak time that the flights were coming in.

In large part, this would solve a lot of these staffing problems if there was better communication at the local level and these local directors were empowered to make decisions based on what is happening at the local airports. Do you agree with that?

Admiral NEFFENGER. I absolutely agree with that. In fact, one of the first things I did last fall when I brought all my Federal security directors together for the first time is to direct them to take responsibility for their local region. I have given them full authority. I like institutionalizing ideas like that so that they stay, because I think that is an important way to go forward——

Chairman MCCAUL. That is what this legislation would do. It would require TSA to basically assess its staffing allocation model and also mandate that they get local input from the airlines and the airports. Would you agree with that?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Absolutely. In fact, that is what we are doing right now and I would like to make that a permanent practice at TSA.

Chairman MCCAUL. Another element of the bill is the TSA's Behavioral Detection Officers who roam around the airport. There are about 3,000 of them. If they can be redeployed to the front screening end process, to me that would help solve a lot of these problems. I think the Ranking Member mentioned this in his opening

statement. Do you agree that that would be an appropriate response?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, we are redeploying the Behavioral Detection Officers now. I think it is important to also note that behavioral detection is still an important element, but it is how you use it effectively, I think, that matters.

So, I can use those officers directly at things like document-checking positions, to serve as divest officers, places where they can still monitor and look at behavior, but at the same time, directly contribute to the efficiency of the checkpoint.

Chairman MCCAUL. Finally, do you support the concept of expanding TSA's PreCheck program, which I think would move a lot of people in the long lines into the PreCheck lines, which I think would solve many of these problems as well.

Admiral NEFFENGER. Absolutely. In fact, that is one of my fundamental priorities is to dramatically expand the PreCheck population and dramatically expand the capability to enroll people in PreCheck.

Chairman MCCAUL. Sir, I know they are putting a lot of blame on you for this crisis, but we passed a bill out of this committee to expand the TSA PreCheck program, which would have helped this situation, and yet it is sitting there in the Senate, stalled in the Senate.

They could have helped this problem months ago, and it is unconscionable that the Senate hasn't acted on this. I call upon the Senate. Sometimes they don't listen to us in the House. But for the sake of the American people, it is time for the Senate to act on this important legislation.

With that, I now recognize the Ranking Member.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Cedric, put the chart up. I have a chart that kind of crystallizes what I think is the challenge that TSA is faced with.

In fiscal year 2011, we had 45,000 TSOs, 642 million passengers; fiscal year 2016, we have 740 million passengers and only 42,500 TSOs.

I guess the question that comes to mind, what do you think the number of TSOs you need to address the problem we are faced with now?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, thank you for the question. I do think that we are at a lower staffing level than we need to be to meet peak demands at peak periods, and we are working the staffing models now aggressively with the airlines to determine the right number. We are also looking to see what kinds of efficiencies we can gain in just the way we deploy people.

So we found in Chicago, for instance, that we converted 100 part-timers to full time. That is an instant gain of a workforce. We are using overtime hours to effectively convert additional part-timers to full time. We added—we are adding a total of 250 officers over the summer, 58 right now.

That in conjunction with some operational adjustments we have made have dramatically improved the situation in Chicago.

So we—I think that—I don't have an exact number for you right now because we are reworking our staffing models completely to

look at the way in which the airlines do it, but I do know that we need a higher staffing level than we currently have.

Mr. THOMPSON. I look forward to you coming up with the number. Do you have, presently, the resources to address the problems of wait time and other things presently within your budget?

Admiral NEFFENGER. The reprogramming request has helped considerably, because it has allowed me to immediately put resources. Right now, the most effective approach is to get part-time to full-time, so that I can get trained people working longer hours who want to work longer hours, who would like to be full-time.

That reduces my attrition rate, so it increases my ability to avoid churn. Then it allows me to redeploy some of my canine teams to the airports of highest need.

That addresses the problem in the top airports, but I don't want to see the problem cascade across the system, which is why we are looking at the potential for whether a second reprogramming request is needed to hire additional.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you. Some people are saying that the wait time has increased substantially after the airlines implemented baggage fees, and that people, rather than paying the fees, are taking their additional baggage onto the planes to avoid the cost.

Therefore, the wait time getting to the plane increases because of the increase in baggage. Have you all looked at that as an issue?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, I will tell you, we see about 4 times the number of baggage coming to the checkpoint than get checked. Volume at the checkpoint, you know, the volume of carry-on bags is—puts a lot of pressure on checkpoint operations.

So we have been working aggressively with the airlines to first enforce the 1+1 rule. We think that is very important, because if you bring 4 things through the checkpoint, a couple of those things are probably going to get gate-checked, anyhow.

Mr. THOMPSON. Well, you know, I think one thing we ought to look at as a committee, the airlines are making several billion dollars annually off those fees. If that has contributed to the wait times and additional things, I think we ought to look and see if they can make a contribution toward this effort to alleviate the wait times. I think that is a reasonable thing for us to look at, and I look forward to this committee looking at that as a possibility.

I was glad to hear your analysis of the BDOs. There has been a lot of comment and criticism, quite frankly, about their use. So now if they are being deployed to address this crisis, I compliment you on doing that.

With this wait-time issue where we are, can you tell me what the airlines are doing to help address this problem as far as TSA is concerned?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Yes, I have been very pleased with the—with what the airlines have been aggressively doing lately. So, quite a few of the airlines have been hiring contract staff to take nonsecurity duties, everything from sitting at the exit lanes—that frees up a TSO to get back on a checkpoint; providing people to run the bins from one end of the line back to the beginning of the line.

Doing what is called divest officer duties. That is the individual who reminds people to take off their shoes and their belt and so forth. It turns out that is a pretty important position because a lot

of people forget to do it and that can slow things down if you don't have—if you are not prepared by the time you get there.

So that has been very helpful. They are also providing people out in front of the checkpoints to direct people to other checkpoints. What we find is that oftentimes, you will have, particularly in airports where you have limited, you know, limited physical space in which to operate, you have multiple small checkpoints that you can't see from one to the other. Sometimes you will get a big line in one and they will be nobody in the next.

But human psychology is such that once you are in a line, you don't want to leave that line to go to another one because you might be—you might find yourself in a longer one. So catching them before they get in line is important.

Finally, the other thing they are helping us do with the huge increase in enrollments that we have seen in PreCheck, we have a lot of people who still walk into a standard line not recognizing that that is not going to be an automatic PreCheck lane. So you have got to scrub the standard lines to pull people out. As many as 15 percent of the daily passengers we are finding are walking into a standard lane by mistake and you have got to get them out of there.

So the airlines have been very helpful in that respect.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you.

I yield back, Mr. Chair.

Chairman MCCAUL. I thank the Ranking Member.

The Chair recognizes Mr. King, from New York.

Mr. KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Admiral, for your testimony here today and for your service.

In New York, my understanding is that at JFK Airport, there is an 82 percent increase in the maximum time between 2015 to 2016. Whether that is 82 or 72, it is still extraordinarily high.

Can you quantify what impact you expect from the additional new officers you are going to be sending there? In other words, will that 82 become 72, 52? Is there any way you can make the equivalency between the additions and subtractions?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Yes, I don't know if I can put a percentage on it right now for you. But I can tell you we are already seeing a dramatic improvement at JFK. For example, yesterday the maximum line-wait we saw, and it was just a spike—was 39 minutes in a standard lane. The maximum time we saw in a PreCheck lane was 5 minutes.

So we are already seeing a dramatic improvement there. We have watched that very carefully. We want to make sure that we see that every day. You had a very high volume coming through at JFK yesterday.

Mr. KING. Is that because of increased personnel or because you changed your methods?

Admiral NEFFENGER. It is a combination of changing in some operational procedures, so using the personnel more effectively. One of the things that this National incident approach, this National approach to it allows us to do is rapidly move good ideas around the system.

It is also the combination of some new personnel coming in, shifting some dog teams there. Dog teams help considerably in terms of moving passengers.

Mr. KING. Again, if we can try to quantify. Your original goal was 25 million for PreCheck.

Admiral NEFFENGER. Right.

Mr. KING. There are 9 or 10 right now.

If you got to 25, what impact would that have?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, I think it could dramatically transform the system because then you would have many, many lanes open. That would represent roughly 50 percent of the daily traveling volume if you got to 25 million people. You could keep many more lanes open in PreCheck. You could run the dogs more effectively in the locations where you still had high volume, but it would be on a smaller crowd of people.

So if we can continue to grow that population, I think that is the way. The other thing it does for me is it gives me a trusted—a known population. That is much more important, particularly in today's world.

Mr. KING. The Chairman mentioned Egypt Airlines, and maybe this is slightly off-topic, but he also mentioned the insider threat. Can you just say what you are doing on that? I know last year there was the IG report. It just so happens, the Chairman mentioned Charles de Gaulle Airport where they had to get rid of 85 personnel.

We have almost a million people behind the scenes that are insiders. How effective is our vetting process for them?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, I think it is far more effective this year than it was even last year. So we have—we screen. We have always screened everybody. There are about—as you said, just under a million people who hold badged access of some type to an airport. It is not universal badged access and there are varying levels of access.

Each one of those individuals is continuously vetted against the terrorist screening database. Since the—since December of this year, we now have full access to the so-called TIDE categories. This is the extended database of interest that doesn't necessarily indicate that you are connected to a known or suspected terrorist, but there may be indicators. We now do recurrent vetting against that as well.

We are piloting a project with Delta Airlines in 2 large airports to do now recurrent vetting against criminal databases, the so-called FBI Rap Pack program. The current requirement is every 2 years. I want that to be recurrent as well. Assuming that goes well, then we will implement that full-time by the end of the calendar year and that will be continuous vetting against the criminal databases as well.

Mr. KING. So are there training procedures in place for cooperation between the TSA personnel and the armed police at the airports? Because TSA obviously is not armed. They can't make arrests. If they do spot something, how quick is the time response with the police officers?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, it can vary by airport, but it is—but we have got duress alarms at every checkpoint on every single lane

of every checkpoint in the Nation. We completed the installation of those just before the end of the calendar year. We train every day with police departments.

In fact, I just met with the Association of Law Enforcement Officers at their annual conference and we—and one of the topics was a discussion for consistent training across. It is everything from active-shooter training to response to emergencies, to clearing contraband items that are discovered at the checkpoint.

But I think we have a very good relationship, particularly in the largest airports where the potential for greatest concern can be.

Mr. KING. When you have nothing else to do, if you would do me a favor and just check out what the relationship is between TSA and the Port Authority police of New York and New Jersey.

Admiral NEFFENGER. Yes, sir, I will.

Mr. KING. Thank you very much.

I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chair recognizes Ms. Sheila Jackson Lee.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I thank the Chairman and the Ranking Member for this hearing.

Admiral, thank you again for your service. I have often said in this committee and said to TSOs and others that the Transportation Security Administration are the first responders of aviation security. I believe that is important to convey to your management, to you and to certainly the line officers, supervisors, and others who go out every day to do this great work.

I also want to acknowledge the Chairman and Ranking Member of this committee because they have led an enormously bipartisan committee that only focus, or main focus is the security of the Nation. This makes this a pleasant experience because we are committed to getting the job done, if you will. We want to get the job done with you.

So, I want to emphasize a thought that it is difficult to call yourself the reprogram government. It is hard to reprogram for infectious diseases. It is hard to reprogram for military. It is hard to reprogram for the security of the Nation, particularly in aviation security.

So, I understand that we may be getting 700 TSOs coming this summer. I want to follow the line of questioning that our Ranking Member had with this particular graph here. It is stark between 2011 and fiscal year 2016, particularly with the increase in travelers. I think we might even get more.

So can you—I understand we may be getting 700. I understand that we may be getting at a point 1,600, and then 2,500. Can you put that in perspective of when these numbers will come to add to the TSOs?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Yes, ma'am. The 768 that we are hiring right now should all be on board by June 15. So we are hiring them now. So they are rolling into the system. But we should have them all trained and on board by June 15.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. June 15.

Admiral NEFFENGER. That is right. Then they will add to that. That is in addition to the normal hiring that we are already doing.

So that is on top of the 200 new officers a week that we are putting out of training currently.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. So is that fiscal year 2016, can we expect 1,600 and then 2,500? Do I have these numbers——

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, the 1,600 was the number I was scheduled to lose in fiscal year 2016. So Congress allowed me to keep that number. So, we had already——

Ms. JACKSON LEE. That is somewhat of a plus, but you didn't lose them. So that 1,600——

Admiral NEFFENGER. We just didn't lose them. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Then what is the——

Admiral NEFFENGER. So this 768 is a plus on top of that 1,600 that we would have lost. We had already cut some into that number to meet the fiscal year 2016 targets, we had to hire back some of those.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Does that make the 2,500 additional or—obviously 16 and 7 is 23. But what do you think you are going to get in fiscal year 2016?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, I think we will keep the 1,600, plus the 768 on top of that. So that gives us roughly the 23—2,400 or so.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Does that include the potential reassignment, redeploying of BDOs which I think is an excellent idea, particularly having them be at a point where they can assess—a stationary point—where they can assess almost every individual that comes through.

Admiral NEFFENGER. No, that gives me additional capability on that of that. That is a real capability right now. We are moving those in right now and then the conversion of part-time to full-time.

As you know, we have quite a few part-timers that would love to be full time. But eventually they can't wait long enough for a full-time position to open so we lose them. So we have a high attrition rate in our part-time workers.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Let me ask a series of questions, I congratulate you on FLETC. One of my concerns is training, training not only the new recruits but training the existing TSOs.

That ties into the numbers that we reflected on dealing with accuracy, I will just make that general point. I would be interested in your work on accuracy and also on the training. I would hope that we could actively engage in training ex-military, and I indicated some time ago college recruits. I would like you to comment on that.

The last question is Chicago was the epicenter; everybody's eyes were on Chicago besides Arizona and the equipment failure. If you can finish your questions by saying what is the appointed and immediate response to Chicago? Which is an example of what other cities are facing.

Admiral NEFFENGER. So immediately in Chicago and this is—when I talk about Chicago, understand we are also doing the same thing at the other top airports because, well, Chicago was a preventable incident, in my opinion.

When you look at what happened, this was a surge that was anticipated, it was known. It was a failure to get some things done in advance of that. We have proved that by fixing it pretty quickly.

So in Chicago, among other things, we had already planned to put additional officers in there. So of that 768, 58 of those individuals are coming into Chicago by the end of this week. There will be a total of 58 new.

We converted 100 of our part-time officers to full-time officers and we pushed a lot of overtime hours there so that they can use overtime hours. You have to be careful with overtime; you don't want to burn up your full-time workforce but it is very effective at taking part-timers and giving them more hours and many of them want those.

We also moved some additional K–9s; these were K–9 teams that we had planned to be moving. We just accelerated their move into Chicago. The total of that has resulted in a significant change in the Chicago picture.

The *Chicago Tribune* reported in today's paper that the longest wait time was 15 minutes yesterday and that was with significantly higher volume. So it tells me that with some targeted additional resources, efficient use of those resources and then a management team that understands how to run that daily tactical operation, you can make a big difference.

That is what we are doing at each of the big airports, right now.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Recruitment?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Recruitment, fortunately, right now we do not seem to have trouble meeting our recruiting targets. We have large pool of people that have been pre-vetted. That is why we were able to rapidly begin to hire that 768 because we had a large pool of available applicants that had been screened that were looking for work.

I still want to work on bringing more of that back in-house than is currently done. As you know, we work through a private contractor to do our hiring and recruiting right now.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I will get your other answers in writing regarding the institute that—in Georgia, FLETC about how you can utilize that better. Let me just conclude by thanking the TSOs all across America for the great service that they do for this Nation.

I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chair now recognizes Mr. Rogers, from Alabama.

Mr. ROGERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral, thank you for being here and for your service to our country. I think you are a good man, a competent man who has been given an impossible task to administer the TSA.

The TSA has wallowed in its own bureaucracy for more than a decade. Over that period of time, it has built up a lot of bad habits that have come to fester. You spoke in your opening statement about making the TSA a more responsive organization, leaner and smarter. I want to help you do that.

To that end, I plan to introduce legislation to transform TSA from an H.R. not-merit to a security-focused organization by reforming and greatly expanding the Screening Partnership Program. Having worked on these issues for more than a decade, I have seen

that TSA can do a mission when it is given a clear succinct mission.

My bill is going to allow more airports to hire private contractors capable of managing day-to-day operations and make TSA the driving force to oversee intelligence-based security strategies. These changes will get more out of your organization than any summer-rushed Band-Aid bill could ever do.

You can spend your time conducting covert testing and building effective strategies instead of trying to decide who is going to work the morning shift at Reagan Airport. To the end, I want to talk to you about the SPP Program.

Last year, the GAO determined that TSA is not fairly comparing the cost of Government-run screening operations with their privately-run SPP counterparts. In November, I requested TSA release more accurate cost data to Congress and GAO. Your agency promised to deliver that information within 6 months, but it never came.

In March, I asked you personally for the data during a budget hearing and then sent you a letter to remind you of that. It still hasn't showed up. It has been 191 days since I requested that information.

Can you tell me when I am going to receive the accurate cost comparison that GAO says we need to get?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Yes, sir. As you know, I agreed with GAO that we usually do a better job. GAO set a deadline for us of the end of June. We are working very closely with them in order to meet that deadline.

We are on target to meet that deadline. We have been meeting with GAO regularly to ensure that they concur with what we are finding and that it meets the recommendation they made, as well as an accurate accounting of the costs because I need the same thing.

Mr. ROGERS. By the end of June I can count on seeing that?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Yes sir, we are on target to meet that deadline.

Mr. ROGERS. Excellent.

Next, you talked about the K–9 screening programs. You know I am a big fan of that technology. I believe it is the most effective that we have in our toolbox.

But I went out to Lackland a couple months ago; I have been out there several times. But I was looking at some of the training they are doing, what you all refer to as passenger screening K–9s.

That has been held out by TSA to me as being the same as Vapor Wake K–9s. In fact, what I saw was nothing comparable to Vapor Wake K–9s. They were training K–9s to basically work the lines at an airport. Which means you have to go up to the passenger, the K–9 has to go either smell them personally or right at them.

As you know from Vapor Wake K–9s technology, which we use over here at the Capitol, used over at Union Station, is used at the Grand Central Station in New York, many places. The K–9 doesn't have to come close to the passenger.

They can just detect the air for up to 15 or 20 minutes after a passenger has disturbed it. Can you tell me why that technology

is being trained at Lackland in that more narrow scope instead of the more effective Vapor Wake training?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, I will get you a fuller answer for the record but here is how I understand it. I have cautioned that I am speaking without the benefit of an expert next to me.

When you look at a passenger screening line, it is a slightly different dynamic because you have got an enclosed line of people. So as I watch those dogs operate, what they are doing is—if you notice they are moving their head around a lot because they are checking for vapor.

We typically put enclosed panels next to the stanchions where possible, or enclose the checkpoint behind a panel. So the dog is doing two things, it is both checking the vapor as somebody goes by them but it is also sniffing the general vapor in the air.

My understanding is they had to modify it somewhat for the very specific nature of the way people line up in queues. But let me get you a better, more complete answer to that.

Mr. ROGERS. Yes, as you know—that is fine. That is much better than doing nothing and it is much better than the equipment we use. But as you know, you can put these assets out in a foyer area before people even get to the line.

They can detect the air that has been disturbed by somebody who has walked by in the recent 15 or 20 minutes without having to come up to the person. That is a very valuable deterrent. Also putting them past the checkpoint, in case the machine doesn't detect something.

These again, are assets that don't have to come up to the person. Unfortunately, for some people it is uncomfortable to a dog come up and smell them. Wouldn't bother me, I am from Alabama. But now, some folks would be bothered by it.

With that, I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Mr. Langevin.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you and the Ranking Member for holding this very important hearing.

Admiral, thank you for your testimony and for your service to our country.

I agree with my colleague that you have an impossible task on your hands, but an important one. Clearly, the wait times at airports that the traveling public are having to deal with are unacceptable. Certainly, my constituents and people around the country are demanding quicker lines. I know that is our goal.

One of the priorities that you and Secretary Johnson laid out as part of your 10-point plan is doubling down on R&D at TSA. I appreciate the promise of new technology to expedite screening, but can you preview some of what we can expect?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, thanks for that. I do think we need to do a better job of both research, development, and incentivizing the private sector to come forward with ideas. But here is an example I think of what we can see.

If you look at the Atlanta Airport today, we just—we opened 2 new automated screening lanes down there. This is not something new. It has been in use in Europe for a number of years. But these are—if you think about a standard lane, you walk up to a lane and

there is a table there. You put your stuff up on the table and you slide it along the table until you can engage the conveyor belt.

This is a fully automated system. The bin returns automatically. It has got an RFID tag and a bar code that ties it directly to you. It takes—there is a photograph taken of your stuff as well as an X-ray. It takes off automatically. There are 5 stations at which people can line up, so you don't have to go single file. You can take 5 people at a time up to the checkpoint. They cycle in as they fill their bins up, and it goes through.

London Heathrow has said that they have seen on average anywhere from a 20 to 25 percent increase in throughput at the same level of effectiveness. So we are very excited about that. I think that as you look at increasing passenger volumes, at some point you reach capacity with a manual system. And then you have to look to automate things. I think that TSA needs to work closely with the system to get it more automated and to bring more technology in.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Can I ask you—on that point, on the automated part, just so I am clear. So, that part is automated, but there is still a human—a person in the loop actually looking at what is in the carry-on baggage that is being screened?

Admiral NEFFENGER. There is still somebody reading an X-ray right now. We are also working with software companies to determine how effective machines can become at identifying prohibited items, so that you can put humans into the work that humans do best, while at the same time, you know, moving machines out to what they do best.

We are also looking at changing the way we do identity matching. I look at—when I look around an airport and I see all those kiosks that distribute boarding passes, there is typically some type of an ID reader on all of those. If you can get ID-reading technology into there, there are things we can do that can, you know, automate the identity check process as well.

Mr. LANGEVIN. So, let me shift over to one other thing. I may come back to technology in a minute. But so, TSA has publicly stated its goal for PreCheck as having 25 million enrollees. I know my colleague, Mr. King, asked about the enrollees in the PreCheck system and what that would mean if we actually had 25 million.

But right now, currently TSA only has 2.76 million people enrolled. What is TSA's plan for expanding PreCheck to further reach that goal of 25 million enrollees?

Admiral NEFFENGER. I just want to clarify. The 25 million is all trusted travelers. So that would include Global Entry, Nexus, and Sentri. Right now, we are at about 9.5 million of total trusted travelers. These are people who have enrolled in some program of the Federal Government.

So there are a couple of things we need to do. First of all is to expand the enrollment opportunities. I don't think we have enough enrollment centers out there. We are working with—we currently have one vendor that provides the contract enrollment services. We are hoping to expand that this year to additional vendors under a new contract.

The second thing is to make those centers more available to do more mobile enrollment, to streamline even further the application

process. We do have an on-line application process, but you still have to show up to do your fingerprints. And then we are working with airlines and traveler reward programs. Many of the airlines are now offering mile redemption for PreCheck. Microsoft Corporation recently bought PreCheck for all of its travelers. And many of the travel reward programs are providing the ability to trade in your miles or points for PreCheck.

Mr. LANGEVIN. So, currently to enroll in PreCheck, the individual has to pay a fee of $85 to be enrolled for 5 years. However, for those that fly once or twice a year, this may not be feasible or practical, and could distract from TSA's efforts to broaden enrollment.

Has TSA thought of any alternatives to paying $85 for PreCheck? Can you detail any thoughts on that?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, most of those fees go directly to cover program costs right now. So it is—it would be challenging to, under the existing contract, to change the fee structure. That is why we encourage people to look at their—if they are members of trusted traveler programs of some sort, then there are opportunities being offered through various programs to get direct reimbursement or direct vouchers for PreCheck.

Mr. LANGEVIN. I know my time is expired. I just, if you could on a follow-up or perhaps in writing, going back to the technology issue. In deploying new screening technology, I wonder how we can ensure that we avoid the mistakes of AIT.

So, I know my time is expired, but I will yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chair recognizes Mr. Perry.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good to see you, Admiral.

Let's talk about bonuses a little bit. TSA requested almost $80 million for bonuses and performance rewards for fiscal year 2017. As I am sure you are aware, it has been revealed that the assistant administrator received almost $90,000 in bonuses over a 13-month period.

So, let's just start with this, what do you do to get a bonus? What do you do? What did the assistant administrator do to receive $90,000 in just bonus, right? I don't know what the rate is for an inspector, but at least one, right? You could hire one with the bonus.

What I think most of the American people view as a historic critical failure right now, looking at the lines and the throughput. I wonder what you have got to do to get a bonus at TSA. I think they are wondering what we have got to do.

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, I wasn't here then, as you know. When I discovered that, in my opinion, that is completely unjustifiable. I think it is appropriate to have the ability to reward good performers in any line of business.

Mr. PERRY. Sure.

Admiral NEFFENGER. So, my belief is first of all, you follow existing policy in OPM. So the first thing I did was eliminated the practice of multiple bonuses to any one individual. So I have dramatically changed that. My goal is to push more reward bonuses out to the people in the organization that do some of the real front-line work.

So I can't justify the level of bonuses that were provided in the past. I can tell you I stopped that. I watch it very carefully. I put significant management controls on it, including requiring oversight by the Department of Homeland Security of anything. I don't want anything happening inside TSA when it comes to bonuses to senior executives.

Mr. PERRY. Okay, so the program does still exist. I think to a certain——

Admiral NEFFENGER. This is a program across the Federal Government.

Mr. PERRY. Right, right. Do you know, how much was spent by TSA last fiscal year on bonuses? You know, I am trying to juxtapose that with the $34 million reprogramming for 768 inspectors, and just trying to get a——

Admiral NEFFENGER. I don't have the number at the top of my head. I will get you the number for the record, sir, but I don't have it off the top of my head.

Mr. PERRY. All right. Well, thank you for that.

Moving on, there was a GAO report regarding employee misconduct, specifically attendance and leave. One of the things they found that penalties for misconduct and failure to attend were lower than TSA's own guidance and recommendations.

Let me just ask you this, if you know, and if you have done any of your own studies: Do unexcused absences and tardiness create problems in staffing—in effectively staffing checkpoints?

Admiral NEFFENGER. It can. It depends on the extent to which it happens. It depends on what the reasons are for it. But if you have significant numbers of unexpected—it will dramatically affect your ability to staff.

Mr. PERRY. So, of course, that is directly correlated with increased wait times if folks aren't there. Do you know if that is something that has impacted to the point that you are taking a look at that?

Admiral NEFFENGER. We are taking a look at it. One of my concerns is that we understand if we don't have staff in place when we expect to have them in place, what is the reason behind that? Did we inadvertently give people leave when we shouldn't have given them leave? Or did they just not show up? If they didn't show up, what would be the reason for that?

That is all part of the calculus to determine, you know, how you are ready for a daily tactical operation.

Mr. PERRY. Do you know what some of the disciplinary actions are for employees with unexcused absence or excessive tardiness? Do you know some of the actions you would take? Because the report said that the penalties for misconduct in the past have been lower than—generally lower than the guidance—than your own guidance by TSA.

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, you know, as I look at it, and I think back to my military experience, when you get guidance, sometimes that guidance will give you the maximum penalty allowable. You may or may not need to assign that.

Mr. PERRY. Sure.

Admiral NEFFENGER. So I think it really is a case-by-case look. If you have got specific cases that you are interested in, I mean, I will be happy to take that for the record.

But my opinion, as I said, there may be a valid reason why somebody doesn't show up on time even if it caused you some real problems for them not showing up. Maybe they should have called, they didn't call. So the level of discipline or punishment you give really is a case-by-case study. It is hard to give a blanket answer to that.

Mr. PERRY. I understand. I was kind-of looking for a range there. You probably know that the subcommittee that I chair, we are conducting our investigation into the misconduct and of course, the penalties associated and potential correlation with increased wait times. We will be looking forward to working with you.

Admiral NEFFENGER. No, same. I am very interested in this problem because I want to get to the root of management issues throughout the organization.

Mr. PERRY. Appreciate your time. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chair recognizes Mrs. Watson Coleman.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Administrator Neffenger.

Admiral NEFFENGER. Thank you.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. You have an incredibly difficult job. I am glad that you are the one that is in it. I am very concerned about the wait times. I really do believe that the airlines, by allowing people to carry 2 and 3 bags instead of 1 bag when they are carrying one to the—on the aircraft, contributes to the wait and the amount of time it takes to go through the lines.

I know you need additional resources and I am really interested in knowing, at some point, the answer to Mr. Thompson's question about how many do you think that you need. I know that it is uneven sometimes in going through even the PreCheck lines where they are telling you take your shoes off and take your belt off. I am like, I thought that is why I was in PreCheck and I wouldn't have to do that. So I am happy that you have an academy and that you are training people now.

I want—and I have got an issue. I have got a question about this issue of partnerships. Because there have been a few instances where airports have threaten to privatize as an alternative to Federalized screeners, which I am more comfortable with, sir.

There have also been articles and statements from those who believe that the SPP provides marginal, if any, benefit in terms of reducing wait times. Is there any measurable difference between the use of Screening Partnership Programs, versus Federalized screeners, or is the problem a resource problem that would be shared by TSA and private screeners alike?

Could we be certain that they would be equally as concerned with the security measure as they would be with the convenience of getting through the lines quicker?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well thanks for the question. I—first, it is important to understand that even a private screening contractor works for the TSA. It is contracted to the Federal Government, contracted to TSA and it is a TSA management staff that runs that. I think that is important because, from my perspective, the Na-

tional security is a Federal function and you need National standards when it comes to that.

In my mind, so when you look at performance, you know, it is roughly the same from a private—we train them to the same standards. In fact, they train at our TSA academy.

From my perspective, the flexibility I get with a Federal workforce is—for this National deployment force, I mentioned, these are TSOs who have volunteered to be deployable in—for surge events and for others. But we have about 250 of those. I can do that with a Federal workforce. I can't reach into a private workforce without working a contract issue.

So if I need to surge, it gives me the ability to do that. I can also move personnel more rapidly from place to place as I need to. So from my perspective, that is a benefit as a manager of having a workforce that works directly for me versus contracted to me.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you. You talked about the fact that there is only 1 vendor that you work with on the PreCheck program and that the $85 that one has to pay really only covers the administrative expenses. So when you are going to expand this opportunity to other vendors, do you think that that will create competition and reduce the cost associated with that?

Admiral NEFFENGER. I really hope so. In fact, that was one of the things that we built into the request for proposal was to look for ways to reduce the fee. I think competition can do that.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Or if not reduce the fee, at least allow some of that fee to be used to ensure that you all have the resources you need to do the job that needs to be done.

Admiral NEFFENGER. Right. I think—what we looked for were flexible options for how you would fund this and pay for it in a different way.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. TSO employees, I know that the part-time employment is something that you really have a lot of turnover in because people need full-time jobs. But I would like to know how much an incoming TSO gets as a full-time employee. What is that salary?

Admiral NEFFENGER. You know, I don't want to get the number wrong off the top of my head. It depends upon location, obviously, because they get locality pay to try to make it equivalent.

Let me get you the number for the record. It is—I want to say it is around $30,000. But let me get that number for the record.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Do you have a high turnover rate in the full-time employees?

Admiral NEFFENGER. No, actually our full-time workforce is pretty stable. It runs between 8 and 9 percent. We get—but we have about a 25 percent turnover rate in the part-time workforce.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. One of my colleagues mentioned the relationship you have with the police. I think it was Mr. King particularly singling out the port authority police of New York and New Jersey. I had meetings with them and they tell me that there is like one police officer assigned to a terminal.

Do you find that there is enough police capacity and support in the terminals?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, we have been—I have been looking at that pretty hard. As I travel around I meet with the various law

enforcement agencies that work in the airports. Some have more capacity than others. There is no doubt about that.

But I am finding in the large airports that for the most part, they understand their mission, they take it very seriously. They are working in the public areas of the airport. They also—we also have a reimbursement program, as you know, which reimburses them for the time that they spend in and around the checkpoints. As I said, we have put duress alarms into every single checkpoint in the country to ensure that there is a—as rapid a response as possible.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Neffenger I just need you to know that I agree that you have got an extremely important job to do. For me, I don't care sometimes about being inconvenient. I want to get on an airplane and know I am going to get there safely. I appreciate what you have to contend with.

I just want to make sure that I understand what you need so that I can fight for what you need to make sure that we are safe and that your agency has the resources it needs.

Admiral NEFFENGER. Yes, ma'am.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you very much. I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. Chair recognizes the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection, Mr. Katko.

Mr. KATKO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sir, Neffenger—good morning, and I want to state preliminarily, I appreciate the collaborative effort we are working on with my subcommittee. In fact, we met for an hour-and-a-half the other day at your offices and I appreciate the frank discussions and the give and take and your commitment to trying to get things done and putting politics aside and I appreciate that.

But something kind of piqued my curiosity when we were talking today and that is the fees surrounding PreCheck. There is a PreCheck bill sitting over in the Senate now that is wait—ostensibly because they want—the Senate wants the fees to go to general treasury that are generated from the PreCheck fee.

So I want to talk about those fees a second. Tell me, what does that $85 go towards?

Admiral NEFFENGER. As I said, it primarily covers the full program cost. So there is a component that pays the FBI—reimburses the FBI for the background checks that they do. That is a fixed fee that the FBI charges to conduct the background checks.

There is a component of the fee that covers TSA's administrative costs because it is a self-funding program. So it pays for the overhead and the staff and the administrative staff to do that. Then the bulk of the fee then goes to the vendor to cover their costs, both for the physical enrollment centers and their personnel.

Mr. KATKO. Okay. So if that $85 was taken away and gone—goes right to the general treasury, who would pay for all those costs? Would it be TSA? Would it not?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, we would have to find the money someplace.

Mr. KATKO. Okay. So let's say—so $85—$85 is in fact the cost, and you want to enroll 10 million more people, that means $850 million you would have to find somewhere else in your budget, is that right?

Admiral NEFFENGER. That is right. Yes, sir.

Mr. KATKO. It is kind of insane, isn't it, if you think of that?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well I like self-funded programs.

Mr. KATKO. Okay. So the bottom line—there is a bill that is sitting over in the Senate. I just want to make sure I understand it. It directs TSA to partner more closely with the private sector and have basically competition, if you will, in the PreCheck program. That would help drive cost down. That is a goal of it.

So with that being said, do you believe that that bill would help you achieve the higher numbers with PreCheck?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well you know, what that bill does is codify what we are trying to do right now, which is to increase competition in the private sector with the hope of that competition driving the cost down.

Mr. KATKO. Okay. All right, good enough. Now with respect to—I want to talk to you just for a second about the bonuses that were given out. Is there a system at TSA that—whereby subordinates can nominate superiors for bonuses or put them in for bonuses?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Apparently there was a system that allowed that. That system doesn't exist under my leadership.

Mr. KATKO. So you have stopped that.

Admiral NEFFENGER. I absolutely have. Yes.

Mr. KATKO. Okay, there was a system, you stopped that and I commend you for doing that. That seems incongruous to me. It just doesn't—I don't understand how——

Admiral NEFFENGER. No I—right now, it requires approval by me and then seconding by the Department for any bonuses awarded to senior executives.

Mr. KATKO. Okay. If I may switch gears one more time because I know you have talked a lot of different topics, so I want to expand a little bit here. ICAO was the international organization that basically certifies a minimum level of competence for airports. Is that correct?

Admiral NEFFENGER. That is correct.

Mr. KATKO. Do you rely on—once somebody hits the ICAO level, that is it and that is all you care about?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, as you know, we are signatory to the ICAO treaty and that sets a standard around the world for security. From my perspective, I think you have to continuously pay attention to these standards and try to drive them up even higher.

In fact I just—I recently met with the ICAO counsel in Montreal. As you know, there was a general assembly this year and I pushed for an aggressive security agenda at the general assembly and we tend to continue to drive that.

In advance of that, we are—we look at every place that services the United States directly and we put a significant additional requirements in place to insure that we are comfortable with the screening and overview standards that they are using.

Mr. KATKO. Okay. So I just want to ask a couple things about that. With respect to these last-point-of-departure airports, LPDs, you know we have a bill that has been submitted. It is over in the Senate now waiting approval. That is why I am interested in this area a little bit.

How important are these LPDs to have body scanners at the airports?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, I think—body scanners may be the right answer depending on where you are looking. What I am most concerned with, are they effectively screening? I can understand why some places might not have a full body scanner. But if they don't have one then they have to have some other things in place to be equivalent to that.

So you can do that by full-body pat-downs, you can do that by explosive trace detection. There are lots of other means to do that.

Mr. KATKO. Is explosive trace detection equipment important to have at these airports?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Again, if—we like to see that. We have been working with ICAO and other foreign partners to push that type of equipment out. In the absence of that, then I want to see some very stringent additional requirements that would make up for the lack of that as we try to build that capacity.

Mr. KATKO. How about document verification machines to authenticate documents that are coming through? Are they important as well? Same answer?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well that is important to me. If somebody is flying to the United States, I want to know who they are.

Mr. KATKO. Okay. So if you had an airport that didn't have body scanners and didn't have explosive trace detection equipment, didn't have document verification machines, and had troublesome, if not incompetent, K–9 teams, would those types of airports that have those things lacking, would they be a cause of concern to you?

Admiral NEFFENGER. I would pay very close attention to airports like that. I want to be sure that they meet appropriate standards for us.

Mr. KATKO. Okay. Last thing I will ask about this—I apologize, Mr. Chairman—and that is the personnel at those airports, is it important for you to know how those personnel are trained and whether or not they are giving adequate security background checks?

Admiral NEFFENGER. That is part of what we try to verify when we go into foreign last points of departure to determine: Are they meeting standards that are appropriate for us to fly into this country?

Mr. KATKO. Thank you very much. I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. Chair recognizes Mr. Payne.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Ranking Member. Administrator Neffenger, you have a very difficult job here. I just want you to know that a lot of us appreciate your efforts in making sure that the final checkpoint before our citizens get on to airplanes are safe, along with the TSOs.

You indicated that the TSOs with the behavioral detection training are being integrated into a checkpoint as document checkers. You also said that the FSDs have been granted unprecedented flexibility. Would you have a problem with the FSDs using a BDO for a checkpoint screening yourself?

Admiral NEFFENGER. If they determine that that is their highest need at that moment, I have no problem with that. They have that authority to do that.

Mr. PAYNE. Okay. In April the FAA announced that they would be redesignating Newark Liberty International Airport, which is in my district, as a level 2 slot-controlled airport starting in October, potentially increasing the number of flights arriving and departing from the hub.

How is TSA prepared to deal with the increased air traffic and the larger number of passengers that will come in with this designation? I know there have been great efforts over the past week to alleviate some of the time in Newark. We appreciate you looking at that and trying to be helpful as possible.

But if this comes in October, naturally, you know, what we have done to this point will need to be reevaluated and looked at again. I know several TSOs are coming on-line as well as we move forward.

But what would you do to take a look at that, knowing that this is going to change?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Yes, sir, and in fact, what—this increased collaboration with the airlines and the airports is helping us to foresee problems like this in a way that we hadn't in the past. I don't want to get caught by surprise by something like that. Because, as you say, if you increase flights dramatically, you have got—we have got to be prepared to receive those.

So we have been working very closely with the airlines and that airport to understand what that might look like, when we think we will begin to see that so we can get well in advance of that. I know that a couple of the major airlines there are already considering some things that they might do with respect to increased automation at the checkpoint, increasing the availability of checkpoint lanes. We are pushing resources into Newark and we will continue to do so.

Mr. PAYNE. We had an incredible subcommittee hearing that Mr. Katko chaired just the other day where we had several of the airports come in and really share with us and I think, with the Chairman there and Mr. Katko, heard a willingness to try to work with TSA on these issues. They were quite a few major airports and hubs that were here to speak. So moving forward, we would like to continue to get that collaboration——

Admiral NEFFENGER. Yes, sir.

Mr. PAYNE [continuing]. That we think that might not have been there to this point. Or not to the level that it needs to be. Let me just say also, I have been echoing this every opportunity that I have gotten the past several days, we really need to look at our TSOs and see what the compensation level is for them.

They have a very important job. They are the last line of defense for some catastrophic situation to happen. You know, I don't know how many people can raise a family, you know, on what we might think is $30,000 in this country.

So we need to even look at the compensation of the TSOs. Understanding that they have a thankless job, first of all. They are on the front lines. They should be compensated in a manner of which the importance of their job is. Thank you.

Admiral NEFFENGER. I would agree.

Chairman MCCAUL. Chair recognizes Ms. McSally.

Ms. MCSALLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Admiral Neffenger. At the beginning of your testimony you said your first point of focus is a focus on the mission. I pulled up your mission statement for TSA and it says, "protect the Nation's transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce."

I have been reading reports that your agents in the midst of the crisis of making sure in the increasing terrorism threat that people are able to fly safe, we don't have another terrorist attack in America. That also people are able to move quickly to get to where they need to be.

But I have seen reports that your agents are being pulled to support things like Presidential campaign events, concerts, sporting events, and other things. I don't see that anywhere within your core mission and your core responsibilities.

So my first question is, under what authority is TSA screening Americans on their way into a sporting or concert or Presidential campaign rally?

Second, where does that fit into the priorities? If everything we have heard today about the importance of keeping our transportation safe and making sure that people can get there in a timely manner in this manning sort of crisis, where is the priority of supporting these events that have nothing to do with your core mission?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Right now, we provide support to Secret Service when they ask under an intergovernmental service agreement. We currently have detailed—I shouldn't say detailed. They are on standby. We have 75 people on standby to assist with Presidential security events over the course of the summer. We will likely be asked to do that——

Ms. MCSALLY. Presidential or campaign?

Admiral NEFFENGER. This will be—we will be likely asked to do this at the conventions, wherever the Secret Service is providing——

Ms. MCSALLY. So there are reports there has been over 250 events that TSA Agents have been supported.

Admiral NEFFENGER. We have supported events around the country. I have been working with the people who are asking for us to let them know that we are in our own crisis right now. You know, we would like to have as many of those people back as possible.

Ms. MCSALLY. Okay. So, prioritization—you don't get to say no?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, with Secret Service, we support that because it is—that is a pretty important mission and we are—for the Federal Government, we are the screening experts.

Ms. MCSALLY. Look, I agree it is important to make sure that people that are attending these large-scale events are safe. But I don't see that anywhere within the core competency of TSA and your mission. Do you agree?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Our core mission is transportation security. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. MCSALLY. Okay. So is there—possibly would you agree if we can work on a better way to make sure that people going to concerts are safe, while allowing you to focus on your core mission?

Admiral NEFFENGER. I would like to be fully focused on my core mission.

Ms. MCSALLY. Okay. Well, thank you.

Second, I sent you a letter on April 12 asking a number of questions related to the issues that are at our hearing today. I asked if you would get back to me by April 26, that is about 29 days ago. I haven't heard back from you yet. I was wondering when I might be getting an answer to this letter?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Let me find out. I am not sure why you don't have an answer.

Ms. MCSALLY. Okay. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to put my letter into the record and ask the admiral to just respond in writing for the record as part of this hearing.

Chairman MCCAUL. Without objection, so ordered.

[The information follows:]

LETTER SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY HON. MARTHA MCSALLY

APRIL 12, 2016.

Honorable PETER NEFFENGER,
Administrator, Transportation Security Administration, 601 South 12th Street, Arlington, VA 20598.

Dear Administrator Neffenger: As you may know, in recent months, airport security checkpoints nationwide have encountered exceedingly long lines and extensive wait times for passengers. With heavy travel season quickly approaching, I write to express my concerns about how this could affect the free flow of travel and understand how the Transportation Safety Administration (TSA) intends to mitigate the problem.

In 2015, a Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General report revealed that an internal, undercover investigation conducted by Red Teams—undercover inspectors tasked with identifying weaknesses in the screening process—found that airport screening checkpoints across the nation failed in 67 out of 70, or 95%, of tests to detect threat items. These reports were extremely troubling and unacceptable and demonstrated that the safety of our nation's travelers was clearly at risk. At a time when transportation hubs remain targets for terrorist organizations, I applaud efforts to address these shortfalls, through massive re-training efforts and security protocol revisions. However, it has now become clear that those efforts are also causing immense obstacles in ensuring efficient travel at a time when airports are experiencing record passenger volume. Additionally, it appears that your agency's frontline workforce may be buckling under the pressure of operating under these circumstances while you attempt to hire more agents. I am concerned that TSA's existing hiring practices are cumbersome and unable to meet the pressing mission needs of the agency.

Part of the security line issue also pertains to the TSA PreCheck program that launched in 2012. Customers at our nation's airports are spending their hard earned money to capitalize on a program that promised to ensure them expedited screening at security checkpoints only to find rampant lane closures of PreCheck lanes.

In order to better understand how TSA plans to address the issues going forward, please provide answers to the following questions no later than April 26, 2016:

1. How will TSA work to mitigate staffing shortages at Tucson International Airport and other airports during periods of high passenger volume?
2. How does TSA expect passengers to enroll in the PreCheck program when PreCheck lanes are often closed at times when travelers need to utilize them, and how is TSA expanding and marketing the PreCheck program?
3. What are TSA's methods for responding to and adjudicating checkpoint complaints at airports?
4. What is the current size of TSA's National Deployment Force, and how are they being utilized to handle higher passenger volumes?
5. Will TSA be employing increased use of overtime hours in order to bolster staffing at airport security checkpoints during periods of high passenger volume?
6. What are TSA's strategies for implementing efficiencies at the checkpoint while continuing to build a culture of security awareness and stringent adherence to protocol?

7. How is TSA streamlining and enhancing its hiring practices in order to retain a screening workforce of the highest caliber?

Thank you for your attention to this matter and your timely response.

Sincerely,

MARTHA MCSALLY,
Member of Congress.

Ms. MCSALLY. Great. Thanks.

Tomorrow, Mr. Katko's subcommittee is going to be holding a hearing bringing some of the representatives of airports. My CEO of Tucson Airport Authority will be there, which I appreciate. She participated in the roundtable that we had last week where we had a very fruitful and vigorous discussion on some of their concerns and ideas.

A couple of things that we are seeing going on in a small airport like Tucson—people are paying the $85 to go through PreCheck. They are giving their biometric information to the Government. But then they are showing up at the airport and the PreCheck lane is closed. We have two terminals. On average, the PreCheck lane has only been open 5 hours a day total for the 2 terminals, with really little to no flexibility.

So this is a concern we are hearing really from around the country, that if people are going to spend the money and the time to go through it, the PreCheck lane needs to be open. Are you aware of this issue? Is there anything in the works to rectify this?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Yes, I am aware of that issue. My goal is to get those PreCheck lanes open throughout the day so that they are available when passengers arrive. Some of that is a staffing issue and some of that is a scheduling issue. So this—the focus that we are putting now on daily hourly operations is showing us where we are having that problem.

Some of that is just, you know, best practices across the system. Some of that is availability of people to go through that. In the absence of that, the other thing that we are doing is dramatically changing the way we move people through. So you move PreCheck people right to the front of the line, and you get them through in a PreCheck way, even if it is a standard line. So opening up the PreCheck lane or the line, even if you don't have enough people to open that lane at that moment.

So you have to build enough capacity—build enough volume to justify pulling, you know, the bodies off to open a PreCheck lane. But this is—my goal is to make sure that if we are going to promise a service to people, that you can deliver that service across the system.

Ms. MCSALLY. Great. One of the themes of that roundtable, and I am sure we will hear it again tomorrow on the record, is the feeling by the airlines and the airport authorities that the lack of flexibility by the FSDs to work in partnership with the airlines and the airport authorities to make tactical decisions. They feel like there is a top-down approach coming from Washington, DC.

In Tucson, this is even worse because we are part of this spoke operation where our FSD is in Phoenix. So even if you are giving flexibility to that person, the leader down in Tucson is still stuck with these top-down answers coming out of Washington, DC, and sometimes Phoenix.

Are you willing to initiate or will it take an act of Congress? Are you willing to sort of relieve some of that and allow more bottom-up decision making so that the leader on the ground for TSA at that airport can make——

Admiral NEFFENGER. Absolutely. In fact, that is the message I have been sending out consistently to my field leads. So I think—I go back to my military model. You know, if I am a field commander, I want—and I have resources, I know what my mission is, then I want to be able to do that to the best of my ability, and reach out as I need for additional help.

Ms. MCSALLY. Well, they are being told their hands are tied, and that they are being directed by Washington, DC, when the PreCheck lane can be open in Tucson.

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, I have new leadership now that isn't following that model.

Ms. MCSALLY. Okay.

Admiral NEFFENGER. I have made it very clear that they do. I am checking on that to make sure that they are actually doing that.

Ms. MCSALLY. Right. Things like that shouldn't take an act of Congress, as you know.

Admiral NEFFENGER. No, I mean, it took an act of me, and I said, "Look, that is the way things have to happen."

Ms. MCSALLY. Great. Thanks.

Sorry, Mr. Chairman, for going over. Appreciate it.

Chairman MCCAUL. No problem. Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Mr. Keating.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral, thank you and your staff for helping us and providing feedback on a bill I introduced last month that already passed the committee in a bipartisan fashion regarding perimeter security and access control points. So, appreciate that, and your actions.

Two things on the wait times. I have spoken with airport operators regarding the need to establish really a more formal process in which airport operators and carriers can share predictive data. You know, how many seats on a flight; where the flights are; and try and make that as live-time, as functional as possible.

I wanted to know where you are on that, and how easily that can be done, given your personnel.

No. 2, this is actually both of them, several Federal agencies utilize private explosive detection canine programs. We use this in the State Department. We use it in some of the most dangerous places in the world to help keep our people safe.

It is my understanding that TSA hasn't expressed a willingness to turn to these type of programs, despite requests from airport operators. It is—we have had committee testimony where the airlines for—American Cargo Airlines Association have testified and expressed their support for that. The DHS Aviation Security Advisory Council voted 16 to 1 in support of these recommendations, moving towards a certification program.

Can you tell us, given the minimal supply and the growing demand, what TSA can do to improve the situation, to incorporate more canine screening, whether or not there is an openness to these programs?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, I am open to that program. In fact, I have had a number of conversations with people about private screening.

Mr. KEATING. Do you have the resources to move forward and expand that, then?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, if by resources you mean, you know, kind of an oversight staff to pay attention to it, we have got—we have. I have the staff I have which manages the current canine program, and they are—they can work with private vendors who are interested.

The challenge associated with that is we also have to work through local law enforcement. Because as you know, there has to be protocols established for if a dog finds something, what do I do now? So local law enforcement has a say in this as well. So airport-by-airport in the local law enforcement——

Mr. KEATING. So you think the inhibiting factor isn't money or the number of these resources available? It is only just coordinating with local law enforcement?

Admiral NEFFENGER. No, No, I didn't mean to imply that that was an inhibiting factor. I think part of it is the willingness of TSA to explore this. So I am willing to do that and I have said that to——

Mr. KEATING. We are hearing from so many groups in front of this committee how valuable that would be; how it——

Admiral NEFFENGER. I think we should explore the option.

Mr. KEATING [continuing]. And how it would improve safety.

Admiral NEFFENGER. Exactly. I think we should explore the options, particularly when you are thinking about cargo screening and other types of things that are off airport property that has to be done. So there is a—I think there is value there.

Mr. KEATING. I mean, we have worked in this committee with Joint Terrorism Task Force, working with law enforcement. It would seem to me that we would be able to function with this as well, if we can provide any assistance or if the task force models are helpful.

It is really important I think to upgrade that. I think they also serve as a very visible deterrent.

Admiral NEFFENGER. There is no doubt with dogs.

With respect to predictive data, it is relatively straightforward. We are doing that right now with the airlines. So the operational cell that I have got focused daily now, which I intend to become a permanent feature, includes airlines and airports to provide that predictive data. But in more real time, not just after the fact. I mean, it doesn't help me to find out what happened last week.

It is much more important to find out what is coming and then to do something about it in near real time.

Mr. KEATING. Yes, if you could keep me informed in terms of the canine program, where that is, I would really appreciate that.

Thank you for everything you are doing. Thank you for the success that you are doing under really tough situations.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chair recognizes Mr. Donovan.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you, Chairman.

Admiral, thank you for your testimony and your candidness with this committee.

We saw with the shooting in LAX I guess last year, and what happened in Brussels, the vulnerability of the non-secure areas of our transportation hubs. Is that the total jurisdiction of, like, the State and local authorities? Or does TSA have a role in the non-secured areas in our airports?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, we have a role in assisting with setting standards and expectations. My primary role is at the checkpoint, down in the baggage area, and then out in the secure areas of the airport. We work very closely with local law enforcement to patrol and guard the public areas of the airport as well.

Mr. DONOVAN. I know last summer—it may have happened actually before your appointment—there was the covert testing at TSA and the vulnerabilities of things going through, and some changes have been made. Have you found that those changes have improved our ability to detect things going through our checkpoints that shouldn't? Is there data that supports that?

Admiral NEFFENGER. There is. I won't get into details in an open setting, but I can tell you that our own internal testing tells us that we have improved significantly. We have a ways to go yet, but we are—it is significantly improved over—I think the measures that we took, the retraining that we did, and the changes in focus have helped considerably.

I have recently met with the inspector general. They are about to kick off a new round of tests—specifically testing our improvement. That will take place over the course of the next few months. They don't tell you the exact schedule for obvious reasons. But I look forward to working with him and understanding what he is finding and if he is validating any of what we are finding.

Mr. DONOVAN. Wonderful.

My last question actually is, with your efforts to get more people on pre-screening and off the standard lines, does that just move the delay over to pre-screening?

Admiral NEFFENGER. No, it actually dramatically improves the ability to move. You can move almost double the speed on a PreCheck line that we do. So for example, right now, even with the dramatically increased numbers that have enrolled in PreCheck, 92 percent across the entire system, 92 percent of people in PreCheck wait less than 5 minutes for screening. So that is a significant improvement.

Mr. DONOVAN. With the increase of people going to prescreening, you think that standard would uphold?

Admiral NEFFENGER. I do. Because we can now more consistently, to Congressman McSally's point, we can more consistently open the PreCheck lanes and open more of them. Because you need volume to justify keeping the lanes open and that volume is now giving me the ability to keep more lanes open.

Mr. DONOVAN. Thank you very much, Admiral.

Admiral NEFFENGER. Yes, sir.

Mr. DONOVAN. I yield back the remainder of my time, Chairman.

Chairman MCCAUL. Chair recognizes Mr. Richmond.

Mr. RICHMOND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Admiral. I represent Baton Rouge and New Orleans and New Orleans, one

of our biggest economies is the tourism industry, which means our airport is vitally important. So if you are talking Mardi Gras, Jazz Fest or Essence Fest or any of the events, the last thing we want is people to come down and have a good time and then have a bad taste in their mouth because they waited in an airport line or they missed their flight. So specifically, do the FSDs have the ability to grant overtime if they need more employees?

Admiral NEFFENGER. They do. I have pushed a lot of overtime out to the FSDs. You have got a great FSD down there, too, by the way.

Mr. RICHMOND. We do. We have hardworking TSAs and unfortunately we had an incident last year.

Admiral NEFFENGER. You did.

Mr. RICHMOND. Where we had to use deadly force and it was done by the book.

What about K–9 teams? Because that is another thing that they expressed. We had it for Jazz Fest. It worked tremendously well. So the question becomes, can we get a permanent one and as you expand your 10-point plan or implement it, where would we fall on the list?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, I will get you the exact priorities on the list for the record. But I will tell you, I would like to expand our K–9—passenger screening K–9 program beyond what we currently have. So right now, I am—I pushed K–9s to the largest airports where we are experiencing some of the biggest challenges. My goal and my plan is to backfill those as we can bring more K–9s on board. I will find out where New Orleans is on that priority list.

Mr. RICHMOND. I have read and I know about your goal to increase PreCheck passengers. One idea that I think that, you know—let me just say off-hand. I am opposed to the baggage fees. I think it is abominable. The price of gas has gone down and been very low for the last year, so airline ticket prices have remained the same.

I think baggage fees is just another way to dig in American people's pocket and make excessive money but at the same time I think that what it does is it pushes those carry-ons through our security checkpoints. Which means our margin of error, if it is 1 percent or .1 percent, now that we have millions and millions more bags because airlines are doing their fees, I think at some point I want to just prohibit them.

But if we want to push people to PreCheck, why don't we just say anyone who has PreCheck, the airlines can't charge you baggage fees? That would drive people to go enroll in PreCheck and we get to not stick it to the airlines, but we get to help the American people.

But do you think that the number of bags going through our checkpoints is problematic?

Admiral NEFFENGER. There is a lot of pressure on the checkpoints. We see a lot of bags coming through the checkpoint. About 4 times at the checkpoint of what gets checked. So this is why we encourage the airlines to help enforce that 1+1 rule because every additional bag coming through the checkpoint is a potential slowdown to the processing of people through.

Mr. RICHMOND. Because what I noticed, and probably many of the people on the committee since we travel so much, we will notice that once you get to the gate, when they make the announcements, most of them say that the flight is pretty full, we will complimentary check your bag.

So you have had this backup at the checkpoint and once you get through the checkpoint and you get to the gate, they say, hey, how about we check your bags for you now for free. Well, if they are going to do that they might as well do it on the front end, alleviate some of your pressure and also help us protect the American people. So I really would hope that you look at that.

Let me switch topics a little bit. I know that you are going out for bid on—you have a RFI out for your IT on your secure flight program. I would just ask that you look at using shared services with the National Finance Center, which already, I think, does your payroll and other things for you. They have great software development team, it is already a branch of Government. I think they can help you get your needs to market or they can service you a little bit faster than the process you are going to go in. I think they will save you a tremendous amount of money.

So I would just ask that you all really entertain using a shared service with National Finance Center to develop the software for the Secure Flight program that you are looking for.

Admiral NEFFENGER. We will take a look at that.

Mr. RICHMOND. With that, Mr. Chairman, I will yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank the gentleman. The Chair recognizes Mr. Carter.

Mr. CARTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Neffenger, thank you for being here. Mr. Neffenger, as you know, I represent Georgia. Of course, Hartsfield-Jackson Airport, one of the busiest airport in the world, this is a major problem the backlog that we have there.

In fact I just went out, stepped outside a few minutes ago to have a picture taken with some visitors from Georgia. They were telling me this morning, this morning, you know, one of them commented, I only had to wait 30 minutes in line.

Well, you know, it is unacceptable what is happening here. I just want to make sure that we are on the same page here. At Hartsfield recently, they just opened up the south checkpoint and started using a new system, the radio frequency identification on the bins so that they can put their stuff in there and they don't have to load the bins. Hopefully that is going to help some.

You and I have spoken before about privatization, and as you know, and full disclosure, I am really big on privatization. Atlanta and the bigger airports are indicating to us, at least to me, that it is beyond the scope of a bureaucracy to be able to do this. I just don't get a warm and fuzzy feeling that you are embracing privatization here.

Congress passed the Screening Partnership Program. Tell me what you are doing to implement that. We need to get to a point where you are on the other side of the table. You are asking the questions and overseeing this as opposed to being here answering the question from us.

Admiral NEFFENGER. We have made a lot of changes to streamline that process. I was concerned that it takes a long time because it has to go out on bid, it has to go out on contract and the like. I am—I have said repeatedly that the law allows for this, I will work with any airport that is interested.

In fact, I have directed airports like Atlanta to go out and talk to San Francisco because that is the only large Category X airport that has a contracted screening force and we will continue to work with them. I think there are things that we can do to—we are somewhat hampered by the way the Federal acquisition rules work. Remember, that is a workforce that is contracted to the Federal Government, not——

Mr. CARTER. Hold on—I don't mean to interrupt you. But I want to know, you say you are hampered. I want to know how I can help you to become uninhampered, if that is a word.

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well as I said, it is—we follow the contracting rules for—under the Federal Government contracting requirements. It is a contract to the Federal Government. So I want to make sure that it is fair and it is open competition and you have to give people the opportunity to participate in that. We will work with anybody who wants to do that.

Mr. CARTER. Well understand that I want to work with you so that we can streamline that process. I still don't get the feeling that you are embracing it. I want to know what you are doing to encourage it—to the privatization of it.

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, again, it is up to the airport to determine whether they want to do it. We advertise its availability. We make available information about it. There is a Screening Private Partnership office that manages that.

What I can offer you is to bring the person who is running that office up to outline what has changed over the past year and what we do to make that information available to airports, if they are interested and inclined——

Mr. CARTER. Okay. A couple other things real quick. First of all, as you know, FLETC is in my district. That is where you do your training. I think it is a great facility, does a wonderful job of training. We still incorporate that, even in the private sector. I mean, they can still be trained down there. We——

Admiral NEFFENGER. I train—I have trained the private screeners as well.

Mr. CARTER. Absolutely. Absolutely. So, you know, it is not as if they are not going to get the same kind of training that we currently get for the employees. It is just going to be management. It appears to me by the conversations that I have had with some of the smaller airports that that is where the problem is. That there is a void, a gap, if you will, between the local senior TSA reps in between the management up here in the District of Columbia, that they are not communicating.

Can you speak to that?

Admiral NEFFENGER. You mean the FSDs in the field and the——

Mr. CARTER. Yes.

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, I felt that the same thing. That is why I have made some leadership changes and some structural

changes to the way we do it and I have pushed a lot of authority out to the FSDs. They already had that authority, in my opinion. They just needed to know that they could use that authority. I have been trying to drive less operations from headquarters, because you can't drive from headquarters. You got to provide guidance and resources.

Mr. CARTER. Absolutely. I am glad to hear you say that.

Admiral NEFFENGER. Yes.

Mr. CARTER. But you know, and I—again, I feel like what is happening here is we are creating this giant bureaucracy that at some point we are not going to be able ever to break it down. Now is the time for us to start going more toward privatization, so that we don't get this giant bureaucracy that obviously is not performing to the level that we want it to perform to.

You know, one of the first things they taught us when we got into the Georgia legislature was, when you are in a hole, stop digging. We need to stop digging, because it ain't working the way it is working now. So, I encourage you to look at this privatization and to push the privatization. That is the route that I would see us needing to go.

Admiral NEFFENGER. Yes, sir.

Mr. CARTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chair recognizes Mr. Hurd.

Mr. HURD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral, appreciate you being here. I know it has been a long morning.

I have some, couple of basic questions, and I love your comments on the philosophy of getting passengers through checkpoints quickly, versus security effectiveness and how you balance that.

Admiral NEFFENGER. Oh, well, first and foremost, you have to be effective at what we do. We learned that lesson the hard way when the Inspector General report came out last year.

So it was imperative that we refocused. This was not—I will say, not the fault of the front-line workforce. They were doing exactly what they were told to do, get people through the line fast. If you do that, you will get people through the line fast, but you might not do your job very well.

So that was the first thing. But you still have to ensure that you do it as efficiently as possible. Those 2 things are not mutually exclusive in my mind. There are efficiencies that we can gain in the way we deploy our people, in the way we employ them and in the way they are managed.

I think an awful lot of the work that I am doing is in really reforming and transforming the management piece of the organization, because that is where the greatest opportunity for fixing that is.

So, I think we can do a lot to improve through-put. Then there is a technological piece to it as well. I—you know, TSA is still operating equipment that was operated for the past 30 years in terms of—with the exception of some of the upgrades to the software and the X-ray machines, the basic system still is a manual system.

So, there are things we can do that will dramatically improve our ability to process people more efficiently, while still doing our job really well.

Mr. HURD. Do copy. The next question, and I know this is about how TSA works with local—with individual airports. I know the answer is going to be "it depends." All right. But are you getting the kind of support from airports when they build a new terminal? Are you getting the opportunity to provide input and guidance on how to design it in such a way that it would improve efficiencies of security?

Are you also—do you get the kind of support—you know, you don't run the airports, right? I think folks forget that. Are you getting the kind of support from the airport personnel on non-security tasks that could be going on?

I would just welcome your, kind-of, general thoughts on that?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, thank you. With respect to the last point, we have gotten some great support from airlines and airports over the past few months to provide assistance for non-security-related duties. Everything from monitoring exit lanes to bin-running, to helping guide people into the appropriate checkpoints.

So, I have been pleased with that. What I believe is that TSA needed to do a better job of engaging at the local level, airport-by-airport, as well as at the Federal. I think we have always had pretty good relations with the big associations, but it is on the ground at the individual airport where the difference is made.

So, we have been working very hard at pushing our feet. We are going back to that comment about the FSDs and authorities, is to get them engaged with their local people, share with them their staffing models, share with them their current challenges, learn from each other. More importantly, find out when they have got plans to modernize or improve their infrastructure, because that is an opportunity for us to build in some new capability and some new space that would allow us to operate better.

Mr. HURD. Great. My last is a comment, not a question. I just want to say thank you for working with us on getting some TSA agents back into small airports in some of these small towns.

Admiral NEFFENGER. Yes, sir.

Mr. HURD. I know we have been talking a lot about wait lines at big airports, but I am looking forward to flying back to Washington, DC, from Del Rio, Texas, in the next couple of weeks once that gets set up.

So, I appreciate your willingness to work with us and making sure that the small-town airports and these small towns benefit from the economic advantages of having a functioning airport.

So, thank you. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chair recognizes Mr. Walker.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral Neffenger, thank you for being here today.

Earlier this week, Kelly Hoggan was removed from his post as head of the security operations. In another committee, a recent hearing—in fact, we talked that, you and I, and some of the questions there. We talked about the $90,000 bonuses as well.

It is not where I want to stay or camp too much this morning, but I do want to ask a couple questions in regards. What is Mr. Hoggan's annual salary?

Admiral NEFFENGER. He is an SES level, so his annual salary is, I believe, right around $180,000.

Mr. WALKER. Yes. I have got $181,000, so I think we are pretty close on that.

Can you confirm if Mr. Hoggan is on paid administrative leave?

Admiral NEFFENGER. He is currently on paid administrative leave, yes, sir.

Mr. WALKER. Okay. So, if my math in my head—that is about $500 a day. According to the DHS's administration lead policy of 2015—I am sure you are pretty familiar with that?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Yes, sir.

Mr. WALKER. I would like to read it for the record, if that is okay, Mr. Chairman?

Chairman MCCAUL. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. WALKER. The policy states managers must decide whether the continued presence of the employee in the work place may pose a threat to the employee or others, result in loss or damage to Government property or otherwise jeopardize legitimate Government interests. Where such a risk does not exist, the employee should remain in the workplace.

So Neffenger, in the case of Mr. Hoggan, which of these instances applies?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Mr. Hoggan is currently—we are resolving this, as you know. I needed—I wanted to make a leadership change. I made that leadership change. It was my considered opinion that I needed a new direction going forward.

We are working to process with respect to Mr. Hoggan, and I will work that process very rapidly.

Mr. WALKER. So, I am not sure that—let me rephrase the question, here. Why is it that you have made the choice to put him on paid administrative leave when there doesn't seem to be any threat to the organization?

Admiral NEFFENGER. It is a very short-term decision, so while the process—it allows us to make the process for what the next steps are with that, so I can move forward with the new direction that I need to ensure we meet the challenges coming forward.

Mr. WALKER. Sure. I want to respect that. So, when you say short-term, can you give us a ballpark, an idea? What does that mean?

Admiral NEFFENGER. I intend to determine that this week.

Mr. WALKER. Okay. All right. I want to go back also, where there are tough places to dig out, that is—there are places, but also where I want to commend you.

In the past, the TSA has had involuntary or voluntary moving expenses in the neighborhood of $200,000. I believe the one gentleman testified, from Maine, that he had $100,000 relocation expense.

Is it my recollection that, if my memory serves me correct, that you are no longer operating under that particular mind set or those procedures, is that correct?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Oh, I discontinued that practice.

Mr. WALKER. Okay.

Admiral NEFFENGER. I have capped relocation expenses.

Mr. WALKER. All right, and I appreciate you doing that. Let me follow up with one more question here on Mr. Hoggan.

In the same memo which announced Mr. Hoggan was no longer assistant administrator, you announced a new chief of operations who will direct Nation-wide screening operations and oversee daily allocation of forces and capabilities.

According to your website, TSA's assistant administrator for security operations is responsible for, "Airport checkpoint and baggage screening operations." Is that true? Is that a fair statement?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Yes, sir.

Mr. WALKER. Okay. All right. So, in concluding with Mr. Hoggan before I move on to something else here, are you at a place where that you can reveal any long-term plans with Mr. Hoggan at this point?

Admiral NEFFENGER. I cannot at this point, no sir.

Mr. WALKER. Okay. All right. Well, we will certainly respect that.

I am going to—a very general question. I have got a minute-and-a-half left, and I want to give you an opportunity. The overall culture of the TSA has not been where the American people expect it, where Congress should expect it, where the taxpayers should expect it.

Briefly, can you tell me, philosophically perspective, why do you feel like that you are being able to turn this tide? We have heard several Members talk about it today, that you are undergoing an impossible—or trying to take on an impossible task.

That doesn't encourage you much today. Obviously, with your background, you would have not taken on this position unless you felt like there were improvements that could be made and things that could be done. You can share a couple specifics if you would like, but I would like to hear an overall general purview of why you think that you are able to turn this ship in the right direction?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, let me start just by talking about our workforce.

We have a really tremendous workforce. I don't just say that lightly. I have been out meeting with them in the now 10 months-plus that I have been in the job. I go out to the front lines.

We have people who are—they come from all walks of life. There are people with graduate degrees, with undergraduate, some high school graduates. There are people who are former military, people in their second careers.

So, what gives me—what gave me immediate hope was seeing not only the passion and the dedication of that workforce, but their resilience.

You know, I think—I really believe they have one of the toughest jobs in Government. I mean, they—the average screener at a large airport sees more than 13,000 individuals every day. They have to remain professional, and they have to remain committed. These are true public servants.

That said, I think they needed a clear sense of mission, a clear focus from leadership on mission. They needed that focus to stay constant and straightforward. I think about my time in the military. What is it that makes the military able to take people from all walks of life and focus them on their duties and have the kind of response that we have that has created the best military in the

world? It is a clear sense of purpose and mission, a reminder of that, an engagement in that across the workforce.

So I was surprised to discover when I came to TSA that there was no—there was no true formal training program across the entire organization at any level of the organization. To me, that is foundational to creating culture and to creating engagement. So it was very important. I was really pleased that Congress agreed that founding a TSA Academy for the first time ever was a very important first step.

It is a first step. I wanted to get that front-line workforce back engaged and connected in a way that they hadn't been before. I mean, we were just training people all over the country, individuals inconsistently. So now, we have a consistent training program. You need to do that across the entire workforce.

So I started for the first time ever this year a rising leader development program which looks at all of our mid-grade employees and begins to teach them about what it means to be in charge and leading.

So we need to do leadership training, we need to do skills training, and we need to do it consistently. The reason I believe the ship can turn is I look to where the United States military was post-Vietnam, and everybody said it was a broken organization. It turned itself around. How? By doing exactly those things: Focusing on the mission, reengaging with the workforce, going back to fundamentals, and training across the board.

I believe that is the answer. It doesn't happen overnight, but we are already seeing some good signs with some of the new people that have been coming out of the academy. There is already this sense of passion. I get—I should share with you some of the e-mails I am getting from——

Mr. WALKER. I will just say my time is expired. So it will be up to the Chairman to extend that. But I do appreciate your answers.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chair recognizes Mr. Ratcliffe.

Mr. RATCLIFFE. I thank the Chair.

Administrator Neffenger, thank you for being here today. Over the course of the last years, you know, we have had hearings on this committee on security breaches caused by improper screening of employees of airports and airlines and vendors, we have had hearings about the agency's trouble with excessive waste and cost and some security failures, specifically a hearing on the DHS IG's investigation that showed that we had as many as 95 percent of some banned security items being able to get through and with aviation workers with links to terrorism not being disclosed.

I say all that not to lay blame with you, but to highlight that you were brought in at a very challenging time at the TSA. Clearly, there is a lot of work to be done here and I do want to say that I have noticed that you have taken proactive steps to try and rectify some of these problems. But now today, we have got another problem to talk about.

These long lines are not just an inconvenience to travelers, they do pose a security risk, having hundreds of passengers standing close together in an unsecure area. We saw what happened in Brussels with respect to that and I know that the TSA is working

every day to try and prevent those types of things that happened in Brussels from happening here.

But I do want to follow up in this particular area because I know you have attributed some of the long lines to personnel departure at TSA in previous years and that the agency has not yet replaced some of those folks. I know that through the Appropriations Committee, we repurposed—Congress has repurposed some $30 million, $34 million to allow for the hiring of additional TSA agents.

But I have some concerns about the allocation of additional TSA agents. It is not just about getting screeners to the airports, but about allocating those resources strategically to alleviate some of the long lines that we are seeing right now. To that point, I know there was a transportation security roundtable last week where stakeholders repeatedly said that they thought that the staffing model at the TSA was fundamentally flawed.

Now, no one wants to sacrifice security simply to lower wait times at the airport, but if you or if we can improve efficiency of security processes without sacrificing safety, I know that is something that we all want to get to.

So I have heard in the past that TSA had the capability to schedule its workforce to match up with the airline flight schedules and passenger load, but that it dropped that and instead, now uses an electronic time and attendance system that has a lot of—requires a lot of manual changes to deal with employees on leave and irregular operations and weather-related delays. First of all, is that correct?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, we do use an electric time and attendance system, but we still have the flexibility to meet demand. We just—I don't think we did it very well.

Mr. RATCLIFFE. Okay. Well, are you—can you tell me are you looking at any commercial technology solutions that would align workforce needs with airline and airport passenger flow? If so, when would that be deployed?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, what we have done immediately is we are working with the airlines directly and the airports. We have opened up the full staffing model to the airports—at the airlines in particular. About 2 months ago we had all of the major airlines in at a very senior level to say here it is. We are airport by airport, where everybody—anybody wants to look it, looking at that staffing model as well.

I think that there is work to be done on the staffing model. It needs to be flexible and agile enough to meet the demand as it arrives. What I am learning is that the airlines are exceptionally good at predicting and responding to their peak periods. We can learn a lot from them and they are helping us adjust our staffing model. We even saw in Chicago a couple of the key adjustments that we made right after that, you know, day that we had all the challenges, it dramatically decreased the line waits.

Mr. RATCLIFFE. Well, I am glad to hear that you are engaging the airports and the airlines in that regard. To that point about the staffing model, are you taking into account the different layout structures of different airports? So for example, the DFW airport in my home State of Texas has 15 screening check points, where I know the Denver Airport only has 3. Obviously, that makes a big

difference in terms of staffing requirements. Is that something that is being taken into account?

Admiral NEFFENGER. It is, and you have to do that because what you say applies the real challenges. Some airports are big and open and have lots of opportunity to run efficiently, other airports are very constrained by space and you have multiple small checkpoints distributed across the airport. So you have to think very differently about managing those more constrained airports than you do a large open airport.

Mr. RATCLIFFE. Well, on that same vein, and my time is expired, but I do want to ask you this question as well: Do you think that Federal security directors located at the airports should have more flexibility in determining the local needs of the airports where they are stationed?

Admiral NEFFENGER. Well, I have given them complete flexibility. That said, it is important to note that I only have so much staff to go around, so if they come to me and say, "I want 500 more people," I mean, they—I have got to work with them to get there. But within the resources that they currently have allocated to them, they have the ability to flex those resources however they need to, working with the local airports and airlines. Then if they need more, then they need to—they have the ability to come to me and say, "Look, I think I need more and here is what I need."

Mr. RATCLIFFE. Thanks very much for being here today, and thank you for your candor in your testimony and answering questions today.

With that, I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. I think the gentleman.

Just want to remind Members that tomorrow morning at 9 a.m., the Subcommittee on Transportation will be holding a hearing with local—with airline authorities, airport authorities, and airlines and look forward to that perspective tomorrow.

Members of the committee may have additional questions. We would ask that you respond in writing. The Ranking Member is recognized.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just like unanimous consent to enter into the record a letter to Administrator Neffenger dated April 19, 2016.

Chairman MCCAUL. Without objection, so ordered.

[The information follows:]

LETTER SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY RANKING MEMBER BENNIE G. THOMPSON

APRIL 19, 2016.

The Honorable PETER NEFFENGER,
Administrator, Transportation Security Administration, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 601 12th Street South, Arlington, VA 22202.

DEAR ADMINISTRATOR NEFFENGER: I am writing to express the serious concerns I have regarding staffing issues at airports throughout our nation. One recurring complaint I hear from airport officials is current staffing allocation models do not adequately correspond with the airport's needs.

According to a recent press release from the Transportation Security Administration, many airports around the nation are experiencing substantial growth in checkpoint volume. During peak times passengers are experiencing significant delays. Certain airports have the capacity to operate multiple lanes within security checkpoint areas; however, starting shortages often leave the lanes unused, and as a result, the queue grows and wait times increase. I am concerned the inability to take

advantage of airports' infrastructure may create an additional vulnerability by not having individuals screened in unused lanes due to staffing shortages.

Understanding we are working in a time where budgets are constrained, I realize additional funds will be needed to provide more staffing at airports. However, I believe a thorough look must be taken at the current staffing allocation model and standard operating procedures to ascertain if any room exists where efficiencies can be achieved.

One possibility for flexibility and efficiencies could be achieved through the Screening of Passengers by Observation Techniques (SPOT) program. In May 2010, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report on TSA's efforts to validate this program.[1] GAO analyzed (1) the extent to which TSA validated the SPOT program before wide-scale deployment, (2) implementation challenges, and (3) the extent to which TSA measures SPOT's effect on aviation security. GAO found TSA deployed SPOT nation-wide without first validating the scientific basis for identifying suspicious passengers in an airport environment; TSA was experiencing implementation challenges, including not fully utilizing the resources it has available to systematically collect and analyze information obtained by Behavior Detection Officers (BDO) on passengers who may pose a threat to the aviation system; and the agency lacked outcome-oriented measures to evaluate the program's progress toward reaching its goals.

In November 2013, the Government Accountability Office made public a report recommending TSA limit future funding for TSA's SPOT program and suggested Congress consider the lack of scientific validation for the program when providing funding for the agency.[2] To my knowledge, TSA has not scientifically validated the usage of BDOs. Given these facts, I believe you should strongly consider the possibility of reallocating these individuals to perform other screening functions within the staffing allocation model.

I look forward to working with you to identify and address this important issue. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Hope Goins, Chief Counsel for Oversight.

Thank you,

BENNIE G. THOMPSON,
Ranking Member.

Chairman MCCAUL. Pursuant to committee rule 7(c), the hearing record will be open for 10 days for statements and questions from Members.

Admiral, thank you for being here today. I know you are a newcomer to this job and certainly, the challenges are great. But I think you are well-equipped to solve those and we look forward to working with you to solve these problems for the Nation, and we thank you for your service.

Without objection, the committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:09 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

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[1] GAO–10–763: Aviation Security—Efforts to Validate TSA's Passenger Screening Behavior Detection Program Underway, but Opportunities Exist to Strengthen Validation and Address Operational Challenges.

[2] GAO–14–159: Aviation Security: TSA Should Limit future Funding for Behavior Detection Activities.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONS FROM HON. MARTHA MCSALLY FOR PETER V. NEFFENGER

Question 1. What law gives the Secret Service the ability to call in TSA's Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response, or VIPR, teams for additional security presence at events such as campaign rallies, political party conventions, NFL games, NASCAR races, and concerts?

Answer. TSA's Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response (VIPR) teams often provide support to the United States Secret Service for events designated as National Special Security Events (NSSEs), such as Presidential Inaugurations, and the Republican and Democratic National Conventions. This assistance is rendered pursuant to the Secret Service's authority to plan, coordinate, and implement security operations at special events of National significance, 18 U.S.C. § 3056(e), TSA's authority to provide personnel and services to other Federal agencies, 49 U.S.C. § 114(m), and TSA's authority to conduct VIPR missions to augment the security of any mode of transportation, 6 U.S.C. § 1112.

VIPR operations at transportation venues may coincide with events given a Special Event Assessment Rating (SEAR) by the Department of Homeland Security, with a designated Federal Coordinator to lead the Federal Government's operational plans to provide security for the event. These VIPR deployments are made under the program's own authority, 6 U.S.C. § 1112, which specifically authorizes the development of VIPR teams to augment security in any mode of transportation at any location in the United States. This authority adds greater specificity to the authority granted to TSA by U.S.C. § 114(d), which establishes TSA's general authority and responsibility for security in all modes of transportation.

Whether an NSSE or SEAR event, the Secret Service or other designated Federal Coordinators are aware of TSA's VIPR capability and may request that VIPR operations be part of the overall security plans for the areas associated with those events.

Question 2a. How many times have the VIPR teams been deployed to events described in question No. 1? Please break down the number of each of the previously-mentioned events VIPR teams have been deployed to.

Answer. During fiscal year 2016, VIPR teams have or will be deployed to transportation locations in support of 5 NSSE and to augment security at transportation venues associated with 15 highly-rated SEAR events. The NSSEs include the State of the Union Address, Nuclear Security Summit, the Republican National Convention, the Democratic National Convention, and a portion of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). The highly-rated SEAR events include the remainder of the UNGA, the Rose Bowl Parade and Game, Super Bowl 50 (San Francisco Bay Area), the New York City, Chicago and Boston Marathons, Fourth of July celebrations in Washington, DC, Boston, and Chicago, the Indianapolis 500, the Papal Southern Border visit (El Paso, TX), the Thanksgiving Day Parade (New York City), the Times Square New Year's Eve celebration, and the National Museum of African American History and Culture Dedication (Washington, DC).

Question 2b. Has there been security operations conducted by VIPR teams at any private events?

Answer. TSA has not deployed VIPR teams to private events.

Question 2c. Does TSA have the legal authority to deny this request?

Question 2d. If not, do you want the authority to be able to do so?

Answer. TSA is not required by law to deploy VIPR teams in support of NSSE or SEAR events. However, every attempt is typically made to utilize the VIPR teams to mitigate terrorist risk at transportation locations associated with the events.

Question 3a. How many VIPR teams does the TSA currently have?

Answer. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has 31 Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response (VIPR) teams based in 20 locations Nation-wide.

Question 3b. How many TSA agents make up a VIPR team?

Answer. Basic VIPR teams are composed of 1 Supervisory Federal Air Marshal (SFAM), 6 Federal Air Marshals (FAM), 2–4 Behavior Detection Officers, 1 Transportation Security Inspector—Aviation, 1 Transportation Security Inspector—Surface, and 1 Transportation Security Specialist—Explosives. Some locations include additional teams of 1 SFAM and 6 FAMs.

Question 3c. Are there Federal Air Marshals who serve on the VIPR teams?

Answer. The appropriation for the VIPR Program, which is separate from the appropriation for the Federal Air Marshal Service, supports 227 positions for SFAMs and FAMs who serve on the VIPR teams or with the VIPR Program office.

Question 4a. Much of TSA's security expenses are paid for through the Passenger Fee, also known as the September 11 Security Fee.

How are the services provided by VIPR team paid for?

Answer. TSA's VIPR team services are funded in the current fiscal year in the Surface Appropriation.

Question 4b. Does the Passenger fee fund VIPR teams in any way?

Answer. Passenger fees do not fund VIPR teams as the Passenger Fee offsets appropriated resources in the Aviation Appropriation.

Question 4c. Have funds collected through TSA PreCheck fees ever funded any of these operations?

Answer. TSA PreCheck fees to do not fund VIPR services, as this would be an unauthorized use of those credentialing fee collections.

