

**NOMINATION OF VICE ADMIRAL
DAVID P. PEKOSKE, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
OF HOMELAND SECURITY, TRANSPORTATION
SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT
OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

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

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

JUNE 21, 2017

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SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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**NOMINATION OF VICE ADMIRAL
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SECRETARY OF HOMELAND SECURITY,
TRANSPORTATION SECURITY
ADMINISTRATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HOMELAND SECURITY**

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 21, 2017

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m. in room SR-253, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. John Thune, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Thune [presiding], Nelson, Booker, Inhofe, Cortez Masto, Gardner, Sullivan, Cantwell, Blumenthal, Peters, Klobuchar, Hassan, Capito, Markey, Wicker, Young, Fischer, and Heller.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN THUNE,
U.S. SENATOR FROM SOUTH DAKOTA**

The CHAIRMAN. Good morning. Today we will consider the nomination of Admiral David Pekoske to become the next Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration. Having spent over 32 years in the Coast Guard after graduating from the Coast Guard Academy in 1977, Admiral Pekoske is an exceptionally well-qualified nominee to become the next TSA Administrator.

His extensive leadership experience ranges from serving as the Commander of the Coast Guard's Pacific Area and Coast Guard Defense Forces West, where he was in charge of all Coast Guard operations in the Western Hemisphere, to becoming the 26th Vice Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard in 2009, where he served as the second-in-command, the Chief Operating Officer, and the Component Acquisition Executive of the Coast Guard.

Admiral Pekoske's nomination to become TSA Administrator comes at an important time. Security threats remain a persistent challenge for both aviation and surface transportation, and the TSA is not only tasked with protecting these modes from terrorist attacks, but also ensuring the freedom of movement of people and commerce in an efficient manner.

Since its creation by this Committee in response to the 9/11 attacks, the TSA has been subject to extensive scrutiny by Congress, the public, and the media. The TSA has been appropriately criti-

cized for issues like the ease with which covert testers from the Department of Homeland Security Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office have been able to smuggle contraband through screening checkpoints, as well as persistent problems with large acquisitions.

In spite of these challenges, the previous TSA Administrator, Admiral Peter Neffenger, made significant positive changes to the agency, some of which include shortening wait times during last summer's travel season, improving technology at checkpoints, and the creation of a training academy for workers. I hope that Admiral Pekoske can build on these improvements, provide continuity for TSA's workforce, and apply his extensive leadership skills to solving the challenges that remain should he be confirmed.

The Commerce Committee has been active on aviation security. Last Congress, the Committee passed the most comprehensive reforms to TSA in a decade in the FAA Extension Safety and Security Act of 2016, which addressed the challenges posed by unauthorized access to secure areas of airports, expanded access to TSA PreCheck, and attempted to optimize checkpoint operations.

Earlier this year, however, the Commerce Committee held an oversight hearing in which DHS Inspector General John Roth testified that challenges still remain with regard to many of these issues. Inspector General Roth's testimony indicated that these challenges include vulnerabilities related to the vetting of employees, ensuring that only cleared employees have access to secure areas, and the troubling issue of lost or stolen access badges. I hope that Admiral Pekoske will make progress in addressing these persistent problems raised by Inspector General Roth.

As the Committee continues work—to work, I should say, with TSA to improve aviation security, it's important to incorporate the perspectives of stakeholders. The Commerce Committee recently held a hearing to highlight stakeholder perspectives on improving TSA to better serve the traveling public. One of the major themes that emerged from the witness testimony was the need for a risk-based approach to security as well as better collaboration between TSA and industry to promote innovation.

Currently, the Agency is drawing considerable attention for exploring the possible expansion of the ban on personal electronic devices, such as laptop computers, on flights to the United States from certain last point of departure airports. While the Secretary of Homeland Security has recently signaled that such a move may be unnecessary, this is a good example of an issue where stakeholder collaboration will be critical to the development of solutions and the acceptance and implementation of security protocols. My hope is that Admiral Pekoske will work to promote relationships with the private sector and create a culture at TSA that embraces innovative approaches to security.

In the surface transportation sector, a long-standing challenge for TSA has been adopting a cross-cutting, risk-based approach to security across all modes. In April, the Committee held a markup on the Surface and Maritime Transportation Security Act, which I introduced with Ranking Member Nelson. Our bill would direct TSA to conduct an analysis across all modes of transportation for asset deployment, require the TSA apportion its budget on this

basis, and establish a Surface Transportation Advisory Committee similar to the Aviation Stakeholder Advisory Committee. The bill was reported favorably with bipartisan support, and we continue to work to ensure its eventual enactment.

I was able to meet with Admiral Pecoske last week in advance of this hearing, and I believe that, if confirmed, he will provide important strategic and cultural continuity to TSA in much the same manner as his distinguished predecessor. I strongly support his nomination and I hope that we can move quickly to confirm it.

With that, I will turn to our Ranking Member Senator Nelson for any remarks he would like to make.

**STATEMENT OF HON. BILL NELSON,
U.S. SENATOR FROM FLORIDA**

Senator NELSON. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. And I agree with your comments, and therefore I'll insert my comments in the record. I just want to thank the Admiral for his 33 years with the Coast Guard, which is a very professional team. And the members of this Committee are very proud of the Coast Guard. And since he had the whole West Coast, that includes all the way down to American Samoa all the way up to the Bering Sea in the Arctic area where the Coast Guard basically takes care of all of that area.

One thing that we might look at in this ever-changing scene of technology and the threats to transportation safety is that whenever people bunch up, that's a soft target. And we found, unfortunately, with Brussels and London, that that is outside the secured areas. And someplace I was the other day, I think it was at Grand Central Station, as people were getting ready to form the line to go through the gates to get on the train when the train arrived, and they don't let you go in until the train has arrived so that you don't clutter up the platform there by the tracks, I was thinking at the time, I mean, this is a bunch of Americans all massed up together. And this is stuff that you've got to worry about because it's all part of our transportation safety.

Surface transportation, the security of that surface transportation has been underfunded and unfocused, and the bill that we are looking at aims to fix that by enhancing risk-based security, requiring training to address the threats on our highways, closing gaps in port security, and providing funding to improve security at our rail stations and our seaports.

Now, the bill does something very, very important, and that is it adds 200 K9 teams, and that is not only a powerful technological thing because nobody has been able to reproduce the sensitive sniffing of a dog, but it also provides a strong psychological deterrence as well.

And on the FAA Extension, which passed a year ago, it included bipartisan provisions to better guard against terrorism threats and improve security screening.

And I will just say in conclusion that I think the people that had advised the President were not giving the best advice when they recommended cutting the dog teams in the President's proposed budget. Once you're in the position, Admiral, you need to make what you know to be true well known at OMB and the White

House. And what we're trying to do in the bill is increase the number of canine teams, called VIPR teams.

So thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let's hear from the witness.
[The prepared statement of Senator Nelson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. BILL NELSON, U.S. SENATOR FROM FLORIDA

Thank you Vice Admiral Pecoske for joining us today to discuss your nomination to be the next administrator of the Transportation Security Administration. And I want to thank you for your 33 years with the Coast Guard and your willingness to continue to serve our country.

As you know, TSA is tasked with protecting our transportation systems and the traveling public, while also ensuring the flow of commerce. Though TSA is most visible to the public at commercial airports across the nation, the agency's security responsibilities cut across all modes of transportation; including transit, railroads, pipelines, and maritime.

As threats to our transportation systems evolve, TSA must respond to meet new challenges and anticipate future risk.

For instance, the attacks this week in London and Brussels, as well as several others over the last few years, continue to ring the alarm that surface transportation security remains a serious threat.

That's why I worked with Chairman Thune and Senators Fischer and Booker to introduce the Surface Transportation and Maritime Security Act.

For too long, surface transportation security has been underfunded and unfocused. Our bill aims to fix that by enhancing risk-based security, requiring training to address threats on our highways, closing gaps in port security, and providing funding to improve security at our rail stations and ports.

Importantly, the bill adds as many as 200 K9 teams, which provides a powerful psychological and physical deterrent to potential threats.

Also, the FAA extension, which passed into law in July 2016, included bipartisan provisions to better guard against terrorism threats and improve security screening efficiency for travelers.

For instance, it authorized TSA to double the number of TSA's VIPR teams from 30 to as many as 60 teams. It also expanded grant funding to assist law enforcement in preparing for and responding to mass casualty and active shooter incidents at airports and mass transit systems.

TSA was also required to evaluate staffing, technology options, and checkpoint configurations to expedite passenger movement through security screening. This included efforts to expand TSA PreCheck.

Now although the administration increases TSA's overall budget from the previous Fiscal Year, it includes several proposals that could undermine security, including cutting the VIPR teams from 31 to 8, eliminating TSA staffing at airport exit lanes, and eliminating the Law Enforcement Officer Reimbursement Program.

Instead of cutting the tools that have proven most effective, I believe we should be focused on reexamining and bolstering our transportation security strategy.

Vice Admiral Pecoske, I look forward to hearing how you will protect our citizens and our Nation's vital transportation networks. And I hope that you will remain committed to visiting at least one of our Florida airports with me.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Nelson.

And we are delighted to welcome Admiral David Pecoske, of Maryland. He is here as a nominee to be Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security, Transportation Security Administration.

So, Admiral, please proceed with your remarks, and we'll look forward to, at the conclusion of those, asking you a few questions. So please proceed.

**STATEMENT OF VICE ADMIRAL DAVID P. PEKOSKE,
NOMINEE FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF HOMELAND
SECURITY, TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

Admiral PEKOSKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Chairman Thune and Ranking Member Nelson and distinguished

members of this Committee. It is a privilege to appear before you today as the President's nominee to lead the Transportation Security Administration.

I am honored to have been nominated by President Trump for this very important national security position, and if confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity to work with Secretary Kelly, Deputy Secretary Duke, and the entire team at the Department of Homeland Security.

My first comments today are in strong support of the men and women of the Transportation Security Administration. Each and every one contributes to the security of our Nation's transportation system and works tirelessly to earn the trust and respect of the American people. Their work is critical to the security of our aviation and surface transportation systems, and they have, in my opinion, done an outstanding job in protecting us from an ever present and very dynamic threat. It would be my privilege to join them as their Administrator and bring my leadership, skills, and experience directly to the effort of securing our homeland.

TSA could not accomplish its mission were it not for the strong partnerships it has with other Federal partners, state and local public safety and law enforcement agencies, the airline industry, the government services industry, airport owners and operators, and international partners. Throughout my professional career, I have seen firsthand the importance and enormous value of strong partnerships and professional relationships. This is the extended TSA team, and it would be my privilege to join them as well in our collective goal of ensuring transportation security in the United States.

I had the high honor of serving our country in the United States Coast Guard for most of my adult life. I am forever grateful to my Coast Guard colleagues for their investment in my leadership and professional development. I have extensive experience in counterterrorism and security operations and in leading a large operating Federal agency that uses risk-based management.

I was at the Coast Guard Commandant's side on 9/11 as his executive assistant when the attacks on our homeland occurred. Like all of you, I will never forget that day and the days that immediately followed. I was privileged to remain as the Commandant's executive assistant when the TSA and the Department of Homeland Security were established.

In the summer of 2004, I served as the lead Federal official for maritime security at our first two national political conventions since 9/11, the Democratic National Convention in Boston and the Republican National Convention in New York City. Both were National Special Security Events, and our security operations across all Federal, state, and local agencies were very successful. Strong partnerships among law enforcement and public safety agencies are absolutely critical and are a very high priority for me.

I served as the Assistant Commandant for Operations at Coast Guard headquarters, establishing service-wide policy for our security operations and regularly participated in discussions with the National Security Council staff and the operations deputies of the other military services. As Commander of the Pacific area, I was responsible for all Coast Guard operations on the West Coast of the

United States, Alaska, and Hawaii. Given the vast expanse of the Pacific and our national strategy of increasing emphasis on operations in the Pacific theater, I worked closely with the Coast Guards of Russia, China, South Korea, Japan, and Canada. I am a strong supporter of international engagement and international standard setting. Both can contribute substantially to the security of the United States.

As Vice Commandant of the Coast Guard, I served as the Vice Service Chief, the Chief Operating Office, and the Coast Guard Acquisition Executive responsible to train, equip, and organize a Coast Guard force of over 50,000 people. In addition, I was the execution champion for the Coast Guard Innovation Program, one of the most well-established innovation programs in government. Should I be confirmed as TSA Administrator, innovation will be one of my key focus areas. I think it is critical in continuing to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of TSA operations.

Following my Coast Guard service, I joined a very successful mid-market company in the government services industry. My experience in the private sector was very valuable, and I learned how government can be a better consumer of private sector expertise and support.

My experience in the Coast Guard and in the private sector is directly relevant to the position of TSA Administrator. Today, we face a multitude of threats that are persistent and ever evolving. We know that certain terrorist organizations remain focused on commercial aviation and disrupting the freedoms we enjoy as an open society. Staying ahead of these threats and ensuring that appropriate measures are in place will continue to be TSA's most significant challenge.

If confirmed, it will be my honor to serve in what I consider to be one of the most challenging jobs in government. My overarching goal would be to lead the TSA in an ever stronger position as an effective and efficient provider of security for our transportation systems, especially aviation, with a strong and growing level of public confidence in the agency's mission performance.

I will articulate a clear vision for TSA to ensure all of our efforts contribute to its achievement. My full intention is to serve as TSA Administrator, if confirmed, for as long as the President and the Secretary wish me to remain in this position. I think leadership continuity at TSA is very important. If confirmed, I would be the 13th Administrator in 16 years, when you include those in an acting capacity.

I'm always reminded of a quote of Alexander Hamilton when he, as our first Secretary of the Treasury, issued instructions to the commanding officers of the Revenue Cutters, which are the predecessors to the Coast Guard. Secretary Hamilton issued these instructions in 1791. He said in part, "They will always keep in mind that their countrymen are free men and, as such, are impatient of everything that bears the least mark of a domineering spirit. They will, therefore, refrain, with the most guarded circumspection, from whatever has a semblance of haughtiness, rudeness, or insult." I think that sage advice from one of our country's Founding Fathers applies to all Federal officials involved in law enforcement and se-

curity operations today. It is something that will guide me if I am so fortunate as to have the opportunity to lead the TSA.

The TSA is the face of the Federal Government to millions of air travelers every day. These travelers rightfully expect effective and efficient screening with a minimum delay by government officials who treat them with respect. I will work diligently with the entire TSA workforce to ensure TSA continues to meet this standard. We must balance the demands of security with the imperatives of liberty guaranteed in our Constitution.

In closing, I thank President Trump and Secretary Kelly for their confidence in my ability to lead TSA. Chairman Thune, Ranking Member Nelson, and distinguished members of this Committee, I thank you for your courtesies during this confirmation process and for the opportunity to appear before you today. And I look forward to answering your questions.

Thank you, sir.

[The prepared statement and biographical information of Admiral Pekoske follow:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF VICE ADMIRAL DAVID P. PEKOSKE, NOMINEE FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF HOMELAND SECURITY, TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Good morning Chairman Thune, Ranking Member Nelson and distinguished members of this committee. It is a privilege to appear before you today as the President's nominee to lead the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). I would like to thank President Trump for nominating me for this important national security position and I would like to also thank Secretary Kelly and Deputy Secretary Duke for their support during this process.

My first comments today are in strong support of the men and women of the TSA. Each and every one contributes to the security of our Nation's transportation system and works tirelessly to earn the trust and respect of the American people. Their work is critical to the security of our aviation and surface transportation systems and they have, in my opinion, done an outstanding job in protecting us from an ever present and very dynamic threat. It would be my privilege to join them as their Administrator and bring my leadership, skills and experience to the effort of securing our homeland.

TSA could not accomplish its mission were it not for the strong partnerships it has with other Federal partners, state and local public safety and law enforcement agencies, the airline industry, the government services industry, airport owners and operators, and international partners. Throughout my professional career I have seen the importance and enormous value of strong partnerships and professional relationships. This is the extended TSA team and it would be my privilege to join them as well in our collective goal of ensuring transportation security in the United States.

I had the high honor of serving our country in the United States Coast Guard for most of my adult life. I am forever grateful to my Coast Guard colleagues for their investment in my leadership and professional development. If confirmed, I would join Admiral Jim Loy and Vice Admiral Peter Neffenger as Coast Guard flag officers who have also served as Administrator. Both of them made significant contributions to the development of TSA and I welcome the opportunity to build on the foundation they and other Administrators have laid since the establishment of TSA by the Aviation and Transportation Security Act.

I have extensive experience in counter-terrorism and security operations and in leading a large operating Federal agency. I was at the Coast Guard Commandant's side on 9/11 as his executive assistant when the attacks on our homeland occurred. Like you, I will never forget that day and the days that immediately followed. I was privileged to remain as the Commandant's executive assistant when the TSA and the Department of Homeland Security were established.

My first assignment as a Coast Guard flag officer was as Commander of the First Coast Guard District, with regional responsibility for all Coast Guard operations from Northern New Jersey to Maine. Within weeks of arriving in this position, I served as the lead Federal official for maritime security at our first two national

political conventions since 9/11, the Democratic National Convention in Boston and the Republican National Convention in New York City. As the District Commander, I had oversight of the Coast Guard's maritime security operations in the ports of New York, New Jersey and Boston. We effectively managed risk and ensured the safe and secure flow of maritime commerce in these two ports.

I served as the Assistant Commandant for Operations at Coast Guard headquarters, establishing service-wide policy for our security operations and regularly participating in discussions with the National Security Council staff and the operations deputies of the other military services. While the head of operations for the Coast Guard, we matured the development of Coast Guard deployable specialized forces that provided advanced counter-terrorism capability in our Nation's ports and coastal areas.

I returned to Coast Guard field operations as Commander of the Pacific Area. I was responsible for all Coast Guard operations on the west coast of the United States, Alaska and Hawaii. In addition, I was the operational commander of the Coast Guard's polar icebreaker fleet with operations in the Arctic and Antarctic. Given the vast expanse of the Pacific and our national strategy of increasing emphasis on operations in the Pacific theater, I worked closely with the Coast Guards of Russia, China, South Korea, Japan and Canada. I am a strong supporter of international engagement and international standards setting. Both can contribute substantially to the security of the United States.

As Vice Commandant of the Coast Guard I served as the Vice Service Chief, the Chief Operating Officer and the Coast Guard Acquisition Executive responsible to train, equip and organize a Coast Guard force of over 50,000 people. Both Coast Guard Area Commanders and the most senior headquarters staff (Deputy Commandant for Operations, Deputy Commandant for Mission Support, the Assistant Commandant for Resources, The Judge Advocate General, and the Assistant Commandant for Governmental and Public Affairs) reported directly to me in this position. During this time, the Coast Guard responded to the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and I served as Acting Commandant when ADM Thad Allen became the National Incident Commander for Deepwater Horizon. In addition, I was the executive champion for the Coast Guard Innovation Program, one of the most well established innovation programs in government. Should I be confirmed as TSA Administrator, innovation will be one of my key focus areas. I think it is critical in continuing to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of TSA operations.

Following my Coast Guard service, I joined a very successful mid-market company in the government services industry. We provided counter-terrorism services to components of the Departments of State, Defense and Homeland Security. Our expertise was in counter-improvised explosive devices. My experience in the private sector was very valuable, as I learned how government can be a better consumer of private sector expertise and support. In addition, I joined several interest groups that advocated for military, veterans and national security issues. I have been an instructor at the Naval Postgraduate School for several years, participating in a course on innovation for new flag/general officers and members of the Senior Executive Service. I have also been an adjunct faculty member at American University teaching a graduate course titled "Politics, Policymaking and Public Administration."

My experience in the Coast Guard and in the private sector is directly relevant to the mission of TSA. Today, we face a multitude of threats that are persistent and ever evolving. We know that certain terrorist organization remain focused on commercial aviation and disrupting the freedoms we enjoy as an open society. Staying ahead of these threats and ensuring the appropriate measures are in place will continue to be TSA's most significant challenge.

TSA is the face of the Federal Government to millions of travelers every day. These travelers rightfully expect effective and efficient security with the minimum of delay by government officials who treat them with respect. I will work diligently with the entire TSA workforce to ensure we meet this standard. We must balance the demands of security with the imperatives of liberty guaranteed in our Constitution.

If confirmed, it would be my honor to serve in one of the most challenging jobs in government. My overarching goal would be to leave the TSA in an ever stronger position as an effective and efficient provider of security for our transportation systems, especially aviation, with a strong and growing level of public confidence in the agency's mission performance.

I am always reminded of a quote of Alexander Hamilton when he, as our first Secretary of the Treasury, issued instructions to the Commanding Officers of Revenue Cutters (predecessors to the Coast Guard) in 1791. He said, in part, "They will always keep in mind that their countrymen are freemen, and, as such are impatient of everything that bears the least mark of a domineering spirit. They will, therefore,

refrain, with the most guarded circumspection, from whatever has the semblance of haughtiness, rudeness, or insult." I think this sage guidance from one of our country's founding fathers applies to all Federal officials involved in law enforcement and security operations today. It is something that will guide me if I am so fortunate as to have the opportunity to lead TSA.

In closing, I thank President Trump and Secretary Kelly for their confidence in my ability to lead TSA. Chairman Thune, Ranking Member Nelson and distinguished members of this committee, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and look forward to answering your questions.

A. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1. Name (Include any former names or nicknames used): David Peter Pekoske.
2. Position to which nominated: Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security, Transportation Security Administration.
3. Date of Nomination: June 6, 2017.
4. Address (List current place of residence and office addresses):

Residence: Information not released to the public.

Office: Information not provided.

5. Date and Place of Birth: May 5, 1955; Meriden, CT.
6. Provide the name, position, and place of employment for your spouse (if married) and the names and ages of your children (including stepchildren and children by a previous marriage).

Spouse: Michele R. Pekoske, maiden name Roy, not employed.

Children: Matthew D. Pekoske, 31; Kristen M. Pekoske, 29; Corinne N. Pekoske, 25; Jillian E. Pekoske, 23.

7. List all college and graduate degrees. Provide year and school attended.

U.S. Coast Guard Academy, BS, 1977

Columbia University, MPA, 1989

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MBA, 1997

8. List all post-undergraduate employment, and highlight all management level jobs held and any non-managerial jobs that relate to the position for which you are nominated.

U.S. Coast Guard Active Duty (1977–2010)

Captain of the Port, Long Island Sound Executive Assistant to the Commandant
Commander, First Coast Guard District Assistant Commandant for Operations
Commander, Coast Guard Pacific Area Vice Commandant

A-T Solutions, Inc.

Group President, National Security Solutions

PAE, Inc.

Vice President, National Programs

American University

Adjunct Professorial Lecturer, School of Public Affairs

Naval Postgraduate School

Instructor, Leading Innovation Program

Frontier Security Strategies

Expert (no work or income has been derived from this entity)

9. Attach a copy of your resumé.

Please see the attached resumé.

10. List any advisory, consultative, honorary, or other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments, other than those listed above, within the last ten years.

None with federal, state or local governments.

11. List all positions held as an officer, director, trustee, partner, proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, company, firm, partnership, or other business, enterprise, educational, or other institution within the last ten years.

I have held positions with the following organizations:

- InfraGard National Members Alliance, Chairman of the Board and Board Member

- Jewish Institute for the National Security of America, Board of Advisors
- Heroes Linked: Military Veterans Appreciation Trust Foundation, Board of Advisors
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, Naval Studies Board, Member
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, Member—Committee on Polar Icebreaker Cost Assessment
- U. S. Global Leadership Coalition, Member, National Security Advisory Council
- Coast Guard Academy Board of Trustees Member
- Association for Rescue at Sea, Board Member
- Country Place Citizens Association, Chair, Covenants Committee
- Pacific Architects and Engineers (PAE), Vice President
- A-T Solutions, Group President
- Frontier Security Strategies, Expert

12. Please list each membership you have had during the past ten years or currently hold with any civic, social, charitable, educational, political, professional, fraternal, benevolent or religious organization, private club, or other membership organization. Include dates of membership and any positions you have held with any organization. Please note whether any such club or organization restricts membership on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age, or handicap.

Coast Guard Academy Alumni Association, 1977–Present, Member
MIT Sloan Alumni Association, 1997–Present, Member

Neither organization restricts membership on the basis listed in the question.

13. Have you ever been a candidate for and/or held a public office (elected, non-elected, or appointed)? If so, indicate whether any campaign has any outstanding debt, the amount, and whether you are personally liable for that debt.

14. Itemize all political contributions to any individual, campaign organization (political party) political action committee, or similar entity of \$500 or more for the past ten years. Also list all offices you have held with, and services rendered to, a state or national political party or election committee during the same period. None.

15. List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, military medals, and any other special recognition for outstanding service or achievements.

Homeland Security Distinguished Service Medal
Coast Guard Distinguished Service Medal (2 awards)
Legion of Merit (2 awards)
Meritorious Service Medal (5 awards)
Coast Guard Commendation Medal (2 awards)
Coast Guard Achievement Medal (4 awards)
Coast Guard Commandant's Letter of Commendation (1 award)

16. Please list each book, article, column, or publication you have authored, individually or with others. Also list any speeches that you have given on topics relevant to the position for which you have been nominated. Do not attach copies of these publications unless otherwise instructed.

I have authored three articles:

- “Maritime Security for our Nation’s Democratic Process,” Joint Center for Operational Analysis and Lessons Learned, Quarterly Bulletin, Volume VII, Issue 1, December 2004;
- Marine Safety Program Editorial: Pacific Maritime Magazine, October, 2007; and
- “Modernization and the Coast Guard Reserve,” Rudder Post Newsletter, November, 2008.

Since my active duty CG service, I have spoken at a Maritime Security Conference in Miami and at a World Customs Organization IT Conference in Brisbane, Australia. Both speeches were on cross-border risk management.

17. Please identify each instance in which you have testified orally or in writing before Congress in a governmental or non-governmental capacity and specify the date and subject matter of each testimony.

House Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Border, Maritime and Global Counterterrorism: Hearing on Border Security, February 13, 2007
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation Hearing on the Implementation of the SAFE Port Act, October 4, 2007

18. Given the current mission, major programs, and major operational objectives of the department/agency to which you have been nominated, what in your background or employment experience do you believe affirmatively qualifies you for appointment to the position for which you have been nominated, and why do you wish to serve in that position?

- Performance in top leadership positions of a large operational agency in the Department of Homeland Security;
- Experience in operational risk management and risk mitigation;
- Crisis leadership;
- Experience working with other federal, state and local law enforcement and public safety agencies;
- Experience in working with industry and interest groups;
- Knowledge of improvised explosive devices; and
- Business experience in government services contracting.

I am honored to be nominated by the President for the position of Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security, Transportation Security Administration. I wish to serve in this position because I bring seasoned executive level leadership that I will put to use to further improve TSA operations and position the agency for the future. This is a great opportunity to serve our country, lead the outstanding men and women serving in TSA and help protect the American people.

19. What do you believe are your responsibilities, if confirmed, to ensure that the department/agency has proper management and accounting controls, and what experience do you have in managing a large organization?

If confirmed, I will be responsible for ensuring required management and accounting controls are being used at TSA. My most relevant experience in managing a large organization was my service as Vice Commandant. In that position I was the Coast Guard's Vice service chief, Chief Operating Officer and Component Acquisition Executive.

20. What do you believe to be the top three challenges facing the department/agency, and why?

The top three challenges, from my perspective as a nominee, are workforce engagement, innovation, and surface transportation security.

Workforce Engagement. TSA is comprised of approximately 60,000 dedicated men and women who help ensure the security of our aviation and surface transportation systems. The workforce must be responsive to the changing threat environment in providing effective and efficient security services. They represent the face of government to the traveling public and enjoy a public trust that their work makes air travel secure. I will place emphasis on training and leadership development of the TSA workforce with the goal of continued performance improvement and higher levels of employee satisfaction.

Innovation. TSA has an innovation task force that formed a beneficial public-private partnership with industry, airports and airlines to foster innovation. This task force is working to identify and introduce technology solutions to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of checkpoint security. This outstanding effort needs to continue to receive strong support from top leadership. In addition to technological solutions, this partnership can foster innovation on process improvements using existing and new technology.

Surface Transportation Security. TSA's role in surface transportation security is focused on security program oversight, system assessments, voluntary operator compliance with industry standards, collaborative law enforcement and security operations, and regulations. The risk to surface transportation needs to be continually evaluated as threats evolve. Surface transportation systems are vulnerable and a security incident can result in significant negative consequences. I will ensure TSA continues to place emphasis on surface transportation security.

B. POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

1. Describe all financial arrangements, deferred compensation agreements, and other continuing dealings with business associates, clients, or customers. Please include information related to retirement accounts.

Pursuant to a separation agreement with PAE, I receive fixed biweekly payments that will continue through November, 2017. As part of the agreement, I agreed to cooperate with PAE in a specific litigation matter upon request and for which PAE will reimburse me for reasonable expenses incurred in connection with such assistance with advance approval from PAE.

I continue to participate in PAE's 401 (k) defined contribution plan. The plan sponsor (PAE) no longer makes contributions. The sole underlying asset in this defined contribution plan is detailed in the Assets and Income section of my nominee Financial Disclosure Report (OGE Form 278e).

As a Coast Guard retiree, I also receive monthly retirement payments from the Federal Government.

2. Do you have any commitments or agreements, formal or informal, to maintain employment, affiliation, or practice with any business, association or other organization during your appointment? If so, please explain.

None except as described in 1 above.

3. Indicate any investments, obligations, liabilities, or other relationships which could involve potential conflicts of interest in the position to which you have been nominated. None.

4. Describe any business relationship, dealing, or financial transaction which you have had during the last ten years, whether for yourself, on behalf of a client, or acting as an agent, that could in any way constitute or result in a possible conflict of interest in the position to which you have been nominated.

In connection with the nomination process, I have consulted with the Office of Government Ethics and the Department of Homeland Security's Designated Agency Ethics Official to identify potential conflicts of interest. Any potential conflicts of interest will be resolved in accordance with the terms of an ethics agreement that I have entered into with the Department's Designated Agency Ethics Official and that has been provided to this Committee. I am not aware of any other potential conflicts of interest.

5. Describe any activity during the past ten years in which you have been engaged for the purpose of directly or indirectly influencing the passage, defeat, or modification of any legislation or affecting the administration and execution of law or public policy. None.

6. Explain how you will resolve any potential conflict of interest, including any that may be disclosed by your responses to the above items.

I would obtain the advice of the agency or department ethics official and follow that advice.

C. LEGAL MATTERS

1. Have you ever been disciplined or cited for a breach of ethics, professional misconduct, or retaliation by, or been the subject of a complaint to, any court, administrative agency, the Office of Special Counsel, professional association, disciplinary committee, or other professional group? If yes:

- Provide the name of agency, association, committee, or group;
- Provide the date the citation, disciplinary action, complaint, or personnel action was issued or initiated;
- Describe the citation, disciplinary action, complaint, or personnel action;
- Provide the results of the citation, disciplinary action, complaint, or personnel action.

No.

2. Have you ever been investigated, arrested, charged, or held by any Federal, State, or other law enforcement authority of any Federal, State, county, or municipal entity, other than for a minor traffic offense? If so, please explain. No.

3. Have you or any business or nonprofit of which you are or were an officer ever been involved as a party in an administrative agency proceeding, criminal proceeding, or civil litigation? If so, please explain. No.

4. Have you ever been convicted (including pleas of guilty or *nolo contendere*) of any criminal violation other than a minor traffic offense? If so, please explain. No.

5. Have you ever been accused, formally or informally, of sexual harassment or discrimination on the basis of sex, race, religion, or any other basis? If so, please explain.

There was a complaint of discrimination under the Age Discrimination Employment Act of 1967 initiated by an employee in 2005. A mediation process was implemented and all issues between the parties have been resolved. The agreement, signed on September 20, 2005, contains a confidentiality clause which prohibits divulging the details of the case.

6. Please advise the Committee of any additional information, favorable or unfavorable, which you feel should be disclosed in connection with your nomination. None.

D. RELATIONSHIP WITH COMMITTEE

1. Will you ensure that your department/agency complies with deadlines for information set by congressional committees? Yes.

2. Will you ensure that your department/agency does whatever it can to protect congressional witnesses and whistle blowers from reprisal for their testimony and disclosures? Yes.

3. Will you cooperate in providing the Committee with requested witnesses, including technical experts and career employees, with firsthand knowledge of matters of interest to the Committee? Yes.

4. Are you willing to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Congress on such occasions as you may be reasonably requested to do so? Yes.

RESUMÉ OF DAVID P. PEKOSKE

Career Objective: Executive leadership position with a high growth/high impact organization

Summary: Over six years of executive business experience leading a homeland security/intelligence government services business area with responsibility for revenue of \$110 million and 13 percent year-over-year growth. Board Chairman of a national security related not-for-profit with over 35,000 members nation-wide. Extensive experience in military and Federal interagency operations based on over 30 years of Coast Guard service and continued strong relationships within government. Strong executive leadership, management and communications ability. Strengths include:

- Strategy development
- Operational leadership
- Crisis management
- Risk Assessment
- Financial management
- Team building

Accomplishments

Strategy development: Developed growth campaigns in the intelligence, software development and homeland security business areas that grew revenue even during periods of significant pressure on Federal appropriations. Led a board of directors in developing and implementing a national strategy to strengthen public-private sector partnerships to enhance critical infrastructure protection.

Operational leadership: Executive responsibility for the execution of multiple U.S. and foreign government contracts and the achievement of business goals for revenue and profit. Led national planning effort for maritime security operations during the 2004 national political nominating conventions in Boston and New York, the first since 9/11, directly contributing to the overall security success of both events.

Crisis management: Principal Federal Official for a national level counter-terrorism exercise that strengthened industry-government partnership and led to approval of a national response framework for crisis response.

Risk assessment: Led the improvement of cross-border risk management tools for vessels and cargo that are in use around the world. Matured U.S. Government Maritime Security Risk Assessment Management tool that consistently assesses risk in ports, identifying where greatest risk buy-down can occur, making security more effective and efficient.

Financial management: Expertly managed a profit and loss (P&L) business area. Demonstrated ability to improve return on sales performance and achieve organic and new business growth. As the Coast Guard's Component Acquisition Executive, championed the development and execution of an annual acquisition budget that exceeded \$1 billion in the largest major asset recapitalization in Coast Guard history.

Team building: Successfully integrated business areas from two separate companies into a third larger company. Skillfully integrated the acquisition of a niche technology company into a larger national security services business. Co-chaired a Na-

tional Security Council working group that developed policy choices and coordinated U.S. Government planning for a potential mass migration from Cuba.

Recent Employment History

Vice President, National Programs, PAE, (2010–2016): Leads a business area focused on the intelligence and homeland security markets with responsibility for \$110 million in revenue, \$11 million in EBIT and 1,200 employees/consultants. Was formerly a business unit president for a similar customer base with A-T Solutions prior to its acquisition in 2015 by PAE.

Vice Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard, Washington, D.C. (2009–2010): Second-in-command of the U.S. Coast Guard, an 88,000-person military service/federal agency with a \$10.5 billion annual appropriation. Chief Operating Officer and Component Acquisition Executive. First line supervisor of CFO. Managed executive development, assignments and evaluations.

Commander, Coast Guard Pacific Area, Alameda, CA (2008–2009): Operational commander for all Coast Guard operations in the Pacific, the Arctic and the Antarctic. Led the development of two new national commands, the Deployable Operations Group and the Force Readiness Command.

Assistant Commandant for Operations, U.S. Coast Guard, Washington, D.C. (2006–2008): Policy and resource responsibility for all of the Coast Guard's operating programs. Chaired the Coast Guard Awards Board. Co-chaired the Cuba Migration Work Group, National Security Council. Chaired a DHS committee reporting to the Deputy Secretary that made significant improvements to operations coordination across all of the DHS operating components.

Commander, First Coast Guard District, Boston, MA (2004–2006): Operational commander for all northeastern U.S. operational units. Pre-designated Principal Federal Official for hurricane preparedness and response in the Northeast.

Military bio available at:

http://www.uscg.mil/history/people/Flags/VCG/PekoskeDavidP_Bio.pdf

Education

Master of Business Administration, Sloan School of Management, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Master of Public Administration, School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University

Bachelor of Science in Ocean Engineering, U.S. Coast Guard Academy

Security Clearance: Top Secret/SCI

Boards and Associations

Member, Naval Studies Board, National Academies, 2013–Pres.

Chairman, InfraGard National Members Alliance Board of Directors (a 35,000 member 501 (c) (3)), 2012–2015

Member, U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, National Security Advisory Council, 2013–Pres.

Member, Association for Rescue at Sea Board of Directors, 2015–Pres. Member, Heroes Linked Advisory Board, 2015–Pres.

Member, Jewish Institute of National Security Affairs Board of Advisors, 2013–Pres.

Member, Adjunct Faculty, American University School of Public Affairs, 2012–Pres.

Instructor, Naval Postgraduate School Center for Executive Education, 2008–Pres.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Admiral. We appreciate very much your willingness to serve in what is a critically important position. And we look forward to working with you to meet the challenges that we have ahead of us.

Let me start by asking a question about the PreCheck program at TSA in which I, and I assume a number of the Members of this panel, participate. It's a valuable risk-based security measure that provides expedited checkpoint screening at airports for low-risk trusted travelers.

Last year, we included a provision in the FAA Extension to strengthen TSA's faltering efforts to expand the PreCheck Application program and enroll more vetted travelers. Since enactment, the TSA has not implemented key elements required under the law, such as soliciting multiple private sector enrollment options or identifying a specific time-frame and long-term strategy for approving private sector marketing and PreCheck.

So the question, Admiral, is, do you believe it's important to expand PreCheck enrollment opportunities for the traveling public so that more trusted travelers are flying our skies and the TSA can therefore focus on screening high-risk travelers?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Mr. Chairman, yes, I do. I am also a PreCheck participant. I think it's a terrific program. About 5 million of our travelers are enrolled in PreCheck, and then when you add in some of the other programs, you get up to about 8 million people. But that only accounts for maybe 18 or 20 percent of the traveling public, which is way too low in my opinion. If confirmed, I'm going to take a close look at the recommendations that the Committee has made, was passed in law, and do everything we can to make enrollment easier for people, encourage enrollment, and ensure that the incentives for PreCheck are clear and evident to travelers as they go through the queue, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. And so that's what I want, the follow up is, will you commit to fulfilling the directives from Congress regarding this program in a timely manner and then update our Committee on how TSA will expand PreCheck under your leadership?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir, I commit to doing that.

The CHAIRMAN. TSA's primary focus has been aviation security. However, threats have continued to evolve, and soft targets and open environments, such as train stations, have become an area of increasing concern. If confirmed, how would you seek to address these security challenges without impeding the flow of passengers and commerce?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Sir, we're reminded nearly every day now of the risks in the surface transportation mode and also the risks in the aviation mode. And from my perspective, if confirmed, I would absolutely bring that risk-based approach to weighing how resources are allocated amongst the different modes of transportation.

When I look at the risk in any particular transportation mode, I look at three things: I look at the threat, the vulnerability, and the consequence should an incident occur. I can see the vulnerability and the consequence absolutely in the surface transportation side. I don't yet have the intelligence briefings that would help me evaluate the threat, but I intend to do that very quickly if confirmed and take a very close look at that. That is a key priority of mine.

I'm a user of mass transit and I just think we need to reassure ourselves of a very dynamic, a very moving threat picture, and make sure that we're applying resources in the right locations.

The CHAIRMAN. Historically, TSA has experienced difficulties in retaining full-time security officers. Staffing levels fell by more than 4,600 from 2013 to 2016 while passenger volumes during the

same time period rose by approximately 15 percent. If confirmed, what would you do to increase the retention rates at TSA?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, looking at the retention rates and the overall job satisfaction amongst the TSA workforce is one of my very top priorities. The TSA workforce, particularly at the front lines, are the front line of our organization. They interact with the American public day in and day out in the number of millions of interactions. I think that continuing the efforts of Administrator Neffenger in that regard would be very appropriate, providing training, providing some sense of what a career path in TSA would look like for our frontline officials, a career path in other elements of the Department of Homeland Security as well would be very important.

The bottom line, though, from my perspective, having worked with a widely dispersed workforce in the Coast Guard of similar size, it's very important for top leadership to be present with that workforce to understand what challenges they have in accomplishing their job and to support them in good procedures, seek their input, provide appropriate technology out there, but really understand the challenges that that frontline workforce is facing.

Finally, I would say that an attrition rate that approaches 12 percent for the full-time workforce costs a lot of money, and it also reduces the effectiveness of the agency because you lose that experience base going forward. And so increased retention and job satisfaction are absolute top priorities of mine.

The CHAIRMAN. Great. Recent terror threats to commercial aviation resulted in a ban on certain carry-on electronic devices for individuals traveling from select airports to the United States. And as I noted in my opening remarks, this ban and the debate about whether to expand it demonstrate both the urgent need to work with our aviation partners and to quickly deploy advanced security technology to combat the latest threats. Unfortunately, it currently takes TSA many years to test, evaluate, procure, and deploy new technologies.

How will you prioritize deploying the latest security technology quickly and effectively? And will you work with Congress to bring any ideas to the table from your private sector experience regarding ways that TSA could improve its efforts?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir, I would absolutely work with Congress and bring my private sector experience to the table. I had a different perspective in the private sector and have a number of ways I think that government agencies can be much more responsive and get better value for their investment in private sector work.

The TSA, as I understand it, has stood up an Innovation Task Force that has looked at various technologies to put in place at the screening locations. This is showing real promise, from what I understand. My experience in the Coast Guard Innovation is significant, and I would bring that experience to TSA in accelerating the work of the Innovation Task Force. I'll throw my full support behind it, if confirmed, but also looking for input from the TSA workforce and stakeholders of TSA as to how we can improve our processes. We, in the Coast Guard, receive an awful lot of good recommendations, and basically use a crowdsourcing methodology to

beta test them, if you will, and I would look to bring some similar system like that in place in TSA, if confirmed, to get input from the workforce and from stakeholders on how we can better process people through screening points.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Admiral.

Senator Nelson.

Senator NELSON. Mr. Chairman, I think Senator Booker has an appointment that he needs to make, so let me defer to him for the questioning.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Booker.

**STATEMENT OF HON. CORY BOOKER,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY**

Senator BOOKER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much to my Ranking Member.

I've been really concerned about within the 9/11 Report, they talk very specifically about the urgency around rail security in our country, but I haven't seen sort of a coordinated plan coming out of TSA about allocating assets to rail safety and rail security.

As you know, in September 2016, there were a series of attacks carried out in New York and New Jersey, including an incident involving pipe bombs found near Amtrak, a New Jersey Transit train station, in Elizabeth, New Jersey. There were incredible law enforcement leaders at that time who worked diligently. They located the pipe bombs. They were able to remove them before they could harm passengers. It was really a great tribute to law enforcement in the New Jersey community, but the incidents really underscore how vulnerable many of our surface transportation systems are to these threats.

I don't believe that we're even complying with some of the directives that came out of the 9/11 Report, and it seems often we're fighting the last terrorist attack or the last incident as opposed to looking about forward. And we see what's happening in Europe where a number of attacks are focused on rail transportation. And the incident in Brussels obviously continues to highlight the need to address surface transportation security.

So can you describe to me some of the ways that TSA, under your leadership, can address these security threats of surface transportation specifically with my concerns around the safety of rail transportation in our country?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. If confirmed, I would put a lot of effort in TSA into looking at the intelligence around the rail threat in particular. TSA has an exceptional intelligence and analysis operation. It's very well coordinated with the intelligence community overall. And from my perspective, the intelligence community has done a very good job of keeping Americans safe, and really, as you said, looking at the threat that is next, not the threat that we just dealt with. So I would place a lot of emphasis, if confirmed, on looking at the threat for rail.

And then in addition to that, great communication with the rail operators and the local law enforcement around those key rail transportation nodes so you can understand from their perspective what they see. They have their own sources of information, certainly valuable experience, that we could all benefit from. And this

is very much a collaborative effort, but I would place a lot of emphasis on really focusing intelligence to make sure that we've taken a good hard look at this and understand the risk.

Senator BOOKER. OK. And then just specifically the 9/11 Report. It was actually way back in 2007. I wasn't here then, but Congress passed legislation requiring the TSA and other agencies to implement the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. What has been frustrating to me is that some of those recommendations have languished since 2007, like the training for frontline transit and freight employees. And this was an area of significant frustration for me when I came to the U.S. Senate, to see specific requirements from Congress not being fulfilled.

And so can you commit to implementing the 9/11 requirements in order to ensure that we have more frontline employees protecting our surface transportation system? Even just the allocation of TSA resources, it's so dramatically weighted toward air travel, which is critical and important, but even the 9/11 Commission indicated the concerns with surface transportation, and it seems to me—but, again, there were requirements for reporting of a plan, but it seems to me we should have a better investment in resources.

And so I guess what I'm looking for is just a commitment on implementing the specific 9/11 requirements and the congressional legislation passed in 2007.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir, you have my commitment to do that. And I would be happy to report back to you if confirmed on the status shortly after I get into office.

Senator BOOKER. So I'm grateful. Just really quickly, port security is obviously something that's very important to the state of New Jersey and is part of TSA's mission. Would you also commit to ensuring me that major seaports like the Port Authority—like the Port of New York and New Jersey will have the resources and support to ensure secure movement of freight?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. The TSA works very closely with the Coast Guard, of which I'm very, very familiar.

Senator BOOKER. Yes.

Admiral PEKOSKE. And when I was the First District Commander, I had oversight of the captain of the port operations in the Port of New York and New Jersey, and I will commit to taking a very close and hard look at that to make sure that the TSA and Coast Guard coordination is what we would expect it to be.

Senator BOOKER. Right. And no need to respond, but I'm just hoping that aspects like the VIPR team bomb-sniffing canines, something that we've had bipartisan support for, are really critical.

And with my last 10 seconds, I just want to thank you for your willingness to continue to serve your country. It's an extraordinary commitment that many Americans make. They don't get the gratitude that they deserve. But I want you to know I'm grateful that you're putting yourself up for this position and willing to subject yourself to questions like these.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Thank you, Senator. I appreciate it.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Booker.

Senator Inhofe.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JIM INHOFE,
U.S. SENATOR FROM OKLAHOMA**

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral, first of all, I appreciate very much the time that you spent with me and with other members of this Committee prior to this hearing. And everyone knows how significant this is. I shared with you some personal experiences I've had with the Coast Guard, with what they have done, their expertise in the area that you are going to be involved in, even commenting that when I had occasion to fly a little airplane around the world, I found myself going from Coast Guard station to Coast Guard station because I knew what their missions were, and it's so much more than just search and rescue.

I think it would be worthwhile to run over a few things that the Coast Guard has been doing, because before it was popular, they were involved in this field. So what the Coast Guard has been doing in terms of its mission and then how you personally were involved in that. And then following that up on specifically what you were doing on 9/11 and so forth.

Let's start with the Coast Guard in general as a training ground for this job.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Senator, thanks for the question. I think the Coast Guard is actually almost a perfect training ground for this job. And if you look at the similarities between what the Coast Guard does and what TSA does, it's striking how similar the organizations are, both relying on a risk-based approach to providing the right resources at the right place at the right time. Both are law enforcement agencies. Both are regulatory agencies. Both are upscale. Coast Guard, 50,000-plus individuals all throughout the country, as you mentioned, at smaller stations, TSOs, and the Federal security director staffs all throughout the Nation, 440-some-odd locations. And certainly both in the Department of Homeland Security originated in the Department of Transportation.

I think, too, that both organizations rely heavily on intelligence information to kind of get ahead, as Senator Booker was mentioning, to get ahead of the next threat so that we're there and ready to meet it, should it occur.

And so I think really from those aspects of similarities with the organization, it's a really good fit.

Additionally, I would say that, to go to the Chairman's question earlier, when you look at the TSA workforce, how can you really invest more heavily in that workforce? These folks are on the front line of our operations. In my view, my experience traveling over all the years since TSA has been established is I've never had a bad experience at a security checkpoint. I really respect very much the work that our individuals, should I be confirmed in TSA, perform day in and day out.

What I think is needed, though, is more investment in them as individuals, in their training, and also in leadership overall within the organization. TSA is 16 years old. The Coast Guard is 226 years old. And what I bring from the Coast Guard is a perspective of what a culture looks like that can be rapid response to a changing dynamic threat that can empower people at the lowest levels of the organization that are facing the American public and really

are the ones that make the decisions that mean success or failure for your mission overall.

And so I am looking forward to joining the TSA workforce, if confirmed, as much as I enjoyed working with the Coast Guard workforce, which I enjoyed tremendously.

With respect to the public area of security, TSA, as I understand it, has an initiative to look at public area security overall, has a framework in place to be able to do that, and is putting the resources and the time to ensure better coordination and to ensure some standardization, if you will, across the country at some basic level of performance. So I think there has been good work done in that regard as well.

Senator INHOFE. Yes, I was going to ask you that you elaborate a little bit on 9/11, what you were doing at that time and—

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. I was Admiral Loy's executive assistant on 9/11. And as we can all remember, it was a beautiful day here in Washington, D.C. We had several meetings in the morning. Literally in the middle of one of those meetings we got the first reports that flashed across the TV monitor, and then from there on, it was a full-up response trying to assess the impact of what was going on.

A couple of hours after the first attacks, of course, we heard and saw the impact on the Pentagon building. I can remember driving home that night, I lived in Northern Virginia at the time, driving right by the Pentagon and to see the Pentagon with smoke coming out of the structure was incredibly impactful for me because you really got to see and feel exactly what had happened.

I learned a lot by watching Admiral Loy and Secretary Mineta respond to that incident. I think that they demonstrated what I would hope to be able to demonstrate, is in a crisis when you're called on and you have to respond and you have to be really at the top of your profession in doing it, both of those gentlemen were.

Senator INHOFE. And the reason I bring that up, because I've also had personal experience in the southern tip of Texas. Down there there's one of your stations, in South Padre Island, Texas.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Right.

Senator INHOFE. Every time we've had some type of an incident come up or a threat of a terrorist attack, the very thing that you'll be doing in your job, they were the first ones to respond.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Right.

Senator INHOFE. And I've been down there and I've actually seen them. And my time is expired, but just one word of caution. There will be a lot of people out there that would like to use an incident that may be isolated where some little old lady is being frisked or something, you know what is going to happen, and so you're going to get ready for a media that's not your best friend. They may be now, but they won't be later on as this progresses.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir.

Senator INHOFE. I look forward to working with you.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. Thank you, likewise.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Inhofe.

Senator Masto.

**STATEMENT OF HON. CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEVADA**

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you.

Admiral, it's good to see you again. Thank you again for taking the time.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Thank you.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. And let me just say this. Like you, I was here during 9/11, I was actually working in the U.S. Attorney's Office, and that has shaped my interactions as a prosecutor, not only here locally, but for the state of Nevada, and how we should be responding and our concerns with terrorist activity, not just in our states, but around the world.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Right.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. So I appreciate your comments. I want to jump back to the budget because we talked a little bit about that. You're going to be having to work in an environment where there are budget cuts that are happening. And I will tell you I am concerned about the impact that those budget cuts are going to happen on the mission of the TSA if you are confirmed. So I want to talk a little bit about that.

As a matter of policy, can you talk a little bit about your perspective on K9 units and how valuable those are to the mission of the TSA? I know we are including some funding to increase the K9 units. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, Senator, I can. I am a very strong supporter of K9 teams. I think they are incredibly effective at detecting what they are trained to detect. And also, equally important in some ways, is they're very effective in deterring activity wherever the canines are present. They're very easy to see, and I think it deters behavior. It might signal a behavior detection officer to notice some response on the part of an individual in a public area where a K9 is operating.

In the Coast Guard, we had K9 teams, a very small number, but we had K9 teams. We found them to be very effective for the work that we did. I will place high emphasis on K9 capability. I think it's a very good investment for TSA. It's a very good investment for the country. The challenge with K9 teams is it takes a long time to train them. It takes about a year to train the handler and the dog, but once they're trained, they're a team for many years. And I am a huge fan and will place continued emphasis on it.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. But I appreciate you saying that because I do have concerns with respect to the budget cuts. We are cutting TSA agents for the exit lane staffing.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Right.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. And can you address that? How will you—if those cuts go through, is that going to impact your mission? And how will you fill that gap?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Senator, thank you. I was not involved, as you know, in those decisions. I saw the budget as the budget was released by the Administration back in May. If confirmed, I will get together with the TSA budget operation and really understand the rationale behind some of those budget actions. And I also commit to you and this Committee that as you do your work in the appropriations process and the review process, as the Senate and the

House do, we will be very responsive to information you may need to make judgments with respect to the budget in FY18.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you. And I would hope that you would commit to being an advocate for your staff, for the resources that you need, against any ill-advised spending cuts, particularly those that are going to be unfortunately used to build potentially a border wall or reinforce and take away from the mission of the TSA. I would hope you can commit to at least being an advocate for that.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, Senator, that's a key aspect of my job, is to advocate for the agency to make sure we have the capability that we need to perform the mission that we've been tasked with performing, but knowing full well that there are going to be tradeoffs. There are affordability issues always, but my job is to advocate for what I think is best for TSA.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you. And, Admiral, can you talk just a little bit philosophically how you see the relationship and the responsibilities at the Federal level versus those at the local airports and how you envision that relationship moving forward? Obviously, what you do impacts a lot of our airports in many of our communities. And how do you plan on developing that relationship and what do you think it should look like?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Senator, thank you for the question. I plan to invest an awful lot of time in developing relationships within TSA, with the TSA workforce, understanding what they deal with day in and day out, and how TSA can best support them in accomplishing the mission they need to perform. If confirmed, I will also spend a great deal of time with all the stakeholders for transportation security writ large, aviation and surface. So I want to know the partners. I know what issues they have and can consider that.

And I think it's important to have really good relationships in advance. If there's an incident or something happens or people tend to get at odds, having a relationship in advance is critically important. And so I would invest significant time in the early part of my tenure at TSA, if confirmed, in getting to know all the stakeholders across the transportation systems and having a good relationship with them.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you. And then, finally, we had this discussion as well. Your TSA officers, they have discretion.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Right.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. And I would hope that you would be committed to adopting written policies and procedures and help guiding that discretion for those TSA officers and recognizing the importance of guiding that discretion.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, Senator, I think it's really important to have guidance out there. And I also think it's equally important that our officers on the front lines have a degree of discretion. When I was in their position as a much younger officer in the Coast Guard, I appreciated the discretion the organization gave me, but I had guidelines that I needed to follow because, you know, when you have a response to something, you need to make instant decisions. And I want the workforce to know, if confirmed, that they have the discretion within those guidelines to make the decisions they need to make.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you, Admiral.
 Admiral PEKOSKE. Thank you.
 The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Masto.
 Senator Gardner.

**STATEMENT OF HON. CORY GARDNER,
 U.S. SENATOR FROM COLORADO**

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Admiral Pecoske, for being here today. When Congress passed—the last Congress—the FAA Extension bill, it included legislation that I authored known as the SCREEN FAST Act. The bill established a pilot program at category X airports for the purpose of implementing innovative screening checkpoints to improve security of passenger throughput. Last week, TSA announced that it was moving forward with these pilot programs through implementation of a new security checkpoint at Denver International Airport checkpoint lane with innovative screening technology using biometric technology that had, quote, the potential to automate the travel document checking process. Obviously, these are pretty exciting possibilities and could mean a significant—make a significant difference in terms of the throughput of our airports. And so I would just hope we could get your commitment today for your continued implementation and work to continually implement the pilot programs outlined in SCREEN FAST at Denver International Airport and other airports across the country.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir, you have that commitment. In fact, I'm very excited about those pilot programs. If confirmed, one of the things that I would want to take a look at is, what does the checkpoint of the future look like? And it would embed I think some of those ideas. But that would be to me a North Star, if you will, for the future of the organization. You could align your personnel strategies, your acquisition strategies, your innovation strategies, to get to that goal. So I agree with you 100 percent, sir, that the more we can embed technology, just try some things out. I mean, I think we should be willing to try some things out, and if they don't work as envisioned, then we look at something else. But trying them out is important.

Senator GARDNER. And there are a lot of airports like DIA and others around the country that have some pretty great facilities that would allow those testing projects, pilot programs, to occur. They have a lot of space and a lot of opportunity to really see how they can work and how they can be combined with TSA and airport initiatives.

Speaking of Denver International Airport and the work they're doing, obviously, if you travel there, you will see that in the Great Hall where they do the screening, you've got the upper level here where you can kind of sit, stand, take pictures looking down at everybody going through the checkpoints. You can take a look at who is doing what when it comes to security screening. You can take pictures of the monitors as the X-ray machines do their work.

And so DIA recognizes, particularly in light of other tragic events around the globe, the need to make some security changes at the airport. And so they're working on advanced security technologies

and talk about restructuring the main terminal building to move the security locations.

And I would like your commitment to work with DIA and other airports to ensure that their checkpoints, their TSA checkpoints, are adequately funded, the transition process at DIA is smooth and on schedule with minimal disruption.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir, you have that commitment. And I applaud their initiative, in looking at it.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you. And in the TSA budget request, it includes a proposal to eliminate funding for the law enforcement office program, which reimburses airports for the law enforcement efforts that they put toward funding to complement TSA's security presence. Airports in Colorado, like Colorado Springs Airport, have expressed concerns that these proposed cuts could hurt their ability to have local law enforcement partnerships with the Federal Government to keep these places safe and secure. So if confirmed, will you review the proposal to eliminate funding for the LEO office?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Senator, if confirmed, I will certainly examine the proposal to eliminate funding. Secretary Kelly testified on this just recently, and I'll just echo his comments that when those grants were first established, they were really never intended to be grants forever. It was intended to provide a boost when the program was first starting up. So I understand the rationale for what's in the budget, but I will take a close look at it if confirmed.

Senator GARDNER. Admiral Pecoske, thank you.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Gardner.

Senator Nelson.

Senator NELSON. Just a couple of questions here so we can get on with our members' questions. Tell me, I mentioned in my opening remarks that the administration's proposed budget cuts the VIPR teams. Since you are appointed by the administration, how are you going to get around this other than us increasing the VIPR teams in the legislation?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Sir, the budget proposal, as I understand it, reduces the VIPR teams from 31 to 8, so there are still some VIPR teams present. I have worked with VIPR teams in the past. I understand the value that they provide, not just to aviation transportation security, but also to surface transportation security. I will work very hard to understand if those cuts are implemented how TSA would best implement those and coordinate very closely with our stakeholders.

But at the end of the day, I support the President's budget, but I want to make sure that as the appropriations process proceeds, that Members of Congress have the information that they need to make their own assessment of what's in the budget.

Senator NELSON. Well, then basically, I hate to put it this way, but we're going to have to save you from yourself. You know, last year we doubled the number of VIPR teams on the appropriate legislation, and everybody agreed with that. That was not a controversial issue. And now the President is taking the current set before they've ever been doubled and is cutting that, and that's just not going to stand.

So I guess it's going to have to be us rescuing you to not only double it as to what was provided last year, but even increase it further, because there is nothing like a dog as a deterrent, particularly in these areas where people are queuing up outside of security.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. And I agree with the risk of large congregations of people in any public space and what that presents. And I would say that my experience with the VIPR teams is very positive. I do think they have a very good effect on security.

Senator NELSON. I just—I feel—I cringe for you that you have to support the President's budget because you have to, when, in fact, everybody in this room knows that it ought to go the other way.

Let me ask you about the DHS Inspector General conducted covert testing of TSA's passenger screening technologies, and the results are classified, but the IG described the results as troubling and disappointing. And according to media reports, TSA airport screeners failed to detect explosives and weapons nearly 95 percent of the time. So the DHS IG has announced that he is now engaged in another round of covert testing. So what would you, when you get to be Administrator, do to correct the deficiencies that are noted in the IG report?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. If confirmed, one of the first things I'll do is read the IG report. I haven't been able to read the classified sections of that report. I know the report exists and have seen the media reports that you mentioned, sir. And I would just say as well that I appreciate the work the IG is doing. I think that's a very valuable input into TSA operations, and I take to heart the IG recommendations, but will look very closely at the classified section of that report.

Senator NELSON. OK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to give the opportunity to the members.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Nelson.

Senator Sullivan.

**STATEMENT OF HON. DAN SULLIVAN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM ALASKA**

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Admiral, thank you for your willingness to serve. I think you have a great background. I think you're very well qualified. I look forward to supporting your confirmation. I also appreciate your quote from Alexander Hamilton in your written statement. I think that that not just applies to you, but should apply to all of us, right? It's a very useful quote when we're thinking about public service and the privilege that we all have in serving our fellow Americans.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir.

Senator SULLIVAN. I also appreciate just the focus in this hearing on the issues that you talked about in terms of personnel and retention and morale of the workforce. Like a lot of my colleagues, I travel a lot. I live in Anchorage, and I see the TSA officials literally a couple times a week, and I think overall we have outstanding men and women, you know, at least in my state, in Anchorage and Fairbanks, throughout the entire state. So I think addressing morale issues, as you say, you're a young agency, is going

to be really important. Any sense on that? I know you've got to get on the ground and get a sense, but any sense right now how you want to do that?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. I think it's critically important. And my sense right now, and based on my experience in the Coast Guard, is I think it's critically important that the top leadership of an organization interact with, understand, walk in the shoes of—

Senator SULLIVAN. Yes.

Admiral PEKOSKE.—their frontline employees. And it's important that those frontline employees know you have their back. You're providing them guidance. You want to seek their input as to how you do—you know, what kind of guidance should we provide you to do your job? But when they perform the job according to the guidance you provided, you stand behind those individuals because, as you know, sir, going through the check lines, everything is captured on video.

Senator SULLIVAN. Yes.

Admiral PEKOSKE. And oftentimes I assume that the TSA officers have followed the guidance that's been provided, I just think they need to be properly backed up by their leadership throughout. So for me, it would be showing keen interest in what they're doing, because that's very genuine on my part. When I was in the Coast Guard, I spent the majority of my time in the field trying to understand how the mission was performing and what I could do, as one of the leaders of the organization, to make the folks that we charge with actually performing the mission more effective at performing it.

Senator SULLIVAN. Great. Well, I think that's going to be an important focus.

We've talked about a number of areas in terms of security. I want to highlight three and then get a sense from you how you would prioritize these.

So we've obviously talked about air travel. And Senator Nelson just mentioned the whole issue of soft targets outside the security perimeter, which I think is a big issue. Senator Booker talked a lot and the Chairman talked about mass transit, and I also share their concerns. Obviously, Alaska doesn't have the kind of mass transit that New Jersey does, but it certainly looks like it's a potential for a soft target that terrorists could take advantage of.

One that does impact my state that I'd like your views on is critical infrastructure. You've spent time in Alaska. We have the 800-mile trans-Alaska pipeline that's one of the most important pieces of energy infrastructure in the country.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Right.

Senator SULLIVAN. So how do you prioritize those three different areas—air travel, mass transit on the ground, and critical infrastructure—when you're looking at your job responsibilities?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir, that's a significant challenge. And if confirmed, I would apply the same principles that we applied in the Coast Guard, which is what I understand TSA is doing right now, and that's taking a risk-based approach to how resources are allocated.

Senator SULLIVAN. Do you think TSA is giving enough attention to critical infrastructure, not just the traveling elements, the transportation elements of the responsibilities of TSA?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. I don't know the answer to that, but that's one of the answers I want to get if confirmed to make sure that we are, because it's looking across the entire transportation system, and you've got to have an effort to focus on all of that so you can make those risk-based judgments going forward.

Senator SULLIVAN. Well, I'd like your views on that once you get confirmed.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir.

Senator SULLIVAN. And, again, I look forward to supporting your confirmation.

Let me finish with, you know, DHS is moving forward with the implementation of the REAL ID standards for air travel in 2018. And as states are working their way through compliance, how do you foresee getting ahead of trying to mitigate what are bound to be and in some circumstances are already happening, passenger confusion and frustration at airport screening checkpoints, that are going to result from that law?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. If confirmed, I think communications is critical to make sure that folks understand. I think the worst thing that could happen is somebody shows up at the airport, they tried to find the information and couldn't find it somewhere. And so good communication is absolutely critical—

Senator SULLIVAN. Or that they know that they've got to come to the airport with certain IDs?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir, that's what I'm talking about. So that they know what IDs are acceptable at the airport.

Senator SULLIVAN. OK. Well, I think having a focus on that is going to be important—

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir.

Senator SULLIVAN.—so we can mitigate a bottleneck across the country once that implementation happens.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. Absolutely.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Sullivan.
Senator Cantwell.

**STATEMENT OF HON. MARIA CANTWELL,
U.S. SENATOR FROM WASHINGTON**

Senator CANTWELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Mr. Pekoske, thank you for your willingness to serve. Sea-Tac Airport has been one of the fastest growing large hub airports in the United States for the last 3 years. It was designated to handle about 25 million passengers, but last year it handled 45 million passengers, and it's going to continue to grow. So these issues of how we plan for security and efficiency are very critical to us. We have had many conversations, and TSA has been to Sea-Tac, tours, all of this, and has committed to adding additional staffing as the season demands, and I hope you would continue to do the same thing.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, Senator, I would.

Senator CANTWELL. Thank you. Then we will definitely be following up with you on details.

OK. My colleague from Nevada brought up the K9 units and their effectiveness. To me, post what's happened in international airports and our own facility, you mentioned deterrents, which I love the fact that these K9 units can be deterrents out in the outer perimeters of the airport, which is just a great added layer of security. And also they can help make for a more expedient line, which is one of the ways that we handle Sea-Tac because if you're built for 25 million and you're handling 45 million, you need some tools. And so they've been a very viable tool there.

One of the ideas that we have been looking at, because I think nationally we need about 300 to 500 more K9 units, and the training does take a long time and the certification takes a long time.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Right.

Senator CANTWELL. What about looking at—would you be willing to look at information and material about doing some of this training in facilities outside of Laughlin if it meet Laughlin standards?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, absolutely. As long as it meets the standards, I think how it's sourced is something we ought to take a look at. And as you mentioned, Senator, the supply is limited. And so if you have a desire to increase your capacity, you need to look at alternate sources of supply at the same time.

Senator CANTWELL. Well, thank you for that. That's a great commitment. And that's where I am. And just for the record, I know that some airports are anxious. Our airport is willing to pay for this. Sea-Tac has seen the cost effectiveness and the security aspect of it. And just as they pay for other airport improvements, they're willing to pay for this one. It's not letting the Federal Government off of any hook, they're just willing to help deal with the capacity issues.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Sure.

Senator CANTWELL. So I hope that some of our colleagues would look at that as well and discuss with TSA this ability to give us more capacity. There is no better security than these dogs, no better security that we can get. So their ability to detect explosives, people talk about what happened in Brussels, you know, that a K9 unit would have been able to target that activity well in advance. So I can't emphasize enough how much I think we need to make this investment. So thank you for your willingness to do the same.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Cantwell.

Senator Blumenthal.

**STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD BLUMENTHAL,
U.S. SENATOR FROM CONNECTICUT**

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for your service, and I appreciate you being here this morning.

One troubling area of threat around the world, and certainly at our transportation facilities, is the use of everyday implements, vehicles, in causing the kinds of mass attacks that we've come to associate with other forms of weapons, use of vans, for example, most recently in Britain and Brussels. I wonder if you could share with

us your insights as to how those kinds of attacks can be prevented, if they can be, what TSA is doing to research this area of threat, and how you're working with other agencies?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Sure. Senator, I don't know specifically how TSA is dealing with this kind of threat right now, but if confirmed, I would certainly take a very close look at that. I'm going to make an assumption, though, based on what I know about intelligence operations in my Coast Guard experience, is that they are looking at threats writ large across the board and closely coordinating with Federal, state, and local agencies to gather information, and also through social media to see what's on social media so they can get ahead of what might be chatted about on the World Wide Web. So, sir, I commit to you that I will take a very close look at that to ensure the intelligence is properly focused, if confirmed.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Well, I hope you will. You know, it's obviously an area of great urgency, and we tend to focus on the TSA screeners at the airports. And by the way, I want to join in thanking them for their service, as I do the Coast Guard. I try to thank the TSA screeners at the airports where I go. I have a feeling I'm in the minority of people they see in expressing my appreciation. But certainly they're very dedicated, they have tough work to do, and they perform an important service—

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL.—and you will be providing them with leadership.

And I want to say that 2 years ago I asked your predecessor at his nomination hearing about the task that Senator Booker raised, the task of our rail and transit network, its vulnerability, and the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. He committed to completing the task of requiring railroads to properly vet and train employees and have plans in place to prepare for and avert terrorist attacks at our rail and other transit facilities.

Now we have a new administration and now the rules unfortunately are still languishing. But making matters worse, the new administration has pursued a regulatory freeze and a hiring freeze, which may have impacts on the ongoing effort to implement these programs. So my question to you is, are you committed to completing these congressional mandates?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir, I am committed to going back and re-examining what the congressional mandate is so I understand it completely and getting a very thorough assessment as to where TSA is with respect to meeting those commitments. This is in law, so it's something that TSA is bound to comply with. So I will take a very close look at that, sir, if confirmed. And then I would like to get on your schedule to come back and talk with you about it.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I apologize that my schedule prevented us from getting together before now.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Sure.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. But I would welcome and be very eager to sit down with you.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Sure.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Let me ask, finally, in the short remaining time I have, last month Homeland Security Secretary Kelly said in an interview, television interview, on Fox, and I'm paraphrasing,

that passengers are trying to avoid check bag fees, cramming their belongings into carry-on bags, and that makes it harder for the TSA to screen bags. And the full quote is people trying to avoid the \$25 or \$50 or whatever it is to check a bag are now stuffing your carry-on bags to the point of, well, they can't get any more in there, so the more you stuff in there, the less TSA professionals that are looking at what's in those bags through the monitors, they can't tell what's in the bags anymore, end of quote. Would you agree with that assessment?

Admiral PEKOSKE. I would say guilty as charged. I do the same thing. I watch the TSA screeners try to make sense of what I have in my briefcase because I've got a lot of things in there, and I know it's incredibly difficult for them to do it. They do a very good job of trying to discern what's there. Oftentimes they have to refer to a supervisor to validate some of the conclusions they might make. But I agree with you, that there's an incentive to bring your bag with you, and therefore you put everything that you can in that bag, and it makes it harder for the screeners.

Sir, I also think that, if confirmed, we ought to look at the technology that might enable us to see better what's in those bags knowing that that's what passengers are doing.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. But there is a very low-tech solution here, which is to eliminate the bag fees.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Right.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. And to eliminate a lot of the incentive for people stuffing everything they own into the bags.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Right.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. That's kind of obvious.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Right.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. And the only reason it hasn't been adopted is that the airlines are making money from it, a lot of money.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. And so, as a matter of fact, Senator Markey and I have written to Secretary Kelly seeking additional information, and I hope that we can follow up with both you and him on this issue.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. And I wish you well in your new role, as a Connecticut native, born in Meriden——

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL.—and raised in Southington, we would welcome you back. I hope you will come back and visit us——

Admiral PEKOSKE. Thank you, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL.—and the Coast Guard Academy, where you spent I hope a number of happy years.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. I did. I did. Except for the first 3 months, everything else was very happy. I'm just kidding. It was a great experience. And actually I was assigned back in Connecticut for 2 years as the Captain of Port of Long Island Sound. Many members of my family are still in Connecticut. We're up there often. So thank you, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Great.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator——

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Well, let me know when you visit. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.
Senator Peters.

**STATEMENT OF HON. GARY PETERS,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MICHIGAN**

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Admiral Pekoske, for your testimony here today. In recent years, I know a number of airports have been putting substantial investments in their infrastructure in order to deal with safety, but threats continue to get more complex. You're also getting increased threats in non-sterile areas as well. So I think there is certainly a tremendous need for additional security improvements from an infrastructure standpoint throughout airports. But I've heard from airports in my state of Michigan that when they talk to the FAA about funding airport security initiatives in their individual airports, the FAA always says it's the responsibility of the TSA and then when they go talk to the TSA, the TSA says it's the responsibility of the FAA. So they're finding this kind of finger-pointing back and forth, pretty frustrating, as I do.

I'm a member of this Committee which has jurisdiction over the TSA. I'm also a member of the Homeland Security Committee. So we're going to try to work through this and find out how we can coordinate better to make the kind of necessary security improvements that we need to make.

Right now I'm working on legislation that will allow airports to use the passenger facility charge that they collect for security infrastructure projects. I'd like to hear from you, if confirmed, would you ensure that the TSA does its part to help airports with security infrastructure projects?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. If confirmed, I think one of the first things to do is to make sure that people are brought to the table and talk with each other. At an airport, bring the TSA Federal Security Director, the FAA lead in that airport, and the airport authority together to have a conversation as to what each other's roles and responsibilities are and expectations. So ideally they can all align and find a path forward.

What I will commit to you, sir, is I will take a look, a very close look, at the issue. I am not familiar with the funding streams that would be associated with that, but I will certainly take a look at it, given that you've raised it, sir, and get back to you.

Senator PETERS. Well, that was my second question, if you would support the creation of an airport security-focused grant program, something you probably aren't prepared to answer now——

Admiral PEKOSKE. Right.

Senator PETERS.—but if confirmed, is that something that you would put some effort into?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir, I would definitely take a look at that potentiality.

Senator PETERS. Do you support the House proposal that would redirect airline passenger security fees, which are right now used to offset unrelated government funding? Would you support bringing that back for aviation security purposes?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Sir, I support adequate funding for TSA overall. And however that funding arrives at TSA, whether it's through fees or through appropriated funds, as long as I get the funding that is needed to provide the security that we're charged in law to provide, I'm happy.

Senator PETERS. The FAA Extension included a number of provisions to respond to insider threats and improve the screening of airport workers, such as requiring the recurrent vetting of airport workers as part of the FBI's Rap Back program.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Mm-hmm.

Senator PETERS. The Detroit Metropolitan Airport has been very proactive in implementing these requirements, and they've even gone further by rebadging all 18,000 employees every year, establishing a thorough and standardized inspection process for all the deliveries that are coming into the airport as well, which, of course, is a way to get contraband and dangerous articles into the airport.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Right.

Senator PETERS. What programs or improvements do you hope to implement to address the issue of insider threats, if confirmed?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. Insider threats are a significant issue. And I think a lot of good work has already been done in that regard. One is to increase the random screening of airport workers, not to the point yet of 100 percent screening. Some airports do, do that on their own. But from a TSA perspective, as I understand it, to increase the random frequency at which those workers are checked.

The other thing, as I understand it from my briefings with TSA to get ready for this hearing, is that they're trying to reduce the number of checkpoints so that the access points in the airport are fewer in number so that you can have greater control over the flow of workers back and forth.

Senator PETERS. Very good. As you know, the TSA Screening Passengers by Observation program is designed to identify and engage individuals who may be high risk on the basis of their actions or verbal cues that TSA officers are watching. And I know it has been an important program for the detection and deterrence of individuals, but I also know that there are folks who believe that this can lead to racial profiling as a whole, and I've certainly heard individual complaints from folks, particularly in the greater Detroit area with a large Muslim American community that I represent. And although I'm aware that Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv is also one of the most secure airports in the world, and they implement a variety of these techniques there, so it is a balance that we have to make.

But I'm curious as to what your thoughts are on the TSA Screening Passengers by Observation program. Do you think it's working? And how would you improve it if confirmed?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. I don't have enough information to be able to assess whether or not it's working. Some information that I would get, if confirmed, and I get into the Agency and can better understand it. As I understand it, though, from public reports, that behavior detection officer function has been embedded with the regular TSA workforce as well, which makes to me a lot of good sense

because you've got more eyes looking at passengers as they're going through.

I do think, and I appreciate your comment about racial profiling or profiling of any nature, that's something that we just don't do. And I think if you get a report or a complaint in that regard, you need to look into it quickly to make sure that if it did happen, that you quickly adjust your procedures and your training to make sure it doesn't recur. But unfortunately, that will happen on occasion. You just need to look at it quickly and address it right up front.

Senator PETERS. Great. Thank you so much.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Peters.

Senator HASSAN. Oh, sorry, Senator Klobuchar is back.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. No, no, no, I—

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Klobuchar is back, so she is—

**STATEMENT OF HON. AMY KLOBUCHAR,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MINNESOTA**

Senator KLOBUCHAR. That's OK. OK. All right. We'll spend all of our time going back and forth. That will be lovely.

[Laughter.]

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Mr. Pekoske, thank you so much for being here, and the important work that needs to be done here. We recently had an all-Senator security briefing on threats to aviation security. You're probably aware of that, including the recent laptop ban on flights from some of the international airports. As a TSA Administrator, you will oversee screening travelers and baggage for over 1.8 million passengers a day at 450 of our Nation's airports. Given your military service and your experience in operational leadership, what do you think are the biggest challenges associated with aviation security?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Senator, the biggest challenges in my view is, first and foremost, the training of the TSA workforce and the support of the TSA workforce. Those are the individuals who do an outstanding job, in my view, and if confirmed, I would look forward to joining them in this effort. But they need to have guidance that makes good sense. And I'm not saying that they don't have it right now, it's just something that I would look at because I haven't been privy to that at this point in time.

And also the discretion to make judgments on their part when they see something that might not fit for them. That's very much a Coast Guard model. We place authority at the point of service delivery in the Coast Guard and give our young petty officers and young officers a lot of discretion as to how they apply the guidance that we provide. I think that's important for the TSA workforce as well. Plus, as an individual, I kind of like that, I like people to give me some leeway into how I do my job.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Yes.

Admiral PEKOSKE. So for me, an absolute focus on the workforce. And then second, Senator, would be a focus on giving the workforce the tools to best do the job, and that's through the Innovation Task Force that I understand TSA has and has produced some good results, putting the technology in place that will make them more successful in their jobs.

You know, to give the example of the individual that screens carry-on baggage. I mean, when you look at those screens, if you get a chance to glimpse around and see that screen, it's very hard to discern good versus bad within that image, and so providing some better equipment to make that job better and more effective for those individuals I think is critically important.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Right. And I would also add just the new technology that we keep testing it.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Right.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. We just are debuting something new at the Minneapolis Airport, Delta is doing it there in Atlanta, with facial recognition.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Right.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. And then also has some self-checking of bags. I don't know. I read it, it looked complicated. I was like, "No!" But I think it's good to try new things and——

[Laughter.]

Senator KLOBUCHAR.—I don't really mean that, it's probably a good thing, but just trying to find those new things. I know you talked at length about VIPR teams, you and I have talked about that and how important that has been in our airports when we have those huge lines, nightmarish waits, and we were able to speed it up with Admiral Neffenger, and we were able to do some new things. It was a big change.

And that leads me to the efficiency issue. According to the U.S. Travel Association, reducing TSA waits, you can do it without compromising security, which is, of course, our number one goal, security, and it could generate an additional \$85 billion in travel, and which, of course, means a lot of jobs.

Which areas of TSA operations do you think are opportunities to reduce traveler hassle without compromising security?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Senator, I think one of the key ways would be to bring more people into the Trusted Traveler Program, whether it's through PreCheck or Global Entry. That would be critical to improving the flow, but when you do that, you get more people into the TSA PreCheck lines, you've got to make sure that you process them through the lines expeditiously as well because you can't have a longer queue in the PreCheck line than you have in the standard line and expect people to want to do that.

So I think that bringing more people into those kinds of programs is really, really important.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. And I know—I think Senator Blumenthal may have asked you about this, but the Federal hiring freeze?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Right.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. How will the partial continuation of the hiring freeze affect our homeland security?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Senator, as I understand the TSA budget, the impact on the hiring freeze is going to be mostly felt on the support end of TSA. And that helps the operations continue, but it does have—you know, I've watched this dynamic in the past in my Coast Guard service. At some point you can't trim support too deeply because then you start to affect the ability of the frontline forces to get their job done, too. So it's a very careful balance. But——

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Right. And you and I had a good discussion about the morale issue as well.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Right. Yes.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Just last question. General aviation industry, we have Cirrus that makes jets in Minnesota, and they use a few of them in South Dakota. Many of the TSA's existing security guidelines rely heavily on the general aviation community to detect and report suspicious activity. For this strategy to be effective, it is important that pilots and airport personnel know who to contact with security concerns. What steps would you take to work with the general aviation community to improve security?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Well, I, first off, Senator, if confirmed, would make sure they know who to call. I mean, I think that's pretty important.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. That's a good beginning. We like that, a simple answer. That's good.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Right. Right. And, you know, the Federal Security Directors, as I understand the structure, have responsibility for some of the smaller airports as well. That Federal Security Director, in my view, ought to be a visible presence on occasion at the smaller airports so people actually put a face to a name and know who it is.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. All right. I really appreciate your answers. Thank you very much.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Klobuchar.

Now Senator Hassan.

**STATEMENT OF HON. MAGGIE HASSAN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE**

Senator HASSAN. Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, Admiral, it is very nice to see you again. Thank you for taking the time to come by my office. I appreciated your willingness to do that and our conversation very much.

I would just add my voice as we talked a little bit about in that meeting to the request that you all take a look very closely at the impact of baggage fees on the way we do business and the cost to TSA, because the other concern I have, hearing the concerns of my colleagues, is that as people work to keep all their belongings with them to avoid the fees, it creates a lot of congestion, we've got more bags to check, and we're really taking a cost through TSA on that perhaps should be borne by the airlines.

So I would love it if you would continue to look at the impact of baggage fees on our security as well as convenience in operations.

Which leads me to another issue that we touched on and colleagues have touched on here. We know that we've seen a number of troubling incidents of violence in the public areas of non-sterile areas of our airports, the Los Angeles incident in 2013 in which an active shooter killed five people—sorry, where an officer was killed, and then it was the Fort Lauderdale Airport where five people were killed in a baggage claim area. A year ago, suicide explosions occurred in the public areas of Brussels Airport and Istanbul Ataturk Airport, killed 61 people.

And you've heard questions from my colleagues about the reductions to VIPR teams and to grants to state and local law enforcement in the budget. What I would ask you to think about is that these soft areas of airports are really important. You know, the basic understanding I have of security is it's always better to push the threat farther away. And so I will tell you, as a former Governor, if the local and state grants go away, you will see personnel reductions at our airports. It's a fact, because there just aren't the state and local budgets to match it. It may have started out as a boost to help people get up to speed after 9/11, but we're dealing with an evolving threat all the time, and the need to change and coordinate across the country in our air traffic system is really an important one.

So I would ask you, you weren't part of developing this budget, I would ask you to stand up for that principle, that we have a national interest in protecting the soft areas of our airports and their perimeters, and that we really do need to help our local and state folks be partners with that.

So I just hope you will commit to looking at that closely and standing up for that principle.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, yes, Senator, I will look at all of the things you've asked me to look at. TSA, as I understand it, has held some public area security summits, four so far this year, which are designed to look at the framework that was established for public area security, and then kind of talk through in individual airport situations how the various entities, the agencies, law enforcement, public safety, TSA would respond, for instance. So I think that's really important to continue to exercise.

And the other thing I would mention, Senator, is the use of what's called advanced screening lanes, which is if you look at the screening process, there are certain obvious bottlenecks.

Senator HASSAN. Right.

Admiral PEKOSKE. One of the obvious bottlenecks, to me anyway, as a passenger is when the individual is looking to try to discern what's in your checked bag.

Senator HASSAN. Yes.

Admiral PEKOSKE. The other one is as passengers try to put their bags on the conveyor belts, some take longer because they're not as familiar or might have different things in their bags.

Senator HASSAN. Yes.

Admiral PEKOSKE. And so these advanced screening lanes, which I think are in 16 airports, as I recall, around the country allow that process to move faster as well.

Senator HASSAN. That would be very helpful. The other thing I wanted to talk on, and I was at another hearing, so I may have missed somebody else asking this question, but I wanted to touch on, as I understand the FAA Extension bill from last Congress helped to increase the vetting of U.S. airport workers in order to prevent against insider threats. And you've talked a little bit about that.

We obviously, though, don't have complete authority over foreign airports. In two recent attacks, one at Mogadishu International Airport in Somalia in 2016 and one at Sharm El Sheikh Airport in

Egypt in 2015, foreign airport workers were believed to be complicit in aiding the attack.

From your perspective, do you think foreign airports, especially those that are points of last departure to the United States, are effectively screening their workers in order to root out potential terrorist threats?

Admiral PEKOSKE. Senator, great question, and I don't know the answer to that.

Senator HASSAN. Yes.

Admiral PEKOSKE. I haven't delved into that, but if confirmed, I will certainly look at that. I know that that's also something Secretary Kelly has looked at with respect to the laptop.

Senator HASSAN. Yes. OK. Thank you very much.

And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Hassan.

Senator Capito.

**STATEMENT OF HON. SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO,
U.S. SENATOR FROM WEST VIRGINIA**

Senator CAPITO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Admiral Pekoske, for taking this I think daunting challenge really on, and I certainly will be supportive. And thank you for the visit to my office. When you were in my office, we talked about not only your long and very admirable Coast Guard history, which I'm very much in awe of, we talked about K9 teams, something I've become very interested in.

In April, when we passed our legislation to ask TSA to develop a risk-based strategy, the bill included immediate expansion of additional K9 teams because they are such a reliable source. And I don't know if you've addressed this issue before I got into the room, but I'm curious to know what your perspective on the effectiveness of K9 teams would be, but also I know through my work with the Capitol Police that the resources to acquire and whether there are enough canines to actually fulfill the desired needs is another issue.

So could you just address that issue? And I think that would be very helpful in terms of all aspects of transportation, not just in the lines, but in the perimeter when people are getting dropped off to the airport. So if you could just talk about that a little bit.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes, thanks, Senator. And thank you for your time in your office. I greatly appreciate the time that you spent with me.

With respect to canines, I have some experience with canines. The Coast Guard used a limited number of K9 teams in their Maritime Safety and Security Teams. From my perspective, they're incredibly effective at detecting whatever it is the canine is trained to detect. And importantly, they're also very effective in deterring. People see a K9, that either causes some behavior that people might notice or causes a person that might be thinking of doing something to not go through with it based on the canine.

And I think you're absolutely right, that the supply of canines are limited, and it takes, as I understand it, about a year to get the team trained. It's the handler and the canine. Senator Cantwell asked me if we would consider other sources beyond the source

that we currently use, as I understand it, down at Laughlin Air Force Base, and that's something that I'm hoping to explore if I'm confirmed, is to look at other sources of doing this, provided that they meet the same standard.

But I agree with your comment completely, that they're very effective at what they do.

Senator CAPITO. I'd like to talk—and you touched on this a little bit as I've listened to your testimony, but I think, at least my impressions on certain occasions of going through the lines at the airports, that—this isn't a universal thought, but I would imagine the challenge of the morale. You know, a TSA Agent on the front line right there has to be pretty patient because you've got elderly people, you've got kids, you have people who have never been through a line before, you've got people who are mad because their flight is late, and they've got an attitude, and then you've got everybody else, and maybe they've been waiting in line for 15, 20 minutes, and they're tired of it.

But I am concerned about the morale issue. How do you propose to address that? And has there been a deep dive into what the actual job satisfaction of a TSA agent is and what improvements could be made? I learned actually over in my Appropriations Committee that, believe it or not, Park Service personnel don't like their job. And we all would think working at a national park would be something everybody would like to do.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Right.

Senator CAPITO. So I'm curious to know, because I think this is a really important issue to be effective.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Senator, I couldn't agree with you more. I think it's one of the most important things for a potential Administrator of TSA to take a look at. And I think it's critically important that the workforce views me, if I'm confirmed, as someone who understands the challenges that they face day in and day out beyond what a normal passenger going through the line will see. And I accept your points that it's a hard job, and you've got to be right all the time.

But I would reemphasize with the workforce, that what they do is so critically important, and I'm not—I think they need to be reminded of that day in and day out because I think if you're doing it day in and day out, you might lose focus on it.

Senator CAPITO. Right.

Admiral PEKOSKE. They are, in many cases, the last line of defense for somebody getting through our security process because the gate check is really not much of a security check at all. And so I would, if confirmed, spend a lot of time with the frontline workforce, and I would want to make sure everything else TSA does enables that frontline workforce. They're the ones that are the face of TSA. They're the ones that are providing direct security both for aviation and for surface transportation in terms of guidance and support and inspections.

I would just want to make sure that they are as supported as they need to be to get their job done, appreciated by the leadership, and have leadership that understands completely what they're dealing with. So really good communications and presence I think are important.

The final thing I would add to that is top leadership interest is one thing, but you have to have interest throughout the entire line of leadership within an organization. And so their first-line supervisor has to be completely engaged with our employees and really trying to find out what will make them become more engaged in the workforce. I'm concerned with the survey results I see and some of the reports I see as well.

Senator CAPITO. I appreciate that. And just a final comment. I know you're going to be confirmed. After you're confirmed, I'm sure you're going to be traveling across the country to many airports. I would encourage you to go, and I'm sure you will, to go to the smaller rural airports to see the different challenges——

Admiral PEKOSKE. Yes. Right.

Senator CAPITO.—and also to see how successful they are at meeting the challenges that they have in the smaller regional airports. So thank you very much.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Thanks, Senator. I look forward to doing that. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Capito. And you can start in South Dakota and West Virginia—right?—checking out those smaller airports where all the Park Service employees are very happy. It's in Minnesota that they're not happy, I think.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. I think that's everybody that we have, Admiral. So again welcome, and we appreciate so much your remarks this morning and your response to our questions and your willingness to serve our country in this very important role. And we hope to be able to move your nomination fairly quickly.

And so given that, we're going to keep the hearing record open until this Friday, June 23, in the next couple days. If Senators can get their questions for the record submitted as quickly as possible, and if you could respond as quickly as possible, we would like to be able to have you on our markup agenda next week.

So I think with that, again thank you. We appreciate your cooperation and the cooperation of all the members of the Committee. And with that, this hearing is adjourned.

Admiral PEKOSKE. Thank you, sir.

[Whereupon, at 11:32 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. DEB FISCHER TO VICE ADMIRAL DAVID P. PEKOSKE

Question 1. I understand that some transportation facilities would like to use TWIC as part of their security plans. What do you think about the voluntary use of TWIC for other modes of transportation, such as pipelines, for facility security plans?

Answer. I am open to exploring the use of TWIC as part of facility security plans. If confirmed, I will look closely into TSA's work on this and would welcome the opportunity to discuss it further with you.

Question 2. Attacks on rail carriers in France in 2015 and Brussels in 2016 highlight the vulnerabilities to our passenger rail systems. These systems are naturally open, which can make them soft targets. TSA does not directly manage passenger rail security, but provides support for passenger rail systems through training and exercise programs. In your opinion, how can we better protect and prepare passenger rail systems to lessen their vulnerability?

Answer. In my opinion, we can better protect and prepare passenger rail systems through vulnerability assessments, security plans and exercises. Additionally, continued promotion of the "See Something/Say Something" campaign would enlist passengers' help to provide information to security personnel for evaluation and response, if needed.

Question 3. In your opinion, do the Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response, or VIPR (pronounced Viper) teams add to our transportation security?

Answer. VIPR teams augment the security of any mode of transportation and have been in use for over 10 years. In my opinion, they contribute to transportation security by augmenting response and deterrent capability, as part of an overall transportation security system. If confirmed, I look forward to briefings on the evolution of the use of VIPR teams.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. BILL NELSON TO VICE ADMIRAL DAVID P. PEKOSKE

Recent Attacks. There has been a series of tragic terrorist attacks both abroad and here at home—from Belgium, France, and the U.K. to New York and New Jersey. In the last year, we have also experienced a tragic shooting at Fort Lauderdale's airport and most recently a stabbing at Flint's airport. These attacks and threats are alarm bells calling for us to reevaluate our transportation security systems in the face of an evolving and persistent terrorist threat.

Question 1. What lessons have you learned in your career that will enable you to best prevent these attacks?

Answer. In my career, I have learned that close cooperation and communication among agencies and stakeholders is critical to prevent security incidents from occurring and should they occur, to providing a rapid and coordinated response to the incident. I think intelligence analysis and sharing are very important to understanding the risk to transportation systems and contributing to the planning and exercising that are critical to overall transportation system security readiness.

Question 2. What should the Federal Government be doing to prevent tragic surface transportation terrorist threats?

Answer. The Federal Government should be assessing the threat and disseminating information as appropriate to state and local law enforcement agencies and facility owners and operators. In my opinion, the Federal Government should also allocate resources based on a careful assessment of the risks to all transportation modes.

Funding for Surface Security. Experts have noted and international experience shows that the opportunity for attacks on maritime and surface transportation sys-

tems may be as great or greater than that of aviation. Yet less than two percent of TSA's budget is devoted to protecting surface transportation.

Question 3. Do the resources TSA directs to surface transportation adequately reflect the risks?

Answer. If confirmed, I will assess TSA's resource allocation to surface transportation security to determine whether relative resource allocation is appropriate, and work with the Administration to address funding priorities.

Agency's Challenges. Your predecessor was well regarded and led the agency through some difficult times—whether it was testy interactions with the public, long lines, or employment training and culture—while accomplishing the mission.

Question 4. What do you think are the challenges the agency still faces and how will you continue to improve how the public views TSA and how TSA employees view themselves?

Answer. TSA still faces challenges with employee satisfaction. This is reflected in workforce attrition rates and annual employee survey results. Perceived employee morale issues and relatively high employee attrition can affect employee performance and public confidence in the agency. The TSA workforce is critical to the agency's mission success. If confirmed, I will place great emphasis on improving employee satisfaction, training, recognition, and leadership development.

Technology and process improvements are being made. Accelerating the pace of these improvements to improve security effectiveness and efficiency would further improve public opinion. If confirmed, I will champion TSA innovation programs and a more rapid acquisition process.

TSA Precheck enrollment rates need to be improved. This is good for security, the TSA workforce and travelers. If confirmed, I will review the TSA Precheck program to identify ways that traveler participation can be increased.

TSA Dispute. I am aware of a dispute between TSA and SecurityPoint Media, a small business based in Florida that provides equipment and services to airport authorities around the country. TSA has decided to effectively block the company from expanding its operations beyond the forty airports that it currently services.

Question 5. Will you commit to examining why TSA's General Counsel has declined to revise its memorandum of understanding to allow airport authorities to contract with SecurityPoint Media and providing an update to the Committee?

Answer. If confirmed, I will examine the issue and provide an update to the Committee.

Responding to Congress. For Congress to fulfill its constitutional duty to conduct oversight, all members of Congress must have access to testimony, briefings, and other information from the executive branch.

Question 6. Will you commit to promptly responding to all congressional requests for information, including requests from members in the minority?

Answer. If confirmed, I will commit to being responsive to all requests from Congress.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTION SUBMITTED BY HON. BRIAN SCHATZ TO
VICE ADMIRAL DAVID P. PEKOSKE

Minority Members' Oversight Requests. White House and the Office of Legal Counsel have recently asked Federal Government agencies to only answer oversight requests from committee chairmen, rather than all members of Congress, including the ranking member.

Question. Do you personally commit to responding to oversight requests and letters from minority members of Congress in a timely manner?

Answer. If confirmed, I will commit to being responsive to all Members of Congress.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. CORY BOOKER TO
VICE ADMIRAL DAVID P. PEKOSKE

Canines, VIPER Teams, Soft Targets, Funding

Question 1. Mr. Pekoske, will you advocate for continued funding and use of bomb-sniffing K9 teams at airports around the country?

Answer. If confirmed, I will advocate for K9 teams and allocate those teams based on security risks to airports and transportation hubs around the country.

Question 2. I also strongly support funding for Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response (VIPR) teams, which are deployed by TSA in coordination with other intel-

ligence levels based on threats levels in order to improve safety. Do you support ensuring use of VIPR teams in reducing potential threats?

Answer. I support the use of VIPR teams in reducing potential threats.

Question 3. As you know, in 2016, extremely long TSA wait times plagued busy airports around the country including Newark Airport. While we have seen improvements, these recent problems indicate a lack of security resources at many of the busiest airports in the country. Can you commit to ensuring that TSA continues to work with me and my team to ensure that TSA has adequate staffing levels at Newark Airport?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that TSA continues to work with you and your team to make the best use of currently available screening resources at airports around the country. I view the role of TSA Administrator as being a strong advocate for adequate resources to complete the mission of the agency. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and your team to review the staffing levels at Newark Airport in light of actual and projected passenger throughput.

Question 4. The Aviation Security Advisory Committee in 2015 identified the urgent need to better protect non-secure “soft target” areas of airports. Do you support ensuring that the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) and State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP) are used for airport security, including securing “soft target” areas and for training exercises?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to thoroughly reviewing ASAC’s recommendations for non-secure “soft target” areas of airports. If confirmed, I would be pleased to follow up directly with you or your staff.

Air Marshals

Question 5. My office has received complaints from Federal Air Marshals about the way they are being scheduled and utilized. I have heard from some air marshals that they are often sleep deprived, leading to health problems and creating a situation where the air marshals could potentially not be at their best physically should a problem arise on a flight. I have also heard that air marshals suffer high rates of alcoholism and suicide. All of this seems very serious to me—if confirmed, would you make it a priority to look into the working conditions of our Federal air marshals?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will make it a priority to look into the working conditions of our Federal Air Marshals.

TSA Precheck

Question 6. The TSA indicates that higher rates of enrollment in TSA Precheck is an effective way to reduce wait times and improve security. Will you commit to work with me and my team to identify ways to increase participation in TSA PreCheck?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, increasing participation in TSA PreCheck would be a priority and I will commit to working with you and your team.

TSA Morale

Question 7. I was encouraged that in your questionnaire submitted to the committee you have indicated a commitment to prioritize workforce engagement. I often point out that while we always hear about any incidents where TSA staff have made mistakes, there is rarely any attention around the countless actions taken by dedicated transportation service officers to protect millions of Americans and save lives. Can you commit to work with me to find new ways to improve morale at TSA in part by making sure we do more to recognize the hard work of tens of thousands of dedicated transportation security officers around the country?

Answer. If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to work with you in finding ways to improve the morale at TSA. Recognizing the strong dedication, high performance and hard work of the TSA workforce is very important and a key function of leadership in DHS and in Congress.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. TAMMY DUCKWORTH TO
VICE ADMIRAL DAVID P. PEKOSKE

Airport Law Enforcement Support. Vice Admiral Pekoske, thank you for your distinguished service to our country. Events like the shooting at the airport passenger terminal in Fort Lauderdale earlier this year and the 2013 airport shooting at LAX highlight the need for law enforcement presence and response capabilities in terminals and at passenger screening checkpoints.

Unfortunately, the President's FY18 budget calls for elimination of the \$45 million annual program that reimburses state and local law enforcement agencies for providing support at passenger checkpoints.

Question 1. What challenges do you foresee in maintaining airport law enforcement support at current levels if Federal funding is eliminated as proposed?

Answer. I think the challenges in maintaining airport law enforcement support at current levels, if Federal reimbursement is eliminated as proposed in the President's FY18 budget request, will vary by local law enforcement jurisdiction. If confirmed, I will ensure TSA works closely with those law enforcement agencies, who are key partners, to mitigate the effect of any potential reductions in support.

Question 2. As TSA Administrator, what is your plan to ensure that law enforcement presence at airports is not diminished and that TSA has adequate support at passenger screening checkpoints?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review TSA's, airport owners' and operators', and local law enforcement agencies' efforts to provide adequate support at passenger screening checkpoints. I think the partnerships that exist within our airports are critical to providing security for all who use them.

Security and Screening Efficiency. Concerns have been raised that increased numbers of carry-on bags and dense packing of those bags are significantly impacting screening efficiency and effectiveness. TSA has announced trial programs at selected airports that require passengers to remove books and other paper products, tablets and other electronic devices, and food items for separate screening.

Question 3. In your opinion, how will TSA balance concerns regarding evolving terror threats with industry and passenger concerns over disruptions and airport checkpoint delays?

Answer. In my opinion, TSA's primary mission is to ensure that security operations are effective at countering the evolving terror threats. I understand industry and passenger concerns for efficient screening and, if confirmed, will work to ensure TSA operations remain effective and efficient through the use of intelligence information and process and technological innovation. Maximizing the use of trusted traveler programs, in my opinion, also provides a key means of achieving this balance.

Question 4. From your perspective, what are the tradeoffs between security effectiveness and possible impacts on screening efficiency, passenger wait times, and TSA staffing and resources?

Answer. From my perspective, all are interrelated. As a passenger, I want my travel to be secure while at the same time, I expect an efficient and professional workforce that is well trained and has the proper tools at hand to accomplish screening with efficiency. My personal experience as a traveler interacting with screening personnel is very positive and I greatly appreciate the work they do. As passenger volumes increase and threats continue to evolve, I believe continued investment in the TSA workforce is needed. This needs to be complemented by technological and process improvements in passenger screening to include increasing the number of pre-vetted trusted travelers.

Risk-Based Approach. A September 2016 report by the DHS Inspector General concluded that TSA lacked an "intelligence driven, risk-based approach" for allocating budget resources across all transportation modes. This criticism was particularly directed toward the surface modes for which the TSA lacked a formal mechanism for funds to be allocated based on an assessment of the threat, vulnerabilities, and consequences of a terrorist attack.

Question 5. In your opinion, how should TSA go about developing a risk-based approach to allocating resources among transportation modes?

Answer. In my opinion, TSA should continue to mature the risk-based approach to allocating resources across all modes of transportation. It is my understanding that significant work is already underway within TSA on this approach. If confirmed, I will become very familiar with TSA's current efforts and will be personally involved in its continued development.

TWIC Program. In the aftermath of 9/11, Congress enacted the Maritime Transportation Security Act that, among other things, requires workers to undergo a security screening before being allowed into a seaport. TSA conducts the security screening and issues a Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) card to those who successfully pass the criminal history, immigration, and terrorist watch list checks.

A 2016 Inspector General audit found that TSA appeared to be more concerned with customer service matters—like issuing the cards in a timely manner—than with careful scrutiny of applicants. It found that applicants believed to be providing fraudulent identification documents were nevertheless issued a TWIC.

In February 2016, Federal investigators announced that they had uncovered a “document mill” producing fraudulent TWIC cards in Los Angeles. Congress enacted the Essential TWIC Assessment Act to improve TSA’s vetting process, including fraud detection. The law also requires DHS to commission an outside organization to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the benefits and costs of the TWIC card.

Question 6. What is your view regarding the efficacy of the TWIC program and do you have ideas for improving it?

Answer. In my opinion, program effectiveness is essential and I am very concerned with the reports cited above. I would welcome an opportunity to discuss my ideas for improving the TWIC program with you after I have been able to look more closely at this matter.

TSA Credentials for Veterans. I am also interested in helping servicemembers better transition to civilian life. A key component is making sure employers understand the skills and training of American Veterans and how these talents can increase efficiency in recruiting and hiring these individuals. For example, Veterans who are honorably discharged and possess an active security clearance should be eligible to obtain a TWIC card without TSA having to invest limited resources into a duplicative background investigation. Presumably, if our Nation already trusts these individual to properly handle classified information, we can also trust them to work in controlled access areas.

Question 7. If confirmed, will you commit to working with me to ensure that TSA maximizes the use of increasingly scarce resources by ensuring that Veterans with the appropriate clearances are able to automatically, or through an expedited process, receive TSA credentials?

Answer. I would welcome the opportunity to work with you on this, if confirmed.

