

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION**

Statement of

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON MANAGEMENT,

INVESTIGATIONS AND OVERSIGHT

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

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Good morning Chairman Carney, Representative Bilirakas, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. It is my privilege to appear before you today to discuss the recent progress in workforce issues of the Federal Air Marshal Service (FAMS), within the

Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

I would like to thank the Subcommittee for this opportunity to discuss the Federal Air Marshal Service. We look forward to continuing our partnership on this and other issues in the coming year.

In the hectic days after 9/11, the FAMS was reorganized and grew significantly. Standing up the FAMS – from the 33 marshals under the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to thousands under TSA – was an unprecedented undertaking. We have come a long way since then in maturing our organization, and we are committed to further progress. The millions of people who fly safely each year are the beneficiaries of the robust flight coverage that FAMS provides.

I was honored to be named as Director of the Federal Air Marshal Service just over one year ago. Today's Federal Air Marshal Service is a full-fledged Federal law enforcement organization with men and women deployed throughout the United States and on U.S.-flagged commercial air carriers throughout the world. The FAMS have state-of-the-art training facilities to provide an intense training experience for our air marshals. In addition, the FAMS is a vital partner with other TSA offices and local law enforcement agencies in the Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response (VIPR) program, which was specifically authorized by the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act. The FAMs that participate in TSA's VIPR Team activities are a key part of TSA's strategy to help prevent a terrorist attack, similar to the attacks on mass transit in Madrid

and London, through risk-based, targeted deployment of integrated TSA assets in coordination with Federal, State and local officials. Recent partner and public feed-back has been positive regarding the VIPR program's effect on promoting public confidence in the transportation system and improving security across all U.S. modes of transportation. VIPR Teams are deployed throughout the United States hundreds of times each year across multiple transportation modes, and we expect to more than double the number of operational VIPR teams in the coming years.

The FAMS daily mission is an inherently difficult one. Federal Air Marshals frequently fly long-haul domestic and international routes, constantly experiencing the consequences of consistently changing duty hours and frequent adjustments to circadian rhythms. This, along with uncontrollable flight delays, impacts the FAMS' quality of life and ultimately, what it means to be a Federal Air Marshal.

We can meet these workforce challenges and still perform at a high caliber. FAMS has improved its operating procedures to better retain Federal Air Marshals, and at the same time has enhanced TSA's ability to respond to emergent situations around the world. For example, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the FAMS moved in to secure the airport in New Orleans and was instrumental in evacuating hundreds of victims. Or, as another example, in response to the discovery in the United Kingdom of a plot to use liquid explosives to take down passenger aircraft bound for the United States, the FAMS, in coordination with other TSA units, responded with unprecedented speed to conduct a range of new missions to combat the threat and help instill confidence in the security of commercial aviation.

In order to continue to support our air marshals in a stressful and ever-evolving workplace environment, we have committed to fostering an open and responsive environment for our employees, and to providing them with the best possible tools and communication channels. The FAMS has assembled employee working groups, increased human resource (HR) efficiencies, and enhanced career advancement opportunities.

Our employee working groups have been particularly successful. These groups, made up of personnel in all workforce categories throughout the FAMS organization, were asked to evaluate concerns and propose solutions on a myriad of issues including quality of life, mission scheduling, performance and on-duty personal appearance guidelines, use of hotels while on mission status, voluntary lateral transfers, and medical issues. To date, the contribution of these 36 working groups and approximately 300 field and non-headquarters personnel have led to some very positive policy changes. For example, to address mission scheduling issues, we have improved scheduling consistency, instituted more consistent start times, limited the number of flight days per roster period, and increased rest following extended international missions. To address some of the performance and quality of life issues, we have eliminated the dress code policy, allowed for hotel self-selection, and created the FAMS Voluntary Lateral Transfer Program, which has allowed 200 FAMS to voluntarily transfer to the field office of their choosing. In the medical arena, we are developing a proposal to conduct large scale research on the implications of FAM scheduling practices on fatigue, mental acuity, and risk for sleep disorders. The study will include a wellness education component along with the

development of a risk assessment tool to identify personnel at risk for sleep disorders. These changes have significantly improved the quality of life for our workforce and their families.

Our efforts have been validated by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) in a recent report (GAO-09-273). In particular, the GAO recognized the successful FAMS operational approach to achieving its core mission and the positive actions taken to address policies and practices in its workforce. As part of its research, GAO visited 11 field offices, interviewed large numbers of rank-and-file FAMS employees, and conducted a comprehensive review of all operations and administrative services over the course of 20 months. The GAO's findings were encouraging. In addition, more anecdotally but nevertheless encouragingly, the feedback I have personally received from Air Marshals in listening sessions, working groups, our FAM Advisory Council and even via our anonymous mailbox all confirms that our organization has made progress in boosting employee morale. I believe we are succeeding in improving the culture for our workforce.

TSA has implemented a new human resources service provider to promote more efficient and streamlined business practices. Specifically, all recruitment, hiring and staffing, personnel and payroll processing, employee benefits, and personnel-related help desk functions are now administered by TSA's Office of Human Capital. Previously, these human resource functions were administered through a separate staff within TSA's Office of Law Enforcement in conjunction with a private contractor. In an effort to further enhance workforce satisfaction, the FAMS has also established a successful

internal promotion process to select the best and brightest candidates for J-band (supervisory) Federal Air Marshal career opportunities. We also encourage qualified Transportation Security Officers and TSA Security Inspectors to apply for FAMS positions, and I am pleased that a number of them have been selected to join the FAMS ranks.

The men and women of the FAMS are our most valuable asset. I am committed to continuing to seek out the views of our employees at all levels. Their direct and candid involvement is critical to help us achieve our goals and objectives to detect, deter and defeat terrorism.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for scheduling this hearing and for the opportunity to testify. I would like to reiterate my desire to work with this Subcommittee as policy and personnel matters are discussed, and I will be happy to respond to any questions you and the members of the Subcommittee may have.