

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
FY 2013 Budget Request for Transportation Security Administration
Opening Statement
11:00 AM | Tuesday | February 28, 2012 | 2362-B RHOB

This morning we welcome John Pistole, Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration, to discuss the TSA's budget request for fiscal year 2013. Administrator, thank you for being here.

TSA continues to be – for many people – the face of the Department of Homeland Security. It is an agency millions of travelers encounter every day. As such, it has earned both respect and criticism.

Under your leadership, Administrator, TSA has had to address new challenges, particularly in aviation security, as enemies try to target us using weapons concealed on passengers or in cargo.

You have said that you seek to meet the evolving threat in a smarter, more efficient way by pledging to pivot your agency toward a more risk-based, intelligence-driven enterprise. The goal, as you've made clear, is to zero-in on the highest risk passengers and cargo.

This is not only the right approach for America's security, but also for her fiscal health. We must focus our limited resources on the actual threats against this Nation and not against everyday Americans with a costly, "one-size-fits-all" approach.

But this Committee expects to see actions, not words.

You're piloting efforts like TSA "Pre-Check," to distinguish low-risk travelers from those who might merit more careful screening. Yet the pilot, in its early stages, is limited to select groups, such as certain frequent flyers. We want to hear more today how this approach could make travel more secure and reduce delays and inconvenience for the great majority of travelers who are low risk. Just as important, Administrator, is to hear from you how risk-based screening and security approaches can bring cost-savings to the American taxpayer to streamline what has become a nearly \$8 billion – a – year agency.

The introduction of new technology and a more intensive airport checkpoint inspection process has also generated controversy.

Travelers have complained of intrusive TSA inspections, with "enhanced pat-downs" and revealing whole-body imaging devices, which were designed to find concealed threats. TSA has addressed some concerns by automating body screening technology and revising pat-down policies – but I don't have to tell you, Administrator, the traveling public feels there is great variability in the kinds of scrutiny they receive. So, work remains to be done on that challenge.

To reduce the chance terrorists will exploit air cargo, TSA is exploring targeting and screening in advance of loading, but face challenges overseas, where risk is greatest. We want to learn more about your collaborations with airlines and foreign governments to reduce such potential threats to cargo.

Overall, Administrator, your request is comparatively modest compared to recent years. It reflects annualizing the cost of prior year increases in personnel and systems. You are not seeking an increase in

funding for screening technology, but are looking at replacing aging technology, and you've made attempts to find efficiencies in your budget. This seems to be pointing in the right direction.

Yet your efforts are undercut by the budget's reliance on increasing aviation passenger fees, which you claim will generate \$117 million in fiscal year 2013. Chairman Rogers and I have repeatedly criticized these budget gimmicks, as the fees are not the jurisdiction of this Committee and have been consistently rejected by the authorizing committees.

Administrator, this request, like last year's, will force us to fill a hole created by phantom offsets that will not come to pass. This will only make our job *and yours* more difficult.

TSA continues to face persistent and evolving threats, which you must balance against our need for the free flow of trade and people. We expect to hear how your budget and planned investments, using a risk-based approach, will achieve better security and be fiscally responsible.

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