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Subcommittee on Management, Investigations and Oversight  
Regarding  
“Ensuring We Have Well-Trained Boots on the Ground At the Border”

June 19, 2007

Good morning Chairman Carney, Ranking Member Rogers, distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. I am pleased to be here today to discuss how U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) trains our frontline employees, CBP Officers, who work at the official ports of entry, and Border Patrol Agents, who work between the ports of entry.

Border Patrol Agents and CBP Officers are America's frontline, the guardians of our Nation's borders. They safeguard the American homeland at and beyond our borders, protecting the public against terrorists and the instruments of terror. These frontline employees steadfastly enforce the laws of the United States while fostering our Nation's economic security through lawful international trade and travel. They serve the American public with vigilance, integrity and professionalism.

Securing our Nation's borders is an enormous challenge. We share more than 7,000 miles of borders with Canada and Mexico and operate 327 official ports of entry. Each day, CBP Officers inspect more than 1.1 million arriving travelers, and examine their documents, baggage, and conveyances. Last year alone, CBP welcomed over 422 million travelers through official ports of entry.

As America's frontline border agency, CBP employs a highly trained workforce, while utilizing our resources and law enforcement authorities, to discharge our priority mission of preventing terrorists and terrorist weapons from entering the

United States. CBP has made great strides toward securing America's borders while facilitating legitimate trade and travel and, thereby, ensuring the vitality of our economy and securing our Nation.

Our efforts to gain operational control of our borders and push our zone of security outward enable CBP to better perform the traditional missions of its legacy agencies, which include: apprehending undocumented aliens attempting to enter the United States illegally, stemming the flow of illegal drugs and other contraband, protecting our agricultural and economic interests from harmful pests and diseases, protecting American businesses from the theft of their intellectual property, regulating and facilitating international trade, collecting import duties, and enforcing United States trade laws. In fiscal year 2006 alone, CBP processed more than 29 million trade entries valued at \$1.8 trillion, seized 2.5 million pounds of narcotics, processed more than 25 million containers, intercepted 47,951 significant plant pests, and inspected 132 million vehicles.

It is our task to ensure new officers and agents are prepared to operate in the challenging legal, cultural and physical environments that exist along our borders, north and south, east and west. It is our job to establish and maintain the continuous communication and interactions between the training we deliver and the tasks in the operating environment and the new tools and new technology added to our inventory and the changes in law, policy and procedures and tactics and the new directions we get from DHS and CBP leadership.

We build our basic training according to the best practices established in the academic community. We use a formal instructional system design and evaluation process that begins with a careful and continuous examination and assessment of the tasks that are performed in the field. We train to task. We test how well the trainee performs, and we test the effectiveness of our own training methods and our own instructors. We evaluate the overall effectiveness of our training: How effectively are new agents and officers performing their duties in the operating environment?

We take our responsibility to train seriously, and our investment in training reflects that reality. At the heart of our basic training philosophy is the importance of bringing experienced Border Patrol Agents and CBP Officers into the training process to give context and to give credibility to the subjects we present and just as importantly to fuel the engine that makes the CBP Officers and Border Patrol Agents so effective in the many environments in which they work, and that engine is the esprit de corps. Our practice of bringing field agents and officers to the academy benefits the new trainees, and it is also a career development opportunity. While on assignment as an academy instructor, field agents and officers increase their knowledge and skills in the areas they teach, become better prepared to participate as sector and field instructors in the post-graduate portion of basic training and learn and receive practical experience in supervision and leadership.

We are proud of the training program we have created to train men and women for important jobs as CBP Officers and Border Patrol Agents. A review conducted by the Government Accountability Office between September 2006 and March 2007 concluded that, “the Border Patrol’s basic training program exhibits attributes of an effective training program.”<sup>1</sup> Additionally, CBP works closely and effectively with the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC). Our close working relationship ensures that our officers and agents receive the best and most up-to-date training available.

## **Border Patrol Agent Training**

Border Patrol Agents are responsible for preventing the entry of terrorists, undocumented aliens, and human and drug smugglers and the smuggling of narcotics, weapons, and people between the official ports of entry. One of the most important duties performed by a Border Patrol Agent is known as “line-watch”. This involves the detection and apprehension of undocumented aliens and their smugglers by maintaining surveillance from covert or overt positions, pursuing leads, responding to electronic sensor alarms, utilizing infrared scopes during night operations, using low-light level television systems, sighting aircraft, and interpreting and following tracks, marks, and other physical evidence. In addition, Border Patrol Agents perform traffic checks, traffic observation, city patrol transportation checks, and other administrative, intelligence, and anti-smuggling activities.

To prepare new Border Patrol Agents for this dynamic and challenging position, they complete a rigorous 81-day training program consisting of 663 curriculum hours in the following subject areas: anti-terrorism, federal Immigration and anti-drug laws, criminal law and statutory authority, behavioral science, intensive Spanish language training, Border Patrol Operations, care and use of firearms, physical training and motor vehicle operations. Additionally, in Fiscal Year 2008, the planning and anticipation is for two program lengths: 55 days for trainees with Spanish language proficiency and 95 days for those requiring language training. This plan will significantly reduce the amount of time to prepare bi-lingual trainees to be deployed to our borders. Working with FLETC, we were able to find ways to effectively and efficiently train new agents.

The Academy’s New Mexico location provides a unique environment similar to the Southwest border where all new Border Patrol Agents are assigned. Combining all of our tested methodologies and best practices under one roof allows us to more effectively and efficiently provide an advanced training environment that enables our agents to reach that state of readiness, that state of professionalism their fellow agents can depend on in the field, and, more importantly, the American people can depend on at home. Another important aspect of our basic training is our use of practical exercises throughout a trainee’s 81 days at the Academy. These exercises require trainees to practice

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<sup>1</sup> GAO Report No. GAO-07-540R *Border Patrol Training*, pg. 3, March 30, 2007.

observational skills and interviewing techniques, while applying their job knowledge of documentation requirements, immigration issues, checkpoint operations, and vehicle stops.

After graduating from the basic academy, probationary agents are required to complete a post-academy course of study one day a week. This weekly classroom instruction, within their respective Sectors, continues for 20 weeks. The Post Academy Training Program is committed to the continued basic training development of probationary agents for the Office of Border Patrol. The program is managed and coordinated by the Post Academy Coordinator. Post Academy schedules are developed and are used as a weekly guide for instructional topics and assignments. The Post Academy examinations are administered at two intervals after basic training graduation, during the 28<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> week of the trainee's service. The exams consist of two parts, both of which are taken at each of the two intervals:

- Law – A comprehensive written exam in immigration, criminal, statutory, and nationality law.
- Spanish – A comprehensive combination oral and written Spanish exam, administered by a Post Academy Examination Review Board.

### **CBP Officer Training**

The CBP Officer's primary responsibility is to detect and prevent terrorists and weapons of mass destruction from entering the United States, while facilitating the orderly flow of legitimate trade and travelers at the 327 official ports of entry in the United States. This requires enforcing laws related to revenue and trade, seizure of contraband, interdiction of agricultural pests and diseases, and determining the admissibility of persons. CBP Officers perform the full range of inspection, analysis, examination and law enforcement activities relating to the arrival and departure of persons, merchandise and conveyances such as cars, trucks, aircraft, and ships at the ports of entry.

To prepare to execute these duties, new CBP Officers attend 73 days of training, 578 hours of lecture, laboratories, and practical exercises, at the Field Operations Academy, within the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glynco, Georgia. Before entering the CBP Academy, CBP officers receive structured pre-academy training at their assigned Ports of Entry prior to completing the CBP Officer basic training course at the Field Operations Academy in Glynco, Georgia.

The course is a dynamic and comprehensive training program that prepares CBP Officers for unique field assignments and provides thorough development in critical subject-matter areas. The course provides students with the foundation necessary to become Federal law enforcement officers with the most extensive arrest and search authority authorized by the Constitution and United States law.

The CBP Officer basic course provides training on firearms/tactics, counter terrorism, arrest techniques and defensive tactics, passenger processing, trade processing, officer safety and survival, automated information systems, and conveyance processing. Additionally, during training, CBP Officers receive training from the CDC/U.S. Public Health Service on medical/biological threats. Annually, CBP Officers continue their education with classroom, on-the-job, and computerized training to update their skills and inform them of new procedures and possible threats.

Students are evaluated extensively through rigorous written examinations and mock Port of Entry practical exercises that simulate the field environment to the greatest extent possible. These exercises allow new officers to demonstrate their ability to successfully perform their duties and take the appropriate steps in meeting the unique challenges of their duty assignments.

Upon successful completion of basic academy training, new officers receive Post Academy On-the-Job training that is specifically related to their designated job functions. This structured program includes classroom, hands-on, and computer-based training. It was developed to provide seamless progressive instruction that covers various work environments and programs that extend beyond their initial primary inspection training.

### **Training Costs**

The cost for training a new Border Patrol Agent in Fiscal Year 2007 is \$16,220. Specifically, the tuition and miscellaneous cost is \$4,807, the lodging and meals cost is \$2,256 and instructors and support staff cost is \$9,157. (Tuition includes items consumed by students, such as printing, pencils, paper, ammunition, and uniforms; miscellaneous costs are contract costs for bus transportation, dining hall, custodial services, and other student services.) The cost for training a new CBP Officer is \$10,752. CBP has worked extensively to constrain these costs, while ensuring top-of-the-line training for our agents and officers.

The Office of Border Patrol is in the midst of an unprecedented surge in the number of Border Patrol Agents. The President and Congress have directed CBP to increase in size from almost 9,000 agents in 2001 to over 18,000 agents by the end of calendar year 2008; doubling the size of the Border Patrol. Border Patrol is also the beneficiary of support from Congress in terms of funding, resources, and attention. Growing so rapidly is not an easy task, but it is one Border Patrol is accomplishing. In Fiscal Year 2006, the Border Patrol Training Academy trained 1,407 new Border Patrol Agents. Through new recruiting methods, more effective training, and competitive pay and benefits packages, Border Patrol is on pace to meet its goals.

### **Conclusion**

We appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Committee today to publicize the advanced and highly effective training we provide to our officers and agents on the frontlines. We are proud of the training we provide.

We would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.