

**DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION
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NATIONAL EXPLOSIVES DETECTION CANINE TEAM
PROGRAM**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON MANAGEMENT, INTEGRATION,
AND OVERSIGHT
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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Good morning Mr. Chairman, Congressman Meek, and Members of the Subcommittee. I am pleased to have the opportunity to appear before you with my colleagues from U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATFE) to discuss the use of canines in deterring, detecting, and preventing potential terrorist attacks.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) administers the National Explosives Detection Canine Team Program (NEDCTP), one of the largest explosives detection canine programs in the Federal government, second only to the Department of Defense (DOD). The purpose of this program is to deter and detect the introduction of explosives devices into the transportation system. TSA has worked aggressively to expand canine explosives detection capabilities in the civil aviation environment by doubling capacity since the September 11 attacks. While these efforts will continue, we are also working to expand our capabilities in other modes of transportation. TSA recognizes that canine teams are one of our most mobile explosives detection tools and is working steadfastly to take full advantage of the multi-faceted capabilities that canine teams provide.

Currently TSA has deployed 345 explosives detection canine teams at 66 of the Nation's busiest airports (Category X and Category I) and one mass transit system (Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA)). Our on-going Phase III expansion within the aviation sector will bring this total to 82 airports and 420 canine teams. These teams are deployed in support of day-to-day activities within the airport and mass transit environment (MARTA) to search aircraft, vehicles, terminals, warehouses (cargo), checked baggage, and subway systems.

Each canine team is composed of one dog provided by TSA and one handler employed by the local law enforcement or transportation authority that has volunteered and partnered to participate with the NEDCTP. Under a Cooperative Agreement executed with each local law enforcement or transportation authority with whom TSA has agreed to provide certified canines, the local jurisdiction agrees to utilize TSA-certified canine teams at least 80% of the time in the transportation environment and to maintain a minimum of three TSA-certified canine teams available around-the-clock for incident

response. The remaining 20% of the time allows local agencies to use these resources to execute other community activities such as response to bomb threats, searches for high profile events, and other law enforcement activities that would require the use of an explosives detection canine team. TSA provides the dog, associated training of the handler, explosives training aids, and technical assistance at no cost to the participating agency and provides monetary reimbursement to the local jurisdiction, in the amount of \$40,000 per canine team per year to help defray costs such as the provision of proper kennel facilities, vehicles to transport canine teams, and veterinary care for the canines, as well as a portion of the handlers' salaries.

The NEDCTP supports an extensive infrastructure in order to accomplish required training of explosives detection canine teams and to monitor their performance. The program requirements, which include an intensive training regimen, periodic evaluation, and annual certification, are essential to assuring quality control over the program. The high standards that we have set and maintained and the mechanisms we have put in place to ensure thorough oversight have enabled the NEDCTP to become recognized as a leader in the canine community with whom other Federal agencies and our counterparts from abroad are eager to partner.

Handlers and canines undergo initial training at the TSA Explosives Detection Canine Handler Course co-located at the DOD Military Working Dog School, at Lackland Air Force Base, in San Antonio, TX. Under this arrangement, TSA has shared use of U.S. Air Force training facilities and the United States Army Veterinarian Medical facilities. TSA controls the course curriculum and the certification requirements of the teams to meet TSA-certification standards. This results in a tremendous cost savings for TSA. The training course and facilities in San Antonio are considered to be the "Center of Excellence" for canine training.

TSA has adopted a three-prong approach to canine procurement in order to ensure an adequate number of canines are available for training and subsequent deployment. This three-prong approach includes partnering with DOD during canine "buy trips", use of U.S. canine vendors, and the TSA Puppy Program. The TSA Puppy Program is a direct result of our consultation with the Australian government and is modeled after the successful Australian Customs Service National Breeding Program. The Puppy Program could not be accomplished without the support of the San Antonio and Austin Texas communities as each of the puppies are placed in a foster home with local community members. I would like to publicly acknowledge their outstanding support to this program. In addition, as a reminder of the legacy of the victims of the 9/11 attacks and our continued efforts in the fight against terrorism, each puppy is named after a victim of those attacks.

The initial training of the handler and canine consists of a 10-week training course, during which handlers develop handler skills; learn about explosives handling, safety and transportation requirements, and explosives contamination issues within the operating environment; and become familiar with administrative requirements of the program, including proper use of on-line applications designed to monitor day-to-day canine

performance. Once a team graduates from the initial training course, the team is given an initial certification at an assigned airport. Each newly deployed canine team must then complete a 14-day training mission in the operating environment before given full certification.

Training does not stop upon graduation and initial certification. The teams undergo several hours of recurrent proficiency training each week in their operational environment, which includes all the smells and distractions associated with a busy transportation system. This training is "objective based" where the handler/trainer must set a training problem up that enhances the team's capabilities or is used to correct a minor discrepancy that was noted during an evaluation or previous training scenario. The training is conducted utilizing canine training aids procured and prepared by TSA, which characterize real threats. The results of each training exercise are recorded in the TSA Canine Web Site (CWS) and are reviewed by TSA headquarters staff for compliance.

TSA also requires each team to go through an intensive annual certification process. These certifications are conducted on site in an operational environment within a three-four day period. The certification is one of the most rigorous operational tests administered and is designed to evaluate the team's ability to perform their day-to-day mission of securing the nation's transportation system.

For FY 05, TSA has been appropriated \$22 million to administer the NEDCTP. Within this amount, \$17 million is dedicated to steadily increase the number of teams deployed at airports. As indicated earlier, we currently have 345 explosives detection canine teams deployed at 66 airports and one mass transit system, and we are continuing our progress to attain an authorized strength of 420 canine teams deployed at 82 airports by the end of this calendar year.

TSA also recognizes the importance of dedicating explosives detection canine teams to provide a timely and mobile response option to threats arising in other modes of transportation, especially in light of the March, 2004, attacks in Madrid and the July, 2005, bombings in London. Within the \$22 million appropriated for FY 05, \$2 million is dedicated to supporting expansion of the NEDCTP into additional mass transit/light rail systems. Currently TSA is working towards providing ten mass transit systems with three TSA-certified explosives detection canine teams each, for a total of 30 teams. The ten systems have been identified based on a comparative analysis of the size of the systems according to passenger ridership, location of the nation's critical infrastructure in the transit sector, threats in the transit sector, and other security criteria. Additional information on this initiative was provided to potential participants at the Mass Transit Stakeholders Summit held on August 10, 2005. TSA is in continuing discussions with stakeholders to finalize the terms and conditions under which the transit agencies would participate in the NEDCTP. These agreements would closely mirror those that TSA has entered into with airports.

Explosives detection canine teams bring technical capability, mobility, and flexibility to security – attributes essential in protecting network systems. The canine teams can move

throughout the system, and they can also post at multiple points during time periods that vary by shift and by day. This variability in locations and times for use of canine teams adds an important element of unpredictability to enhance security. TSA is working to take full advantage of the flexible, omni-modal capability that canine teams afford. We have worked with all participants in the NEDCTP to acclimate their teams to various transportation systems that they may be asked to support so that teams can be rapidly re-deployed to other transportation sectors should threat conditions deem such measures appropriate. This has enabled TSA-certified explosives detection canine teams to be shifted as a Rapid Deployment Force to support security efforts at mass transit systems, bus terminals, and general aviation locations during National Special Security Events, including the G-8 Summit, both national political conventions in 2004, and the Inauguration festivities.

In addition, the FY 05 appropriations contained \$3 million to support TSA canine explosives detection activities relating to air cargo. In 2004, TSA conducted an Operational Test and Evaluation (OT&E) of a TSA-certified canine team's ability to detect explosives in various cargo and mail configurations. The OT&E concluded in August, 2004, and the preliminary results were promising. TSA is further analyzing the data from the OT&E and will make recommendations on whether explosives detection canine teams should be incorporated, along with other systems and technologies, into the screening of cargo and mail transported on passenger aircraft. As a result of the OT&Es, the NEDCTP has partnered with our Aviation Cargo section to develop a comprehensive list of activities to enhance canine detection capabilities and deployment options within the cargo environment. One of these activities is our new Cargo Training Lab in San Antonio, which is designed to replicate a cargo warehouse environment.

For FY 06, the President's budget includes \$19 million, which will permit continued support of the NEDCTP in the airport environment. TSA greatly appreciates Congress' assistance in funding the NEDCTP, particularly those activities relating to mass transit and air cargo. As indicated earlier, canine teams will be deployed at 10 transit systems in the very near future. TSA will work with Congress to ensure that explosives detection canine programs relating to air cargo and mass transit will continue to be adequately supported. The TSA Canine Support Branch currently has the physical capacity to train 108 new canine teams during each calendar year.

Explosives detection canine teams are a proven, reliable, and cost-effective solution for the detection of explosives, and they form a key component of the Department's threat-based risk management approach to homeland security. In close partnership with airport and other stakeholder operators, TSA has worked to steadily increase the number of teams available to address the threat of explosives being introduced into the transportation sector. While this work will continue, special emphasis is now being placed to rapidly increase the number of canine teams that are deployed to modes other than aviation and to maximize the flexible, multi-modal capability that canine teams afford. The formation of the Department of Homeland Security Rapid Deployment Force for mass transit canine and our recent efforts to co-sponsor regional training sessions with the ATFE are examples of Federal agencies working together to leverage both training

and operational resources. The recent completion of the TSA Canine Explosives Storage and Characterization Facility and the centralized procurement, packaging and delivery of canine training aids are other examples of departmental leveraging. In addition, TSA has partnered with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and National Institute of Justice to sponsor the Scientific Working Group on Dog and Orthogonal Detection Guidelines to enhance the performance of detector dog teams.

Mr. Chairman, Congressman Meek, and other Members of the Subcommittee, this concludes my prepared remarks. I would be pleased at this time to answer any questions.