

Testimony

Secretary Tom Ridge

Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation

April 9, 2003

Good morning Chairman McCain, Senator Hollings and other distinguished members of the committee. It is a pleasure and a privilege to be here with you this morning to describe the efforts of the Department of Homeland Security to secure our nation's transportation systems, border and ports of entry.

Thank you for the opportunity to hear your concerns, and to discuss with you the substantial challenges that lie ahead. We at the Department of Homeland Security are committed to working closely with you, state and local governments, and private industry to address these challenges and ensure that America's future is prosperous and secure.

In protecting our systems of commerce and transportation, we face a two pronged challenge; safeguard our homeland, and at the same time, ensure that the free flow of people, goods and commerce is not disrupted. The Department of Homeland Security is leading the effort to reach this objective, but it will not be achieved strictly within the DHS.

It will require a sustained and coordinated effort by governmental and private partners. It will require investment by all parties, the development of new approaches, and the application of new technologies. It will require us to make difficult decisions, critical assessments, and work to find the elusive balance point between the substantial and measurable costs of security and even more substantial and immeasurable costs of insecurity.

Since the terrorist attacks on 9/11, we have made great strides to protect the national transportation system. Congress created the Transportation Security Administration and empowered it to manage transportation security in all modes of transportation. TSA will play a strategic role in developing the National Transportation System Security Plan, a key portion of the National Strategy for Homeland Security.

Two other key components within the Department include the U.S. Coast Guard as lead in the maritime domain and the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection in dealing directly with the movement of people, goods and cargo across our borders.

In February, Admiral Loy appeared before this Committee and provided you with a comprehensive overview of TSA's progress on aviation security. I would like to add several recent successes. Under the purview of the FAA, approximately 95 percent of 6,000 commercial airlines will have hardened cockpit doors as of today. On February 25, we initiated the Federal Flight Deck Officer program. The first training session will begin next Monday at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center.

Additionally, we continue to make progress in deploying explosives detection systems at the few remaining airports where not all baggage is screened using this technology.

We continue to develop the next generation of the Computer-Assisted Passenger Prescreening System. CAPPS II will be a critical element in TSA's "system of systems" and will effectively enhance the screening of airline passengers moving the screening further from the gate while safeguarding their civil liberties.

Along our nation's coasts and in our seaports, the Coast Guard, TSA, BCBP, the Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration and Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation, all play a role to provide increased security at our ports. These efforts were furthered with the passage of the Maritime Transportation Security Act last November. I am taking steps to ensure we implement the Act in an integrated, timely manner.

The Coast Guard and TSA continue their progress on conducting port security assessments in coordination with our Directorate of Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection. TSA, in conjunction with the Coast Guard and MARAD, awarded an initial round of \$92 Million in port security grants last summer to 51 different seaports and in January made available an additional \$100 million for our nation's seaports.

In the cargo container security arena, the Department is providing security for the nearly 6 million containers that enter our ports each year by partnering with other countries and the private sector to push our zone of security outward. One program to implement this strategy includes the Container Security Initiative, or CSI, which identifies high-risk cargo containers and partners with other governments to pre-screen those containers at foreign ports, before they are shipped to America.

The Department has been working with and will continue to work closely with the Department of Transportation, and the many stakeholders in the railroad industry to enhance rail security. We will leverage the industry relationships and regulatory structure that FRA has long developed. As an example of this cooperation, TSA and FRA recently collaborated in reviewing Amtrak's security plan and advised this Committee of the results of that review.

DHS is following a similar approach for mass transit security including rail, inter-city buses, and ferries. Security in these modes presents a continuing challenge due to the lack of security in place at this point and the public's desire and need for the freedom to move through each mode.

Highway security is an additional challenge that we are beginning to address. Cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration and states is crucial. The enactment of the Critical Infrastructure Information Act of 2002, assists this effort by protecting information that is voluntarily submitted to the federal government.

The thousands of miles of pipelines throughout American represent another unique challenge. In order to secure such a vast network, the communications between our Federal, State and industry partners has been streamlined. TSA and DOT's Research and Special Programs Administration continue to focus on implementing coordinated, risk-based protocols to ensure operators are putting security practices into place at critical facilities.

Mr. Chairman, transportation security is a collaborative effort between the Department of Homeland Security, other federal agencies, state and local governments, the private sector, and individual Americans. Together we have made great advances in securing our transportation systems, while protecting civil liberties, and ensuring the free flow of people and commerce, but we recognize that more needs to be done.

The Department of Homeland Security is dedicated to accomplishing the objectives set forth in the President's National Strategy for Homeland Security. This strategy provides the framework to mobilize and organize the nation. We are proud of our efforts thus far and are eager to press forward with the mission of building a safer and more secure future for our country.

This concludes my prepared statement. I thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.