

JOINT TESTIMONY OF

RONALD D. VITIELLO

**Deputy Chief
U.S. Border Patrol**

MARTIN E. VAUGHAN

**Executive Director, Southwest Region
Office of Air and Marine**

**U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Department of Homeland Security**

BEFORE

**House Committee on Homeland Security
Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security**

**April 17, 2012
Washington, DC**

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Cuellar, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, it is an honor to appear before you today to discuss the work that U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) does in securing America's borders.

CBP, with more than 60,000 employees, is the largest uniformed, federal law enforcement agency in the country. As America's frontline border agency, CBP's priority mission is to protect the American public, while facilitating lawful travel and trade. To do this, CBP has deployed a multi-layered, risk-based approach to enhance the security of our borders while facilitating the flow of lawful people and goods entering the United States. This layered approach to security reduces our reliance on any single point or program that could be compromised. It also extends our zone of security outward, ensuring that our physical border is not the first or last line of defense, but one of many.

Commitment to Border Security

CBP protects approximately 4,000 miles of border with Canada, 2,000 miles of border with Mexico, and 2,600 miles of shoreline; processes approximately 340 million travelers a year at our ports of entry (POEs); and processes more than 29 million trade entries annually. CBP's Border Patrol and Air and Marine agents patrol our Nation's land and maritime borders, and associated airspace, to prevent illegal entry of people and goods into the United States.

Over the past three years, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has dedicated historic levels of personnel, technology, and resources in support of our border security efforts. We have more than doubled the size of the Border Patrol since the inception of CBP in March 2003 to more than 21,000 agents today; tripled deployments of Border Liaison Officers working with their Mexican counterparts; and initiated screening of southbound rail and vehicle traffic to look for illegal weapons and cash that, when smuggled across the border, help to fuel the cartel violence in Mexico. Over the last year, we have brought greater unity to our enforcement efforts, expanded collaboration with other agencies, and improved response times. Last February, we announced the Arizona Joint Field Command (JFC)—an organizational realignment that brings together Border Patrol, Air and Marine, and Field Operations under a unified command structure

to integrate CBP's border security, commercial enforcement, and trade and travel facilitation missions to more effectively meet the unique challenges faced in the Arizona area of operations.

During Fiscal Years (FY) 2009 through 2011, DHS seized 74 percent more currency, 41 percent more drugs, and 159 percent more weapons along the southwest border as compared to FY 2006-2008—these results demonstrate the effectiveness of our layered approach to security. CBP has also deployed additional technology assets—including mobile surveillance units, thermal imaging systems, and large-and small-scale non-intrusive inspection equipment—along our nation's borders, and currently has over 270 aircraft and nine Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) that provide critical aerial surveillance assistance to personnel on the ground. Over the next two years, CBP will continue the deployment of technology to Arizona to enhance our border security efforts and maintain our commitment to ensuring a safe and secure border.

The national airspace, coastal borders, southern and northern border regions are critical to national security and are integral to CBP's current goals, successes, and future vision. CBP works closely with our federal, state, local, tribal, and international partners to secure these regions, participating in collaborative efforts such as the Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) South, which coordinates information sharing from U.S. Government agencies and directs law enforcement action to intercept potential smuggling attempts in the air and maritime approaches to the United States.

We have also expanded our strong partnerships with federal, state, local, and tribal agencies, as well as the Canadian government, in protecting our communities, borders and critical infrastructure from terrorism and transnational crime. In conjunction with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), the Department developed a joint border threat assessment, which provides U.S. and Canadian policymakers, resource planners, and law enforcement officials with a strategic overview of significant threats—including drug trafficking (coordinated with the Drug Enforcement Agency), illegal immigration, illicit movement of prohibited or controlled goods, agricultural hazards, and the spread of infectious disease—along our shared border. This assessment has been augmented with the priority initiatives of the Beyond the Border declaration to enhance cross-border security and

increase the legitimate flow of people, goods, and services between the U.S. and Canada.

The President's FY 2013 Budget Request continues these efforts, supporting the largest deployment of law enforcement officers to the frontline in our agency's history: 21,370 Border Patrol agents and 21,186 CBP officers at our ports of entry who work 24/7 with state, local, and federal law enforcement in targeting illicit networks trafficking in people, drugs, weapons, and money.

While there is still work to be done, every key measure shows we are making significant progress. Along the southwest border, Border Patrol apprehensions—a key indicator of illegal immigration—have decreased 53 percent since FY 2008, and are less than one fifth of what they were at their peak in 2000. We have matched these decreases in apprehensions with increases in seizures of cash, drugs, and weapons. In FY 2011, CBP seized more than \$126 million in illegal currency and nearly five million pounds of narcotics nationwide. According to 2010 FBI crime reports, violent crimes in southwest border states have dropped by an average of 40 percent in the last two decades, and some of the safest cities in America are border communities.

Department of Defense Support

Since July 2010, the Department of Defense (DOD), primarily through the National Guard, has provided support to CBP as part of the Administration's Southwest Border Initiative. National Guard troops have acted as a critical support bridge while the Administration brought on new assets provided by the FY 2010 supplemental appropriation dedicated to effective border management and security. The National Guard support mission, known as Operation Phalanx, initially included up to 1,200 personnel providing detection, monitoring, and criminal analysis support to law enforcement on the ground. DOD and DHS are continuing their partnership to further strengthen the already unprecedented levels of personnel, technology, and infrastructure along the southwest border.

The current DOD mission will continue through the end of calendar year 2012. Now that the CBP civilian law enforcement assets and operational personnel allocated from the Southwest

Border Supplemental from August of 2010 are in place, including a record number of U.S. Border Patrol agents, the National Guard began a transition from ground support in static positions to rotary and fixed wing assets conducting aerial detection and monitoring – essentially moving from boots on the ground to boots in the air. The strategic transition to aerial support adds mobile, advanced detection and monitoring capability to the Border Patrol's internal air and ground border security operations, helping to mitigate differences in operational landscapes along the border; providing an additional deterrence factor; providing a faster response time; and providing flexible and adaptive capabilities in lieu of fixed sites.

Operating environments differ from sector to sector and even within sectors. An aerial platform provides a much greater field of vision for places like south Texas where a winding river and thick brush make it difficult to see from a static location on the ground. The additional aerial assets provided by DOD coupled with the CBP Office of Air and Marine air fleet and Border Patrol agents on the ground provide even greater border deterrence capabilities. Further, the air assets reduce enforcement response time where CBP aerial assets are unavailable, providing Border Patrol agents on the ground with greater visibility.

The transition to aviation and intelligence analyst support also includes approximately 200 National Guard troops providing mobile aerial detection and monitoring and analyst support across all four southwest border states. These individuals are supporting law enforcement interdiction operations against illicit trafficking in people, drugs, weapons, and money. The addition of National Guard aerial assets allows DOD to better support CBP by shifting from fixed to mobile sites that can quickly match the dynamic environment of the border – an important enhancement to our capability to detect and deter illegal activity at the border.

DoD also supports CBP through a number of counternarcotics missions and activities directly related to the threat posed by illicit drug trafficking. Support provided by the National Guard Counterdrug Program and through Joint Task Force-North contributes unique military skills that are an effective force multiplier to CBP operations.

CBP Office of Air and Marine (OAM)

OAM is a critical component of CBP's layered approach to border security. With more than 1,200 law enforcement personnel operating aircraft and marine vessels from numerous locations throughout the United States and Puerto Rico, OAM conducts a broad range of operations and supports multiple operational objectives. OAM uses its sophisticated and integrated air and marine fleets to detect, sort, intercept, track and apprehend criminals in diverse environments at and beyond U.S. borders. This specialized law enforcement capability allows OAM to make significant contributions to homeland security efforts across DHS, including the work of U.S. Coast Guard, FEMA and U.S. Secret Service as well as numerous interagency partners including FBI and DEA, as well as other federal, state, local and tribal agencies.

By instituting multiple initiatives to augment CBP's fleet of aircraft, OAM has solidified its ability to provide air support to frontline personnel. At the same time, OAM is also supported by our agency partners, and our continued partnership with DOD has been one of our greatest assets. Through Operation Phalanx, CBP continues to leverage the National Guard air assets to meet CBP's operational needs.

A key element of CBP's border security efforts has been OAM's aviation recapitalization program, which has increased the flexibility and effectiveness of CBP aircraft and air operations in support of Department of Homeland Security and its international, federal, state, local and tribal partners. From FY 2006 through FY 2012, Congress provided CBP with over \$1 billion to accomplish the objectives laid out in our long-range plan to replace/upgrade CBP's aging fleet of aircraft and marine vessels. The FY 2013 President's budget requests an additional \$67 million to continue this recapitalization effort which has enabled OAM to modernize its fleet of aircraft with advanced technology, expanded mission functionality and improved detection capability

Another major OAM initiative has been the acquisition of the UAS. As previously mentioned, the UAS provides critical aerial surveillance assistance to personnel on the ground. The unique construction and engine efficiency of the UAS enables OAM to effectively operate the UAS for long durations, up to 20 hours per sortie, allowing OAM to support several geographic areas, customers, and/or missions requirements if required before returning to base. UAS operating

along the borders can cover hundreds of miles in a single sortie and provide detailed information on routes transited across the border, allowing the Border Patrol to selectively deploy ground agents to efficiently interdict illicit operations. By leveraging the unique capabilities of the UAS' satellite command and control architecture, OAM is able to adjust which ground control station and associated UAS aircrew commands the airborne UAS, transitioning control of the UAS during a single sortie between available ground control stations across the country and allowing quick adjustments for unexpected equipment outages. For example, FEMA uses the unique UAS capabilities to analyze waterways for weaknesses and shifts in support structures. Information both prior to flooding and in response is used by decision makers who need to move assets and personnel to affected areas in a timely manner.

OAM makes efficient use of its staffs' extensive aviation experience by dual-qualifying existing select aircrew to operate both the UAS and other manned aircraft, reducing the amount of aircrew required to stand up and operate a UAS site. For example, OAM placed a ground control station at Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Texas, where OAM already maintains a squadron of aircrew to operate the CBP P-3 aircraft. By training some of the aircrew to also operate the UAS, CBP was able to place a Predator B aircraft at Corpus without incurring additional manpower requirements to fly the UAS and control its sensors.

Further, in cooperation with the DOD, CBP is working to migrate technology from a wartime mission to a homeland security application, and is currently operationally evaluating the Vehicle and Dismount Exploitation Radar (VaDER) on OAM UAS. Using the latest in radar technologies, VaDER has the ability to monitor vehicle and personnel movement over large areas independent of atmospheric conditions. Airborne testing on the UAS began earlier this year, and we are encouraged by the results. The capability the UAS offers will drive important changes in the strategies and tactics we use to achieve our border mission.

OAM has additionally partnered with the U.S. Army to acquire new UH-60M Black Hawk medium lift helicopters, and to convert its aging 16 UH-60A Black Hawks from "Alpha" to "Lima" models. The "Alphas" date back to the 1970s, and were becoming difficult to support, with phased maintenance costs increasing and safety-related structural issues becoming more

prevalent. The new and converted Black Hawks offer greater speed and endurance, greater lift capacity, more sophisticated onboard data processing, a four-axis autopilot, altitude hold and an audible altitude alert. These advanced features increase safety for nighttime over-water operations, and make them the ideal platform for confronting border violence and supporting operations in hostile environments. In addition, the Army projects that the converted Black Hawks will cost significantly less to maintain and support over the lifetime of the fleet.

CBP is further maximizing operational effectiveness by replacing multiple aircraft types with a single, newer, more technologically advanced, and versatile airframe. CBP's aging PA-42 Customs High Endurance Tracker (CHET) Air-to-Air Interceptor and the C-12M Maritime Search Aircraft will soon be replaced with a new Multi-role Enforcement Aircraft (MEA). The MEA, equipped with state-of-the-art sensor equipment and satellite communications capabilities, will perform detection, tracking, and surveillance functions during marine, air-to-air, and over land interdiction missions. The MEA will also be configured with Law Enforcement Technical Collection (LETC) equipment capable of identifying electronic emanations and cueing other air and ground assets towards suspected targets. In its multi-role configuration, the MEA will provide border protection, law enforcement, and rapid response contingency deployment capabilities.

Conclusion

Chairwoman Miller, Ranking Member Cuellar, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify about the work of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and our efforts in securing our borders. CBP is committed to providing our frontline agents and officers with the tools they need to effectively achieve their primary mission of securing America's borders, and we look forward to continuing to work closely with our federal, state, local, tribal, and international partners in these efforts.

We look forward to answering your questions at this time.