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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
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Statement by

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Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Jackson Lee, distinguished members of the Subcommittee: thank you for the opportunity to address you today on the partnership between the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS's) Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to process U.S. military personnel through the screening process more quickly.

We are enormously grateful to the members of the U.S. Armed Forces for what they do at home and abroad for the nation. Expediting screening is a small, but tangible way of recognizing and thanking U.S. military personnel for their service and sacrifice to our nation.

Programs such as this also have a practical benefit: they strengthen aviation security by separating out lower-risk travelers, such as members of the U.S. Armed Forces, thereby allowing TSA to focus its resources on those who present a higher risk. We appreciate TSA's recognition that members of the U.S. Armed Forces are entrusted to protect the security and values of U.S. citizens with their lives and, as such, pose little comparative risk to aviation security.

Since its inception, TSA has worked in partnership with DoD to establish measures to expedite screening for U.S. military personnel. For example, U.S. military personnel in uniform with a military identification card are not required to remove their boots or shoes unless they set off an alarm. TSA expedites the screening process for Honor Flight veterans, and partners with DoD to expedite screening for wounded warriors and their families. The Honor Flight Network organization transports veterans to Washington, D.C., to visit their war memorials.

In November 2011, TSA and DoD began a pilot project to expand TSA's Pre✓™ initiative to include U.S. military personnel traveling from Monterey Peninsula Airport, California. "Active duty" U.S. military personnel in good standing – whether in uniform or not – of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard, and "active drilling" members of the National Guard and Reserves departing on domestic flights from Monterey Peninsula Airport were allowed to present their valid "common access card" to the TSA Travel Document Checker in the TSA Pre✓™ lane for expedited screening.

A “common access card” is a DoD-issued smart card that is used for identification and is machine-readable. This card contains information that can be verified through a central employment status database and is in compliance with Homeland Security Presidential Directive - 12 (HSPD-12), “Policies for a Common Identification Standard for Federal Employees and Contractors” (August 27, 2004), which established a mandatory, U.S. Government-wide standard for secure and reliable forms of identification issued by the Federal Government to its employees and contractors. Pursuant to HSPD-12, prior to issuing a “common access card,” DoD verifies the identity of U.S. military personnel and screens their records against such databases as the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI’s) National Criminal Information Center (NCIC). By using databases such as the FBI’s NCIC, DoD is able to screen out applicants with criminal records, as well as known terrorists. In turn, these verification and screening steps provide a level of assurance to TSA that U.S. military personnel possessing a “common access card” do not pose an inherent threat to aviation security.

Through an agreement with DoD, a TSA Travel Document Checker can scan a U.S. military member’s “common access card” using a special card reader and verify in real-time that travelers are members of the U.S. Armed Forces and in good standing with DoD. As there is no information storage capability on the equipment used to verify U.S. military personnel’s status, once their “common access card” is scanned and TSA determines whether the traveler is eligible for expedited screening, their personal information is automatically erased.

I want to thank Congress for keeping up the momentum on this matter. Just two months after Congress passed the Risk-Based Security Screening for Members of the Armed Forces Act (Public Law 112-86), TSA and DoD announced an initiative to expand TSA’s Pre✓™ initiative at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport to include “active duty” and “active drilling” members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Eligible service members do not need to be in uniform to take advantage of TSA Pre✓™ benefits, and family members ages 12 and under can process through expedited screening as well, as they already receive modified screening procedures at airports nationwide.

Today, TSA also offers TSA Pre✓™ expedited screening benefits to U.S. military personnel at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. We look forward to working with TSA on the expansion of this program to other airports, as it becomes available.

DoD is fully committed to continuing its long-standing partnership with DHS and TSA to strengthen aviation security while significantly enhancing the travel experience whenever possible for our service members. This is part of DoD's broader partnership with DHS to strengthen already unprecedented levels of personnel, technology, and infrastructure committed to security around the country.

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Jackson Lee, distinguished members of the Subcommittee: I commend you for your leadership, continued interest, and support to our nation's aviation security and the U.S. Armed Forces. I look forward to working with you in the future.