

*Statement of Ranking Member J. Luis Correa*

*Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency Hearing*

“From the Border to Disasters and Beyond: Critical Canine Contributions to the  
DHS Mission”

Thursday, May 18, 2017

I look forward to discussing with each of you the Department of Homeland Security’s canine programs – a tool used every day to assist DHS in its mission to secure the nation.

While most of us are very familiar with the benefits of having a “four-legged friend” as a pet, many people are simply unaware of the incredibly specialized skill set the canines of DHS possess.

Several DHS components, including FEMA, TSA, and CBP, acquire and train canines to assist in various DHS missions—from helping secure our borders by detecting concealed humans and controlled substances to offering aid during a natural disaster by locating victims.

The importance of the work of the various DHS canine programs cannot be overstated.

For example, a dog can smell about 10,000 times better than a human, making canines an invaluable asset in detecting the over 19,000 odors associated with explosives.

Consequently, it is easy to understand why canines are considered the most mobile and effective explosives detection tool available.

I look forward to hearing today about research and development conducted by the Science & Technology Directorate to assist DHS components in explosive detection.

The use of a new low-cost, non-hazardous canine training aid is of particular interest, and I understand we will be seeing a demonstration of that training aid this afternoon.

I also welcome testimony from CBP, which possesses the largest and most diverse law enforcement canine program in the country.

Just a few months ago, CBP canines in Arizona were credited with the recovery of \$400,000-worth of heroin and methamphetamine along the border during three separate vehicle inspections in a 24-hour time period.

Despite this incredible work, it is my understanding that there is a shortage of canine teams at the ports of entry.

I look forward to discussing what, if any, additional resources are needed to ensure CBP canine teams are fully staffed with both handlers and dogs.

I also look forward to hearing about the important work of the TSA National Explosives Detection Canine Team Program, which is currently the largest explosives detection canine program at DHS and the second largest in the federal government.

The TSA program has received continuous support from Congress because of the importance of securing the nation's airport, mass transit, and cargo environments.

I am troubled that despite support from Congress each year, including the addition of 50 TSA canine teams in Fiscal Year 2017, President Trump's Fiscal Year 2018 budget proposes cuts to the TSA Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response, or VIPR operation that specializes in detecting suspicious activity at airports using canines.

I hope our TSA witness will be able explain how these cuts would impact TSA canine operations across the country.

Proposing to cut proven programs at TSA, along with FEMA, to help pay for a multi-billion-dollar boondoggle of a border wall is not sound homeland security policy.

It is imperative that DHS considers the important work of its canine programs and how future homeland security priorities and missions may be affected if they fail to receive the resources they need.