



HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Scott Perry (R-PA) Oversight and Management Efficiency Subcommittee

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

May 18, 2017

Remarks as Prepared

As we welcome law enforcement officers from across our nation to Washington D.C. to commemorate National Police Week, we’d be remiss not to thank the unsung hero partners of many of our forces: canines.

Earlier this month, near an immigration checkpoint in Tucson, Arizona, a U.S. citizen was arrested for narcotics smuggling after a Border Patrol canine unit detected an odor emitting from a hearse, which produced over \$33,000 worth of marijuana concealed within a casket.

After the Twin Towers fell on 9/11, hundreds of talented canine teams were integral to search and rescue attempts, searching through 16 acres of rubble where the World Trade Center once stood, to find tragic remains, or those lucky enough still to be alive.

TSA’s canine teams screened approximately 26 million passengers in fiscal year 2016, and responded to 35,000 unattended items within the transportation system in 2016, to ensure no explosives were present and mitigate the impact of shutdowns and evacuations.

And finally, in October 2016, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) employees at JFK Airport said a happy farewell to retiring Jasper, a CBP agriculture canine credited with over 17,000 seizures and over 23,000 interceptions. Jasper thwarted smuggler’s attempts to sneak everything and anything past customs – from illegal whale meat to live turtles.

These are just a few examples of the many ways canines contribute to the safety and security of our homeland.

DHS maintains robust canine programs with teams ranging from patrol units with the US Secret Service, explosive detection units with the Coast Guard and TSA, and Urban Search and Rescue units with FEMA. CBP alone has approximately 1,500 canine teams – the largest overall canine program at DHS, with distinct mission sets including, but not limited to: tactical operations along the border, detection of narcotics, firearms, undeclared currency, and concealed persons attempting illegal entry into the U.S., and detection of undeclared agricultural products with the potential to wreak havoc on U.S. agricultural resources.

In total, six operational components use canines – CBP and Border Patrol, the TSA, the Coast Guard, the Secret Service, the Federal Protective Service of the National Protection and Programs Directorate, and

FEMA. Additionally, the Science and Technology (S&T) Directorate provides ongoing research and support to canine explosives detection skills training. For example, just recently, S&T announced a grant of \$198,000 for a wearable device on CBP canines that provide real-time monitoring of the dogs' vital signs while operating in the field.

With the highest threat environment since 9/11, our law enforcement personnel must have the tools they need to keep Americans safe. A dog's sense of smell is vastly more sensitive and acute than a human's, and their detection abilities are unrivaled. As terrorists seek to exploit any vulnerability in our security, the Department's use of canines is that much more important. For example, as we've seen in recent attacks at the Brussels Zaventem Airport and Istanbul Ataturk Airport, aviation systems remain a large target. And as terrorists' capabilities become more sophisticated with abilities to circumvent our technology systems, a canine's nose may be our last line of defense.

Canine contributions to the security of our nation are vast – along our borders, at our ports of entry, in our airports, and beyond. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today on the important contributions of the Department's impressive and broad use of canines.

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