

Statement of John S. Pistole
Nominee for Assistant Secretary
Transportation Security Administration
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Before the
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
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Good Morning, Chairman Lieberman, Ranking Member Collins, and distinguished Members of the Committee. I am deeply privileged to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be Assistant Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). I am honored by the President's call to service and by the support of Secretary Napolitano.

With your kind indulgence, I would like to recognize my wife of nearly 31 years, Kathy, and our daughters, Lauren and Jennifer, who are with me today, and thank them for their unwavering love and support. I would also like to express my appreciation to those in federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement communities and the U.S. Intelligence Community, with whom I've had the privilege to work since becoming a Special Agent of the FBI in 1983. And to the men and women of TSA, I would like to say that I am eager to join your ranks and to work with you in safeguarding our nation's transportation system, should I be confirmed.

Since its creation after 9/11, TSA has played a vital role in securing our nation's transportation systems, and never has that responsibility been more critical than today. We have seen increased attacks not only worldwide, but also in our own country with incidents like the Christmas Day attempt or, more recently, Times Square. With this combination of international and homegrown terrorists who continue to be inspired by messages of hatred and violence, it is critical that TSA be a risk-based, intelligence-driven agency that anticipates these threats. Advances in technology, workforce training development, and an ever-increasing sense of the national security mission are crucial to achieving this goal. Leadership in these areas, specifically national security and counterterrorism, are familiar territory for me in my 26-year career with the FBI. Nearly nine years ago, as I helped restructure the FBI to deal with the terrorist threat in the wake of 9/11, it was evident that our success depended upon a multi-pronged approach that combined a variety of disciplines, including risk assessment, intelligence, and security initiatives, as well as

law enforcement. If confirmed, I look forward to bringing this knowledge and experience to lead TSA forward.

After the tragic events of September 11, 2001, I was put in charge of helping transform the mission and focus of the FBI's new and greatly expanded counter-terrorism program, culminating in my appointment as the Executive Assistant Director for Counterterrorism and Counterintelligence. In 2003, I led an FBI team to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, investigating the bombings of three housing compounds in which 40 people died, including eight Americans.

In my current position as Deputy Director, I was involved in the investigation of the December 25, 2009, attempted attack on Northwest Flight 253 in addition to overseeing the investigative efforts leading to the apprehension of Najibullah Zazi in connection with a plot against New York City subways. Additionally, I was involved in the investigation of Faisal Shahzad related to the attempted car bombing last month in Times Square. In these and all other efforts during my career with the FBI, I have worked steadfastly to expand and improve efforts to ensure the security of the homeland.

The years I spent as a Special Agent in the Minneapolis and New York Divisions, as a field supervisor of a White Collar Crime (WCC) and Civil Rights Squad in Indianapolis, as Assistant SAC in Boston overseeing WCC and Computer Intrusion programs, and as an instructor of Organized Crime matters at the International Law Enforcement Academy taught me the valuable contribution of the men and women who work on the front line in protecting our homeland. Like the FBI, TSA relies upon a dedicated workforce including about 47,000 TSOs at airports throughout the nation. They are TSA's field officers, the front line in protecting our aviation domain from our adversaries. I believe in mentoring, both in the field and in the classroom, and I will pursue it as one of my priorities. If confirmed, I will dedicate myself to supporting TSA's workforce that continues to meet the highest standards of professionalism through comprehensive training, respect, and opportunity for advancement.

My familiarity with and respect for field operations is combined with years in senior management. Following my detail to help lead the Information Security Working Group (ISWG) on security and vulnerability issues, I was appointed by Director Mueller following the tragic events of 9/11 as Deputy Assistant Director for Operations of the Counterterrorism Division, then as Assistant Director, and afterwards as Executive Assistant Director for Counterterrorism and Counterintelligence before being promoted Deputy Director in October 2004. I understand complex organizations and, if confirmed, I am dedicated to leading TSA to the next level.

As part of the U.S. Intelligence Community, I understand the importance of information sharing and I am committed to building upon the Administration's efforts to counter terrorism. It is vital for TSA to not have to pull information from the Intelligence Community, but to have critical information pushed to them. In order to respond to the threats of today and tomorrow, TSA must

have the latest intelligence information to inform their security actions, and that is dependent upon the collaboration with other federal partners. My current position as Deputy has provided me with many opportunities to improve collaboration and enhance partnerships, which will be critical to TSA in this area. If confirmed, I look forward to advancing TSA's critical mission in close collaboration with all of our partners – other federal agencies as well as state, local and tribal governments, private industry, our international partners, and, most importantly, the traveling public.

Moreover, based upon my counterterrorism and international experience at the FBI, I understand that our nation's defenses must begin beyond our borders through strong international partnerships. Our aviation security also depends upon the commitment of our foreign partners to enhance aviation security measures. I look forward to building upon the progress made by Secretary Napolitano and Deputy Secretary Lute in their aggressive global outreach initiative to enhance international aviation security, particularly for international flights bound for the United States. If confirmed, I will build upon these efforts to make the international aviation system safer and ensure the security of our homeland.

In the transportation domain, TSA also employs a layered approach to security, including its Transportation Security Officers and advanced screening technologies at airport checkpoints, Federal Air Marshals patrolling domestic and international flights, canine patrols in both aviation and transit rail domains, and participation in Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs), to name just a few. If confirmed, I look forward to partnering with this Committee in deploying enhanced screening technologies, both at domestic airports and by our international partners. Advanced technologies are critical to detect evolving threats such as explosives. At the same time, TSA must remain respectful of personal privacy, dignity and civil rights and liberties, areas that are priorities for me. If confirmed, I will use the lessons I learned in restructuring our counterterrorism efforts within the FBI to further enhance TSA's counterterrorism efforts across all modes of transportation to keep the traveling public safe.

Finally, throughout my years of service as a law enforcement official, I have remained mindful of the need to identify those who wish to do us harm and also protect individual civil rights and liberties. We should be judged not only by our ability to defend our nation from terrorism, but also by our commitment to defend the rights and freedoms we all enjoy. If confirmed, safeguarding the civil liberties and privacy interests of all Americans will remain a top priority.

If confirmed, I would like a close working relationship with Congress and with this Committee. I would be honored to serve with the outstanding men and women of TSA as their Assistant Secretary, and I applaud the work they perform each and every day, along with the outstanding work performed by Gale Rossides in her role of Acting Administrator.

In closing, I again thank President Obama and Secretary Napolitano for their confidence and faith in my ability to lead TSA. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Collins, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and I look forward to answering your questions.