

TESTIMONY

OF

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BEFORE THE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY, HOMELAND
DEFENSE AND FOREIGN OPERATIONS**

OF THE

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
GOVERNMENT REFORM**

WEDNESDAY, JULY 13, 2011

9:30 A.M.

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Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Tierney, my name is William Parker, and I am the Inspector/Commander of the Amtrak Police Department's Canine Unit. I am honored to be here today, and I appreciate the invitation to testify before you on the topic of airport perimeter security.

Prior to joining Amtrak four years ago, I worked for the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, with responsibility for K-9 teams at Dulles International and Reagan National Airports. I'm also a retired Army Military Police Non-commissioned Officer.

While on active duty, I was a US Army Certification Authority for working dogs. I have also contributed my expertise to implementation of canine programs during my 20 years of service with the U.S. Army. I was selected as one of the Army's first Explosive Detection Dog team leaders to be deployed in support of Operation Desert Shield. As Kennel Master for the Military District of Washington from 1994 to 1997, I planned and coordinated all narcotic and explosive Detection dog missions in the Fort Myer Military Community and throughout the Military District of Washington. I provided on-call support to the Secret Service for the President, Vice President and visiting Heads of State. I established the training program for explosive and narcotic Detection dogs for Fort Myer and other civilian law enforcement agencies. Most of my military career was spent working to secure facilities – including air and rail infrastructure – and perimeters of military installations in the U.S. and abroad.

I am also highly decorated for:

- Coordinating and supervising 45 explosive detection dog teams during the 1996 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Illinois,
- Department of Defense coordinator for 15 explosive Detection dog teams in support of the 1996 United Nations General Assembly 51 in New York, New York,
- Supervising 24 Detection dog teams in support of the 1997 Presidential Inauguration in Washington, D.C., and
- Supporting the 1990 Goodwill Games in Seattle, Washington.

I was hired by the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority in 1997 to strategically plan for the start-up and management of a newly formed K-9 division for the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority Police Department at both Dulles and Reagan Airports. At the time, the Airport Authority had no K-9 program of any kind. My role was to develop a K-9 program to support both airports and acquire the necessary training, equipment and facilities to support the program with the challenge of integrating the K-9 teams into daily airport operation. I developed the general orders of policies and procedures for explosive detection dog operations for both airports. I also assisted area engineers in the planning and coordination of a \$600,000 kennel facility and implementing the training program for ten explosive detection dog teams, which secured two major airports. The decision to develop a program of this capability came directly from the recommendations of the White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security,

which recommended the deployment of canine team assets at major Airports. To initiate the program, the government authorized \$60,000 per team, per year, for the first two years of operation. The Authority initially deployed 8 teams for Dulles Airport and later added an additional 2 teams, which were used to expand coverage to Reagan National Airport.

In my current position with Amtrak I've supervised explosive detection dog teams at the last Presidential Inauguration, the Vancouver Olympics, and I have conducted demonstrations for many Federal agencies, including the TSA, CIA, FBI, Secret Service, and the Department of Defense to show the effectiveness of vapor wake detection canine teams capabilities.

I think it's important to emphasize some of the unique capabilities that a well-trained dog team can bring to the transportation environment that is primarily driven by technology. A dog is more capable, useful, reliable, and efficient than equipment. Dogs do not depreciate like machines do. If dogs are trained properly, and if their proficiency training is consistent, then their skill level increases with experience. Their natural abilities, when paired with a trained law enforcement officer, allow law enforcement to identify and address threats in real time. The need for such a capability has been recognized for more than a decade.

Perimeter security is of great concern to airports and the Transportation Security Administration. Many airports rely on surveillance beams and cameras to protect their perimeters. The problem with this procedure is that if nothing appears on the camera after an alarm goes off, you can't simply assume there's nothing there. You still need someone to respond and make sure no one is hiding from the camera. The K-9 team can respond more effectively than an individual police officer. Of course this type of K-9 would have to be a patrol dog and not an explosive detection dog team.

On and after September 11, 2001, we used dogs extensively to sweep the terminal as soon as we had successfully evacuated the area. The dogs were also used to sweep for explosives in the morning before the terminal opened and in the evening after the terminal closed. I saw a real surge in interest in K-9 capabilities after 9-11, as people realized that dogs were very effective in crowded environments where their explosive screening abilities are better suited to fast screening of large groups than technology is.

At Amtrak, trains are randomly swept before they are boarded, to ensure no explosive devices have been hidden on board. And we keep an explosive canine team present at boarding gates, to provide detection capability and immediate response. I think the presence of a dog team on a jetway at boarding would improve security at no additional inconvenience to travelers and would help to provide travelers an elevated sense of security. Dogs are very effective, not only as a means of detection, but also as a deterrent in any environment when deployed properly.

Amtrak has many of the same challenges as the Airports Authority, particularly the need to secure open spaces that intruders could use to enter the property. We have been able to establish some excellent working partnerships with TSA and Auburn University. Auburn works with us on our certification and on our annual two week advanced training course to improve our officers' dog-handling skills. I think we have been able to implement some procedures that

would be of great value, if they were adopted for airport use. For example, I have helped pioneer a new application for canines called "vapor wake." This capability allows a dog to detect the presence of explosive odor as it emanates off an individual into the air as they pass through an area. The "wake" of the explosive material in the air creates an opportunity for explosive detection. Amtrak continues to develop this capability with Auburn University and other agencies, such as TSA, are starting to adopt the vapor wake canine methodology.

In closing, I would like to reiterate my position that a good K-9 program is an excellent investment to deter terrorism for any agency challenged with securing a high-traffic area or a facility perimeter, provided the program is properly funded and supported with a strong infrastructure.

To make this point, I have brought 2 teams with me to give a brief demonstration. After we conclude the demo, I will be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Thank you again for this opportunity.