

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021

TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2020

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m., in Room SD-138, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Shelley Moore Capito (chairman) presiding.

Present: Senators Capito, Hoeven, Kennedy, Lankford, Tester, and Shaheen.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

STATEMENT OF HON. DAVID PEKOSKE, ADMINISTRATOR, TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO

Senator CAPITO. I call this hearing of the subcommittee on Homeland Security to order. This is the subcommittee's second hearing of the fiscal year 2021 budget cycle and we are pleased to be joined by the Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), David Pekoske, welcome. Administrator Pekoske was confirmed by the Senate as the seventh TSA Administrator in August of 2017.

Prior to joining TSA, Mr. Pekoske served as the 26th Vice Commander of the United States Coast Guard. He has demonstrated expertise in counterterrorism, crisis management, strategic planning initiatives skills that are very useful as he served as the Acting Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security for several months last year, and thank you for that service. He has received numerous awards for his years of service, including the Homeland Security Distinguished Service Medal, Coast Guard Distinguished Service Medal, and the Meritorious Service Medal. I am glad to be joined today by the Ranking Member Senator Tester.

Senator Tester and I have been working together to consider the fiscal year 2021 budget request and we look forward to the insight from Administrator Pekoske today. I would like to mention there is a lot going on and so we will probably have members floating in and out throughout the hearing. The Transportation Security Administration has proven to be one of the most crucial components to the Department of Homeland Security's mission of safe-

guarding our people, homeland, and values from current and emerging threats, both domestically and internationally.

I would like to say, Administrator Pekoske, that the men and women of the TSA are a source of great pride for all of us in this country. They work to keep us safe at our airports under stressful conditions when lines develop they try to ease that anxiety that comes along sometimes with the traveler, but also realizing, and I am going to mention this as well, with the onset of a different type of duty with the coronavirus issues. We certainly appreciate those that are helping to try to contain and also find innovative ways to meet that challenge. Since its inception in 2001, TSA could be considered the face of the Department, interacting with more than 2 million passengers every day through screening checkpoints across the Nation.

There is probably no component of the agency that I interact with more as I fly back and forth from West Virginia, and I want to thank my TSA West Virginia folks. They always greet me with a smile no matter if I am grouchy and it is five o'clock in the morning. As passenger volume continues to increase each morning with TSA breaking records for passengers screen that were just set the previous year, we want to ensure that you have the proper resources to sustain your current operational capacity.

As more passengers are flying, TSA continually faces new challenges, including keeping their workforce and the traveling public safe in the face of the coronavirus. We will learn more about what TSA is doing to meet that challenge today. The budget again proposes to increase the passenger fee to generate \$618 million in revenue for TSA. A proposal that was rejected by Congress in our seven previous budget requests.

The assumption that Congress would reverse its previous decisions and accept the fee increase proposal without proper authorization from the appropriate House and Senate committee undermines Congressional intent. The assumption also presents a budget request that is not founded in reality, but it creates a \$618 million hole that we have the responsibility to fill.

Additionally, the budget request eliminates the Law Enforcement Officer Reimbursement Program that is important for particularly our more rural airports that have revenue challenges, and staffing at exit lanes. These two have been proposed in previous budget request and subsequently rejected by the Congress. I hope you enlighten my fellow colleagues and me by explaining your rationale for including these proposals once again in the fiscal year 2021 request, and whether or not cutting these programs has any merit.

I have heard from several West Virginian airports, as I mentioned in particular about the Law Enforcement Officer Reimbursement Program. A particular note, the budget request significantly reduces the procurement of computer CT machines, Computed Tomography machines, by 90 percent from what we funded in 2020. And when I went out and visited, you showed me the technology.

This committee has been told that these machines are vital in guaranteeing our aviation security and your proposal to slash the procurement of these machines is one we will need to discuss as well. I am encouraged by the budget request to reform the pay scale incentives for the hard-working men and women of the orga-

nization, but I am concerned with the budget suggestion to delay hiring in the coming fiscal year as a mechanism to cut costs. I have been enlightened by my discussions with TSA leadership about your workforce challenges and opportunities.

As we approach a predicted record-breaking year of passenger volume, I want to make sure that this budget proposal will not hinder TSA's operational capacity at our Nation's airports. I look forward to hearing more about how you ensure efficiency while maintaining your security posture. While most think of transportation officers at screening checkpoints in airports, when they think of TSA, like my friends I mentioned at the Yeager airport. I want to note that TSA's mission spans to multimodal security effort, including roads, railroads, bridges, tunnels, and ports.

We want to make sure that you have the proper resources to carry out all of TSA's missions, including those that are lesser-known. I am very concerned, and we just spoke about, the looming deadline for the Real ID compliance. On October 1 of this year, a mere 8 months from now, all adult passengers must present a Real ID compliant driver's license in order to pass through—or I guess you can also present a passport—to pass through TSA checkpoint was some noticed exceptions. Yet as of right now only one-third of all licenses in use are Real ID compliant.

I look forward to hearing from the Administrator about TSA's efforts to ensure that the traveling public is aware of this requirement and to hear about contingency plans in case significant gains are not seen in the Real ID compliance. Administrator Pekoske, thank you for appearing for us today. Please keep us updated on what you need to continue your critical mission. I have enjoyed our conversations in my visits to your facilities to meet your dedicated workforce, and I look forward to doing so.

I will now turn to our distinguished Ranking Member Senator Tester for any opening remarks that he may have before hearing from our witness.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JON TESTER

Senator TESTER. Well, thank you, Chairman Capito, and I want to express my appreciation for holding this hearing today. And I want to thank you, Administrative Pekoske, for being here today to discuss the fiscal year 2021 budget for the TSA. First though, especially with the gentleman sitting behind you, I want to acknowledge your workforce.

Whenever I am traveling back and forth, the transportation security officers are hard-working, dedicated individuals. They don't make a lot of money and they don't have the best hours but they are always courteous and professional. So I want to thank them for their dedication and keeping us safe. It is no small feat and it speaks well to the organization to be able to do the job that they do every day and do it pretty darn well. The fiscal year 2021 budget requests about \$7.6 billion in discretionary funding for TSA, \$182 million below fiscal year 2020 enacted level.

And now, I will tell you it is essential that TSA has the resources it needs to fulfill its important security mission. I hope that our discussion today will take a detailed look at funding the TSA and what they need to stay ahead of transportation threats. At the top

of my mind is the recent hiring freeze TSA put in place and the impacts this decision could have on the traveling public. Now, I am going to tell you something and I have said this before, I am just a dirt farmer, okay, but I am a dirt farmer that flies four legs a week. And we have got a lot of my neighbors that fly every year. If I am a bad guy and we don't have top-notch security technology, it looks like a soft spot, okay. And I know you don't want it to be that way. I certainly don't want it to be that way but aviation does remain a top threat for terrorists.

Protecting us against that threat, TSA secures 965 million domestic and international aviation passengers every year, and experts expect passenger volumes going to continue to grow and it will. The traveling public needs to be reassured that the TSA is capable of deterring, detecting, and disrupting any security threat without creating long wait times and security points. In order for that to happen, TSA needs sufficient staff and the best screening equipment. 21st century threats require 21st century solutions, which is why this subcommittee has supported investments in new technology to enhance TSA's screening capability and passenger throughput.

I am concerned that the fiscal year 2021 budget only request funding for 30 new CT units, despite a total requirement of 2,218. We should be building on the progress from previous years and the meaningful way so that cutting edge technologies can be deployed in the field faster. While it is important to have the most advanced screening technology at airports, the men and women that wear the TSA uniform are your agency's greatest asset. When security checkpoints are adequately staffed, the traveler's experience is more enjoyable and the entire aviation apparatus is more secure. TSA needs to keep pace with hiring in order to process a growing volume, so I am interested to hear how TSA plans to support a robust workforce.

Further, as more information surfaces, it is clear that the coronavirus presents a substantial challenge to ensure secure international and domestic trade and travel. While there are still plenty of uncertainty surrounding the virus, TSA must be prepared to work with industry and Government stakeholders to secure our ports of entry. It is also important to ensure the frontline TSA officers have the proper equipment and training to protect themselves on the job.

Finally, I would like to bring up the budget proposal to eliminate viper teams and Law Enforcement Officer Reimbursement Program. These are short-sighted cuts. These are good programs geared toward keeping the traveling public safe. In the end, David, I want to thank you for your work. I want to thank you for your leadership not only in this capacity, but in previous ones.

We have got a lot of work on this budget to make this thing work though. And as I pointed out to folks who come into my office every day, President's budget adds another \$1 trillion to the debt and yet does not fund TSA to the level it needs to be funded at. We got a lot of work to do. I appreciate your expertise and leadership.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you, Senator Tester and now we will go to our guest. You have five—well, and then we will allow each Sen-

ator in order of their arrival five minutes for any statements or questions that they may have. So, Administrator Pekoske.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF HON. DAVID PEKOSKE

Mr. PEKOSKE. Thank you. Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Tester, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you this morning to discuss the President's fiscal year 2021 budget request for TSA.

I thank all of you and your staffs for the long standing strong support of aviation and surface transportation security. It is a privilege to lead the more than 64,000 men and women who perform our critical mission with excellence every day. This includes our screening workforce, the largest and most visible part of TSA, as well as others on the front line that include our Federal Air Marshals, our canine teams, our inspectors both domestic and international, air and surface including air cargo, our vetting staffs, and my representatives at embassies around the world. They are all enabled by outstanding support, policy, and legal staff throughout the agency.

The President's request provides important new support to our screening workforce. This includes, for the first time ever, funding for service or longevity pay. The budget provides for annual increases of up to 2 percent per year to recognize experience and years of service. It also includes the next phase of incentives to encourage and recognize career progression by providing a 3 percent pay raise for those who acquire advanced alarm resolution skills. I ask for your support of these critical pay initiatives for our transportation security officers. As both of you noted, it is very important that we continue to refresh the technology at our screening checkpoints in the nearly 440 Federalized airports across the country. We need to put the best technology in the hands of our outstanding people.

Thank you for your support of two key ongoing programs. The budget continues deployment of the Computed Tomography (CT) X-ray and the Credential Authentication Technology (CAT) at our checkpoints. First with CT, we are in the process of fielding the initial 300 machines funded by the Congress.

This technology represents a significant improvement in our ability to detect prohibited items in carry-on baggage and eliminates the requirement for passengers to remove electronics from their bags. As many of you have witnessed, it provides greatly improved imaging for our officers. This will have a significant positive impact on checkpoint effectiveness.

The fiscal year 2021 request continues the CT program as we work towards the next contract and will include integrated automated screening lanes. The Credential Authentication Technology improves our ability to validate the authenticity of driver's licenses, passports, and other forms of acceptable ID presented by passengers. In addition, it provides near real-time data from our secure flight system that will ensure passengers receive the appropriate level of screening. This CAT technology is better and faster than the manual validation process it replaces, and it complements the enforcement of the Real ID Act pertaining to air travel schedules to begin after October 1st of this year, roughly 7 months from

now. Real ID is critical for security, improving the reliability and accuracy of State-issued driver's licenses. This prevents and deters terrorists' ability to use fraudulent documents.

Thank you for your support of both of these critical acquisitions. The fiscal year 2021 budget also request funds to begin the acquisition process for new on-person anomaly detection technology and for new alarm resolution technologies. Once complete, our checkpoints will be much more effective and efficient, and our officers will have better tools to screen passengers. Finally, with respect to check point operations, I am pleased to announce that our TSA PreCheck enrollments just crossed the 10 million passenger threshold. This is a key milestone that exceeds a legal requirement to have 10 million passengers enrolled by October 1st of 2020.

I know you have questions on coronavirus. Supporting the President's task force to protect the United States from coronavirus has been a top priority for everyone. We have used the authority provided by Congress in the Aviation and Transportation Security Act to issue a series of directives that limit who may board commercial aircraft destined for the United States. Carriers have been denying boarding to foreign nationals, other than immediate family of U.S. citizens and permanent residents, who have either have been in China or as of yesterday in Iran within 14 days of travel, and transporting all U.S. citizens who have been in either China or Iran within 14 days of travel through one of 11 airports where they undergo medical screening.

My entire leadership team has worked tirelessly to ensure our workforce is protected and we have followed the guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control and OSHA. Both the Department and TSA have extensively messaged the workforce to ensure that everyone has the latest information.

Let me close by thanking you for your strong support of the men and women who serve their country in TSA. I very much appreciate the comments by both the chairman and the ranking member with respect to the TSA workforce. I am incredibly proud of every single man and woman who works for this agency and their service to our country, and I look forward to your questions this morning. Thank you.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DAVID P. PEKOSKE

Good morning Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Tester, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to testify on the President's FY 2021 Budget Request, which includes an \$8.24 billion request for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). I am honored to be here and grateful for the longstanding and constructive relationship that TSA enjoys with this subcommittee.

TSA was established by the *Aviation and Transportation Security Act (ATSA)* in the wake of the September 11th attacks. The world has changed since then, but our fundamental mission, to protect the nation's transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce, has not. While we remain steadfast in providing the highest level of security for the U.S. across all modes of transportation, the scope and complexity of that goal has increased over the last two decades. Today, the U.S. transportation systems accommodate approximately 965 million domestic and international aviation passengers per year; over 5.3 billion passengers traveling on both transit and over-the-road buses each year; more than 10.1 billion passenger trips on mass transit per year; 26 million students daily on school buses; and nearly 900,000 chemical shipments every day on trucks. Our interconnected transportation system and infrastructure includes approximately 440 fed-

eralized airports; 126,000 miles of railroad tracks; 4.2 million miles of highway; 615,000 highway bridges; 473 road tunnels; and 2.5 million miles of pipeline.

Since TSA's creation, the modes and methods of terrorist attacks have become more decentralized and opportunistic than ever before. Aviation and transport hubs, however, remain highly-valued targets. Our adversaries are watching us, studying our vulnerabilities, and working hard to formulate new attack strategies to replace those that have failed. The daily threat environment TSA faces in the aviation, surface, and cyber security realms is persistent, pervasive, and constantly evolving. To meet the challenge created by such adversaries, we must innovate, deploy new solutions rapidly and effectively, and maximize the impact of our resources.

Our continuing vision is to be an agile security agency, embodied by a professional workforce that engages its partners and the American people to outmatch a dynamic threat. To that end, in April 2018, I issued the 2018–2026 TSA Strategy, which established three strategic priorities to guide the agency's workforce through its 25th Anniversary: Improve Security and Safeguard the Transportation System; Accelerate Action; and Commit to Our People. I subsequently published my Administrator's Intent delineating short and medium-term objectives for the first three years to achieve those priorities.

Further empowering TSA to execute its mission, serve as a global leader in transportation, and become an employer of choice, the *TSA Modernization Act of 2018*, the agency's first comprehensive reauthorization since inception, was enacted in October 2018. The *TSA Modernization Act* authorized funding for Fiscal Years 2019, 2020, and 2021; enhanced organizational structures, operations, and processes; and established a five-year term for the Administrator—a critically important factor for ensuring organizational stability and setting and achieving longer term agency goals.

As I come before you today, slightly more than halfway through my term as Administrator and at a point where we are developing the next version of the Administrator's Intent, I want to thank Congress for the authorities provided to TSA through the *TSA Modernization Act*. Currently, TSA has completed more than 80 percent of the Act's requirements with deadlines and I want to express my gratitude for the previous appropriations provided to TSA that have enabled us to execute our mission and make significant progress on a number of strategic priorities. Additionally, I want to use this opportunity to convey both what we have accomplished and our future goals and objectives. In FY 2019, we—

- Screened approximately 839 million aviation passengers (with a peak volume of 2.8 million passengers in one day), representing a 4.3 percent checkpoint volume increase from FY 2018;
- Screened 1.9 billion carry-on items and more than 510 million checked bags;
- Procured 300 Computed Tomography (CT) units and began preparation for the nationwide deployment of CT systems; and
- Conducted 1,693 air carrier inspections at foreign airports, 144 foreign airport assessments, 60 pipeline critical facility security reviews, 107 assessments of mass transit operator security enhancements, and 182 assessments of security enhancements by motor carriers.

The FY 2021 President's Budget continues to support TSA's strategy to improve security and safeguard the Nation's transportation system, accelerate action, and reinforce TSA's commitment to its people. It supports \$3.5 billion for our Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) at the Nation's airports. We thank Congress for the continued support you've provided for the TSO staffing increases needed to meet passenger expectations as well as increasing volumes. This investment will allow us to maintain acceptable wait times, and mitigate risk associated with crowding at checkpoints.

To complement a well-trained, sufficiently sized workforce, TSA is also focused on strengthening checkpoint operations through the development and acquisition of new technology. To this end, we are in the process of acquiring Computed Tomography (CT) units and Credential Authentication Technology (CAT) units, which represent significant technologic enhancements from the equipment currently used for identity verification and the screening of accessible property, and deploying them to airports nationwide as quickly as possible. CT technology will provide superior detection capability, will be more convenient for passengers, and eventually may eliminate the requirement to take electronics, liquids, aerosols, and gels out of carry-on bags.

As of February 25, 2020, there are 65 CT units deployed to checkpoints with another 49 units supporting testing and research and development. The FY 2021 President's Budget provides \$28.9 million to support the procurement of 30 full-size

CT units. The FY 2021 funding will enable TSA to continue to accelerate the provision of CT technology to the field to enable our workforce to more effectively and efficiently execute the mission.

CAT also provides a significant security upgrade to the identification verification and prescreening process. Ultimately, CAT will enable Secure Flight screening status to be known and cross-checked in near real time. In FY 2019, TSA procured 505 CAT units, with 480 units deployed as of February 10, 2020. The FY 2021 President's Budget includes \$2.3 million to finalize the procurement and deployment of 1,520 CAT units to airports nationwide. The continued rollout of CAT units to checkpoints will improve TSA's ability to detect fraudulent documents and screen passengers based on assessed risk. The CAT unit has also served as a key tool for TSA's efforts to meet the *TSA Modernization Act* requirement for TSA Pre® lanes to only serve passengers with Known Traveler Numbers, which will improve the TSA Pre® passenger experience, and serve as a platform for testing voluntary facial matching technology.

Finally, TSA strives through continued investment to improve the Advanced Imaging Technology (AIT) being used at our checkpoints today. The FY 2021 President's Budget provides \$5 million to develop Next Gen AIT systems, and an additional \$3 million of funding for research and development enhancements for Emerging Alarm Resolution technologies.

Our frontline workforce can better execute their security mission when equipped with the technology needed to counter evolving threats. While sustained technological improvement at our checkpoints is critically important, we are also committed to investing in our most important asset, our people. TSA is pleased that our employees provide input into the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, values their feedback, and acknowledges the concerns regarding pay dissatisfaction and low morale expressed through the survey. In an effort to address these longstanding workforce challenges, I commissioned a Blue-Ribbon Panel of public and private sector human capital experts last year to identify problems and recommend solutions. In 2019, we received a number of recommendations from the panel, including that TSA should better leverage the authorities and flexibilities provided through ATSA rather than convert to the General Schedule.

Recently, TSA has addressed locality driven turnover issues through the use of retention incentives as a short-term fix for retaining TSOs in particularly competitive markets. Concurrently, we took measures to create career paths that aligned increased pay to enhanced training and skills by implementing the TSO Career Progression initiative. Through the FY 2021 President's Budget, TSA is transitioning away from relying predominantly on employing retention incentives at specific locations and instead adopting a more holistic and permanent solution by investing in career service pay, which will create a more predictable system for salary increases over a TSO's career. Additionally, the FY 2021 Budget supports the implementation of a second phase of our TSO Career Progression initiative, a merit based promotion to 7,500 top performing TSOs.

The FY 2021 President's Budget funds two workforce initiatives and represents a significant long-term commitment to our workforce that will help address these concerns. First, the Budget includes \$23.6 million for Service Pay to fund predictable, annual pay increases for TSOs who demonstrate service experience. The Budget also seeks \$11.3 million for the second phase of TSO Career Progression, an investment that will enable TSA to provide a three percent pay increase to screeners who demonstrate higher skill levels in checkpoint operations. Although TSA has the legal authority to implement these workforce improvements, TSA requires the budgetary resources to provide these additional workforce improvements to TSOs. We are confident that the investment in Service Pay and funding of the second phase of the TSO Career Progression initiative demonstrate how we can employ our ATSA authorities to make TSA an employer of choice.

Finally, in conjunction with the FY 2021 President's Budget, the Administration has proposed raising the Aviation Passenger Security Fee, also known as the September 11th Security Fee, in order to fully cover the costs of aviation security by FY 2028. The fee was created to cover the costs of aviation security, but in FY 2020 only covers 39 percent of today's costs. The proposal would increase the fee by one dollar, from \$5.60 to \$6.60 per one-way trip in FY 2021 and from \$6.60 to \$8.25 in FY 2022. This measure would generate \$618 million in new revenue in FY 2021 and close to \$28 billion in new revenue over the next 10 years.

Securing our Nation's transportation system is a complex task and we cannot do it alone. To achieve the priorities reflected within the FY 2021 President's Budget, we will continue to engage with industry and stakeholders, invest resources in our employees, and encourage the public to be part of the solution. Finally, through con-

structive oversight and dialogue, we seek to partner with Congress as we work to secure all modes of transportation.

Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Tester, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I look forward to your questions.

COVID-19 SCREENING: TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION'S ROLE

Senator CAPITO. Thank you. I will kick it off here. Let's talk a little more in depth on the coronavirus. You mentioned in your statement that you are working together in a coordinated fashion with other entities that are trying to maintain the safety and well-being of so many citizens. And we are probably one of the most traveled countries, I am sure, around the globe.

I guess, the first question I would ask is, when somebody is screened coming in, explain how that occurs. You mentioned to me earlier that it occurs actually at the airport of origin and not as that person is flying into the United States. Does TSA have a role there and what is your role?

Mr. PEKOSKE. We do, Madam Chair. A couple things to answer that question. First and foremost, TSA through its security directives and emergency amendments provide requirements to carriers at all of the last known departure airports to the United States.

So this is 280 airports throughout the world, not just airports in China. And essentially, what we asked the carriers to do is ask a series of questions of every passenger as they are boarding, and they also have the option of checking the passenger's passport to ensure there has been no travel to China, for example, or now Iran, for the last 14 days.

Senator CAPITO. And there are two countries that are going to be added to that, correct?

Mr. PEKOSKE. There will be additional countries, I am sure, as we continue to work with the task force, and I think those announcements will be relatively soon. So there is screening that is done by the carriers at the gate in last point of departure airports throughout the world. And then there is additional screening done by the passengers when they come into the United States across the U.S. border.

With respect to non-U.S. citizens, if you have been in China or Iran currently in the last 14 days, you cannot travel to the United States until 14 days has elapsed and you don't present symptoms of disease. But for U.S. citizens, you are allowed to return to the United States, but we, what we call funnel, those passengers through 11 airports around the country. And at those 11 airports, the Centers for Disease Control does medical screening for the passengers as they present themselves at the border.

Senator CAPITO. Do you feel you have the resources and capabilities to complete this mission at this point?

Mr. PEKOSKE. I do feel we have the resources and the capability. This really has not impacted our domestic screening operations to date, and we have adequate equipment for our officers, because as you know, our officers wear gloves as a matter, of course, anyway. That is part of our requirement. That is the primary means of transmission for the disease. We have also authorized our officers

in the screening checkpoints if they would like to wear a surgical mask, they are permitted to do that, and we provide those masks.

Senator CAPITO. Do you have any idea how many people have been denied entrance, non-citizens? Is that a large number?

Mr. PEKOSKE. It is not a large number, and then of course an even smaller number that present at the border and then are referred for further medical screening or quarantine.

REAL ID

Senator CAPITO. Let's talk about the Real ID. I am really concerned about this compliance. We all see the little sign that says by October first. You have to have the real ID, compliant ID. I told you earlier today that I did not realize that my driver's license is not compliant although I thought that it was, and it has to have a gold star in the right hand corner, which I checked a couple of times.

This to me could really present to be a major nightmare for TSA. So, how do you suggest or how are you moving forward to making sure, and what are you doing with the States to make sure that people know that this is—your life is going to change. And so I would like to hear your explanation.

Mr. PEKOSKE. Thanks for the question, Chairman. And we have done messaging for literally years on Real ID compliance. But what we find is that when we post messages at the screening checkpoints, people will generally just walk by them. They don't stop to read those messages. So that has not been the most effective means, and of course we put all messaging on our website, but you have to go to the TSA website to receive it.

What we did recently beginning last August was we asked our officers, if a passenger presented him or herself at the screening checkpoint, provided their driver's license and the officer noticed that that was not a Real ID driver's license, which is very easy to figure out because like you said it has got that gold star in the upper right hand corner, the officer would say to the passenger, this license is fine for today's travel and it is fine for travel all the way up through 1st of October, but you will need to have a Real ID driver's license on the 1st of October of 2020.

The other thing that we remind passengers of, and our messaging is very robust on this, is that there are other forms of acceptable ID in addition to a driver's license. For example, a passport is an acceptable form of ID. If you are a member of the military, military CAT card is an acceptable form of ID. If you are a global entry trusted traveler enrollee and you have a card for global entry that is an acceptable form of ID. We just need to remind people to remember to bring those other acceptable forms of ID, if they have them, to the checkpoint.

Final thing, chairman, that we are doing is we are working through the carriers, and the carriers have been terrific in helping us out with this, to post on their websites as a passenger is making a reservation, hey, just remember that as of October, if you are making a reservation after October, you need to have a Real ID driver's license.

And then, we will also ask them in the check-in process, as we get closer to October 1st, as a passenger goes to check in, that they

provide that additional information so the passengers that don't have them either bring something else that can get them through the screen checkpoint or change their travel plans.

Senator CAPITO. Well, we want to work with you to be able to get—I just said I am envisioning, you know, people have a tendency to put everything off. They wait till the last minute. You got to get four or five different types of ID to go in and get your Real ID. So we want to be helpful however we can. And so I will turn now to Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. Administrator Pekoske, I appreciate the work that TSA is doing on this but I share the concern from Senator Capito that there are a lot of people who have no idea that this is an issue and I didn't hear your response to her question of do you think we will be ready by October the 1st?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes, Senator Shaheen. You know, I am very concerned about this as well. I mean TSA is going to be the agency front and center when Real ID implementation occurs on October 1st. We are looking at everything we can do to minimize and mitigate the impact on travel because the last thing we want are more people standing in line at a screening checkpoint and they might learn that they won't be able to make their flight or even travel that day.

We are working very closely with the airports to find whatever means we can use to separate off the people that don't have an acceptable form of ID and handle those passengers different than everyone else who does have an acceptable form of ID. Because one of my concerns is, you know, I try to avoid creating large public gatherings of passengers lined up at the screening checkpoint. That is a security vulnerability.

So we will do everything we possibly can to mitigate this, but the reality is that it is a legal requirement that as of the deadline, if you don't have—if all you are presenting is a driver's license and it is not Real ID compliant, that is not acceptable.

COVID-19: RESOURCES

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, I certainly understand that. I just flew this weekend with my daughter who was not told by the screening agent that her driver's license was not Real ID compliant. So I would urge you to encourage all of your screening agents to actually do that when they see people.

I want to go back to the question about the coronavirus, because I understood you to say that you have the resources that you need. Does that mean that TSA personnel have all the necessary training and personal protective equipment to respond to a traveler who may have been exposed to the coronavirus?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes, ma'am. We have all the necessary personal protective equipment available that we think is needed given what we see today.

Senator SHAHEEN. And do they have the training? They know how to respond?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes, ma'am. And we message this. In fact, I just sent a message out to the entire workforce again this morning on this topic. And just the things that we have all seen in the media of washing your hands frequently. We provide hand sanitizer at the

checkpoints. We recommend that they change their gloves more often than they have in the past. And that they try to keep some distance from passengers because we have that option in the screening checkpoint.

So, you know, I think we have got the number of people that we need because this really has not impacted our screening operations to date, and we will have contingency plans in place should we have a lot of call-outs. For example, of people that call in sick that are working for TSA. But I also think at the same time we will probably see lower passenger volumes as well.

Senator SHAHEEN. And so, I talked to somebody who came in from Italy just in the last week who was not screened for temperature at the airport here in the United States, they were screened in Europe. Is there a reason for that?

Mr. PEKOSKE. The CDC, as of a couple days ago, had not recommended additional measures for either Italy or South Korea, the two countries that have a good number of cases right now and two countries that have been very, very forward leaning on this issue. I expect that in the not-too-distant future we will look at some measures for any country that, that seems to present more of a risk for Americans.

FISCAL YEAR 2021 BUDGET REQUEST UNFUNDED ITEMS

Senator SHAHEEN. The President's budget request eliminates the Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response (VIPR) teams, which is the main way that TSA conducts operations with local law enforcement for rail and bus safety. Can you speak to why that budget request was eliminated when we have approximately 76,000 buses that carry 19 million passengers each weekday in the United States, and that doesn't address the transit and rail security?

Mr. PEKOSKE. The reason that and the Law Enforcement Officer Reimbursement Program (LEO) and the exit lane staffing were not included in the budget again was just simply due to affordability reasons. TSA has a top-line budget that we need to live within and we need to make very difficult trade-offs in living with that top line.

With respect to VIPR and Law Enforcement Reimbursement these are very valuable programs for us, make no mistake about it. I appreciate your comments on the VIPR teams. They provide very important security augmentation in both the surface modes and in the airports. And as I look at airports with our increasing concern about the insider threat, VIPR teams will be even more valuable going forward. So it is no reflection whatsoever on the value of those security measures, it is simply an affordability issue.

Senator SHAHEEN. And so is the assumption that Congress will put the money back in because we understand how important it is and then therefore the Administration can have the money shown to be used for something else?

Mr. PEKOSKE. My commitment to every member on the sub-committee is I will provide you whatever information you need to make your own determination as to whether or not that particular program should continue to be funded. I think we have a very good track record in TSA of being very responsive to any requests from members or staffs.

Senator SHAHEEN. So would you like for us to put the money back in?

Mr. PEKOSKE. I think the capability that are provided by VIPR is very important. And another thing I would add to this discussion is that, you know, VIPRs are staffed by Federal Air Marshals. One of the things that I am trying to do is to ensure that we have enough ground based assignments for Federal Air Marshals so that they aren't flying constantly for 10 or 11 years because that is just not a good use of a resource. So there is a lot of utility to the VIPR program.

Senator SHAHEEN. I take that as a, yes. Thank you. Madam Chair.

Senator CAPITO. Senator Kennedy.

Senator TESTER. Your questions are much more enjoyable than mine.

[Laughter.]

AIRPORT STAFFING

Senator KENNEDY. I am on my best behavior today. Mr. Administrator, we all fly a lot and I guess we have different experiences, of course we do, but I will say that not every time but about two out of three times that I go to the airport, the TSA person checks me and reminds me about the change in the ID.

And in fact, that is how I got to learn about it. I remember reading it about it several years ago, and I remember thinking what idiot came up with this idea that we all have to get new identification. I am sure it sounded like a good idea to somebody at the time.

We have a lot of large airports for which we are grateful, but in my State we have a lot of small airports, and some of my people have pointed out to me that when they on occasion go to our smaller airports, having already paid for PreCheck, they like to get there early to get settled in, and there is no one from TSA checking people in. They have shifts, and when they are not busy, they just don't have a shift. Have you had—do you have concerns about that? Have you heard complaints about that?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Senator Kennedy, at smaller airports, yes, we do use a lot of shift work, but that shift work is designed to ensure that the screening checkpoint is open well in advance of when any flight departures occur. So if there is a specific issue, I would be most happy to address that.

Senator KENNEDY. We will get in touch with you. We have had some situations where a lot of my people like to get to the airport early and get settled in, and they get there in a smaller airport and there is nobody working and they have to wait till somebody comes on duty.

When I get off a plane and I am exiting the airport, I go through the exit lane and there is generally a police officer there saying, you know, to make sure that people don't try to sneak in which of course is important. Are you familiar with the LEO program?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes, sir.

FISCAL YEAR 2021 BUDGET REQUEST UNFUNDED ITEMS

Senator KENNEDY. I realized that the last time Congress adopted a President proposed budget was never, but I am curious as to why you are recommending a cut in the LEO program.

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. The reason for the recommendation again has no reflection whatsoever on the LEOs. They are very good partners of ours. We rely on them heavily. The airport security programs, which is a program that we require the airports to comply with, always contain a provision that requires law enforcement presence within a certain number of minutes at the screening checkpoint.

So it is a regulatory requirement that law enforcement officers be present. We have overtime reimbursed law enforcement agencies because we recognize that their budgets are difficult as well. But the reason why this always appears in the budget as a reduction is because there is a regulatory requirement so there is no requirement to reimburse.

And the thought is that over time, those law enforcement agencies can budget and then basically move themselves off of the requirement for reimbursement. But I do recognize the significant value that they provide to us and the partnerships are very, very strong.

Senator KENNEDY. Well, if the LEO program were substantially reduced or went away, and we have to have the security, who would pay for it, the airport, or the law enforcement agency would have to eat it?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. That would be between the law enforcement agency and the airport. You know, if they could get into some reimbursable arrangement with the airport, for argument's sake that would be between them. We would not be involved. Our requirement is just that there be a law enforcement officer present in a certain number of minutes within the checkpoint for obvious security reasons.

Senator KENNEDY. But you don't have any plans to eliminate the LEO program, do you?

Mr. PEKOSKE. No, sir.

Senator KENNEDY. I yield back, Madam Chair. Thank you.

Senator CAPITO. Senator Tester.

Senator TESTER. Yes, thank you, Madam Chair, and I want to thank Senator Kennedy for that line of questioning because I can just follow right on it. So see, there is always a plan. So there are cuts to the LEO program though, and Administrator, you talked about the fact that there is a requirement if there is a problem for people to be there.

So let's put this in a reality form. Local Government, County Government doesn't have a lot of money. They are not hiring extra cops just to lay around. In fact, I can't think of a case in Montana where they don't need more police than they already have because the need out there is greater.

So if we want to expect them to be able to be there and come to the aid of a potential problem in an airport, they got to have people to do that. The point I would make is with these LEO cuts, there is going to be less opportunity for those local law enforcement

agencies to be able to have the money to be able to bring people on, because they are not going to bring them on just for this, to be able to come forth.

So the real question here is this your idea to cut the LEO program or is this the Office of Management Budget's idea to cut the LEO program?

Because OMB has cut a lot of things in this budget, not this budget, all budgets, not just yours, all of them. Crop insurance is a fine example. Some of you don't know what the hell is going on and OMB cut that program. Purdue would not have done that. And so it is the same thing here. I can't imagine you doing this.

Mr. PEKOSKE. So, the way we work the budget is every single agency in the Department Homeland Security, which I know well, receives a top-line. And every year we get a top-line number and we just need to make sure that our budget submissions are within that top line. That requires some very difficult decisions.

Senator TESTER. This budget runs a \$1 trillion deficit.

Mr. PEKOSKE. I know.

Senator TESTER. The President's budget runs a \$1 trillion deficit. We have passed budgets where we have more money than anything I have ever seen since I have been here in the last 12 years, yet we are taking a potential—maybe I just see it wrong. Maybe flying is no big problem. Maybe putting those planes into the Twin Towers is a one-time thing. It is never going to happen again, but I don't think so.

Mr. PEKOSKE. Nor do I, sir. You know, I think the risk with aviation is as great, if not greater than it was on 9/11.

TSA STAFF HIRING

Senator TESTER. Than it was 20 years ago, that is right. So, let me let me peel on to this a little bit deeper. The Washington Post reported that the TSA has already frozen hiring and overtime in fiscal year 2020. There is a little cost of living adjustment that has put us in that situation, and quite frankly, we haven't allowed enough dollars for the cost of living adjustment. You combine that with the LEO program, with the VIPR program. What is the Department doing?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes, sir, with respect to the hiring freeze, all we are trying to do is manage the funds we have as best we can, as efficiently as we can. And so what we are not doing is we haven't stopped recruiting. We haven't stopped issuing offer letters for people for employment. But we have decided to do is bring them on at certain points in time so we save the salary cost in between.

Senator TESTER. This looks like a disaster waiting to happen, and I am not being critical of you. I like you. I think you are a good guy. But the fact the matter is, have you thought about doing a reprogramming or transfer to take care of this problem?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. Reprogramming of some of my own funds and then a reprogramming request to our Department.

Senator TESTER. And when will we receiving that notification?

Mr. PEKOSKE. That is still under review, sir. And I don't know what the response is going to be from the Department or from the Office of Management Budget yet, but the request has been submitted.

SCREENING TECHNOLOGY

Senator TESTER. Well, Senator Hoeven is here. He is the chairman of the Indian Affairs committee and we have this conversation with the IHS and the BAA all the time. If this is something that has to be done, you need to fight for it. It is just really important. I think it is really important. Okay, so there is a—the best technology for screening passengers and luggage.

We have supported the new CT machines and you know that, need more of them. Quite frankly, as I said in my opening statement, this budget requests 30, we need over 2,200 of them. How is this going to come to reality over time? Look, we get briefed all the time about the change in threat. You know more about change threat than we do. So isn't the best of technology a pretty absolute necessity?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. Absolute a necessity as soon as we can get it on board. And with respect to——

Senator TESTER. But don't you have to ask for dollars to get it on board?

Mr. PEKOSKE. We do. Yes, sir. And I will explain why that request is \$30 million in just a second. But just to reiterate that the capability of the CT technology is night and day compared to the current technology we have and we need to get to this point. We need to get there as quickly as we can. And you are right, the numbers are high.

I mean it is, you know, between 21 and 2,400 X-ray machines throughout our system. We decided last year, we put—we issued the first contract with the money that you appropriated in fiscal year 2019 for the initial 300 machines. That contract was a contract that was on an existing contract vehicle that we had but we knew that we were going to have to put a new contract vehicle in place for all the follow-on acquisitions. This contract vehicle that we are putting in place is a big one because just take, let's say for argument's sake, you take 2,000, you take 300 off, there are 1,700 machines. That is a lot of capability, a lot of investment on the part of the Federal Government, but very, very necessary investment.

What we have done is we have decided that we don't want to be in the business of taking those roller systems. You know, those rollers that feed your carry-on bag into the tunnel of the X-ray and then you pick it up at the end. We want to see an integrated solution to those because our experience is government does not do integrated products well.

And so, we are in the process of working with all the vendors that qualified for the initial acquisition and asking them in today, or yesterday rather, they should have submitted what they think their solution is for this combined baggage handling system and X-ray technology.

And then we are going to go through a testing process. mostly on the integration because we don't need to retest the X-ray technology. We will be in a position to issue the request for proposals for this new very large contract probably mid-summer of this year. And then we will go through the bid process and we expect an award probably a year from there because it is going to take some time to work through that process.

Senator TESTER. And then when would the delivery be?

Mr. PEKOSKE. The delivery will follow immediately after that.

Senator TESTER. So we are talking 2 years from now.

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. Yes, sir. But in the meantime——

Senator TESTER. And you are comfortable that?

Mr. PEKOSKE. I wish it could be a lot faster but this——

Senator TESTER. Are there ways we could speed it up?

Mr. PEKOSKE. I am working every single angle I can.

Senator TESTER. Well, the point is that we are here to help you speed it up. If you give us ideas on how to speed it up, I think you would get bipartisan support for that.

Mr. PEKOSKE. Will do. Thank you.

Senator CAPITO. Senator Hoeven.

REAL ID

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you, Madam Chairman. I appreciate it. So I went and got my Real ID here last week and am pleased to say the State of North Dakota is on top of it, doing an outstanding job. And the process was really good when I went and the challenge is ahead of time getting roughly four different types of ID you need. You know, I am guessing everybody's got some of them, but between myself and my wife, we didn't have all of them. Our social security cards, you know, we lost track of them like 40, 50 years ago.

So we had to go get those. But the point is a lot of folks are going to show up October 1st to see your front line people at TSA, who are doing a fine job and we appreciate them a lot, and what are you going to do? Because I mean our State is promoting it. I know the other States are promoting it.

I think you are trying to get the word out, but you are still going to have a lot of people show up October 1st who are going to want to get on a plane and you are going to tell them no, you don't have a Real ID compliant driver's license. And they are going to go, oh, I know and I am sure going to go get it, but golly, we got to go see my grandma or you name it. What is your contingency plan?

Mr. PEKOSKE. A couple of things. First, on the processing part. When the regulation was first issued back I believe in 2008, a lot of the electronic forms of submission of documents did not exist. And so we worked with the State DMVs who have been very, very good partners for us in this process and we asked for their input as to things we could do to make the document process more electronic.

They came out with some very good recommendations and now we are working through the regulatory process to change that. So the process for people should be easier going forward.

Senator HOEVEN. That is good because particularly for young people, they do everything electronic now. That is important.

Mr. PEKOSKE. Exactly. And plus you are not carrying a bunch of documents with you, leaving them behind, things like that. I mean, it is just better overall. So that process should be in place sometime in the not-too-distant future. I don't have a date for that yet. With respect to people showing up at the screening checkpoint, one of the things that is really important to me is what you all pay me to do, is to ensure security in our system.

And so we will not compromise security in any way, shape, or form with passengers who show up at our screening checkpoints with an ID that we can no longer by law accept as of the deadline date. We just can't since it would be against the law to do that. And so we are going to have to have an enhanced screening process because that is what we do. Our standard operating procedure calls for, if a passenger shows up—and it happens every day, passengers show up that they lost their driver's license, misplaced it. We have a process to get them through screening but it is lengthy.

And so what will happen without a doubt, even if there are just several hundred people which is an under estimate of what we think is going to occur in any individual airport, it is going to take those individuals a long time to get through our process. And there really is no way around it because when we do screening for people without the acceptable forms of ID, that is full bag search and that is a full on body pat-down. That takes a lot longer than having your bag go through the machine and having us look for specific anomalies in that bag or walking through a metal detector and not alarming it.

Senator HOEVEN. Is that going to hold up the person with the Real ID and then they are going to miss their flight?

Mr. PEKOSKE. We are working every way we can to make sure that doesn't happen.

Senator HOEVEN. I think you are going to have to have—look, it is going to happen. And your folks on the front line are doing a fine job. They are going to be confronted with some real challenges. I think you better have a clear plan and really lay it out and we are going to have to know exactly how it is going to work, because I guarantee people are going to show up and you are going to have this issue. And I am saying, yeah, we need to get the word out. Let's do more of that. You still have to have a contingency plan.

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes, sir.

Senator HOEVEN. If I were a frontline worker sitting there, I would want to know there is a contingency plan and I would want to know what it is because I am going to be facing a lot of folks that are going to get pretty angry if they can't get on that plane because they just have to go.

Mr. PEKOSKE. Right. And I am going to be front and center on that issue if it happens at airports around the country. I am keenly aware of that and we will do everything we can to mitigate the impact but there will be an impact.

Senator HOEVEN. And I think, you know, we will help however we can and States will help. But this is something—it has to be both the communication but then you have to have a plan that day because you will have to handle those people, and we need to know what that is.

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. But I would just add that no matter what we do, because we have limited capability of screen checkpoints as you know. I mean some checkpoints only have a fixed number of lanes, no matter what we do, for people that don't have a Real ID driver's license, it will take longer. And it could take a lot longer. And as you pointed out, even for passengers that have the Real ID or have a passport, there will be some time impact to them, but we will try to minimize that as much as we can.

SCREENING TECHNOLOGY

Senator HOEVEN. I had one other question. Madam Chairman, do you want me to wait? I have one more. The other question follows up on something that the ranking member brought up. We have some really fantastic rural States represented here like North Dakota and Montana and West Virginia and Louisiana and even Oklahoma. And, what are you going to do to get those—can you talk about those scanners, you talked about those CAT scanners, out.

And Senator Tester is right. I mean, we need those things out there. You need a lot more of them. How about some more—what are you going to do in a rural airports, right? Because we know you are going to give me the urban airports, but we got a lot of rural airports out there that we are worried about. What is the plan?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. We planned even in our initial 300 buy, to make sure that we spread the distribution across all sizes of airports, because as you point out, every single—there is no airport that is less important than another one. Because as a passenger, if you get through security, you are in the entire system. And so I want to make sure that we put the technology out at rural airports and at the same level that we do for the larger airports.

Senator HOEVEN. Very important point. Well-made. Thank you. Mr. PEKOSKE. Thank you.

REAL ID

Senator CAPITO. Thank you. Before I go to Senator Lankford, I would just like to ask, Senator Kennedy said whose brilliant idea was it that we have a Real ID. If you could maybe in 30 seconds say whose brilliant idea that was and when that was conceived.

Mr. PEKOSKE. It was the Real ID Act of 2005.

Senator CAPITO. That would be Congress, yes. Senator Lankford.

UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS

Senator LANKFORD. If it is of any help to you, Senator Kennedy, you weren't here when that passed and so you won't have to worry about taking that one. So, thanks for being here. Thanks for the work. All of us go through the process of TSA, all of us are grateful for the folks that are standing there in blue doing a great job.

And I would tell you in the airports that I fly out of Oklahoma City and Tulsa, the most out of those two airports, and I fly out of Oklahoma City more often than I do out of Tulsa, it is a remarkable group of folks that are there. And what they do, the attitude they do it with, the speed and the efficiency they do it with, are really a tremendous group of folks. And if you get the opportunity to be able to come to Oklahoma City and Tulsa and to be able to meet those folks, I would encourage you to be able to do it and to be able to see how they are doing it because they are really doing it extremely well.

And I know they are in a process in our airport, have taken time to be able to merge several sites and doing what all other ports are doing right now. They are really doing a remarkable job. Let me ask you a couple of quick questions on things. TSA has requested

an increase of 28 positions on countering unmanned aircraft systems (UAS).

Tell me a little bit about what you plan to do with that. There is obviously authorization that Congress gave you a couple of sessions ago on it. What is happening and what are those positions being used for?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes, sir. What has happened since the congressional authorization is that we have worked through the inter-agency process with the National Security Council staff and have developed a concept of operations for counter UAS operations in the United States, focused primarily on what we call the core 30 airports, the 30 largest airports where if there was a disruption in any of those airports, it would have a significant cascading effect on the rest of the system in the United States.

So we have a concept of operations. Part of that concept of operations was the designation of a lead Federal agency, and TSA has been designated as that lead Federal agency. So as the lead Federal agency, we have responsibility for making sure that con-ops is implemented in a timely fashion. These resources provide us with additional staff to do airport vulnerability assessments, for example, because we do a separate vulnerability assessment for UAS vulnerabilities at those core 30 airports.

We eventually, Senator Lankford, we want to open that aperture a bit to get to some still large airports that wouldn't be part of the core 30. The other part of that request is to provide us some additional attorneys to be able to support our counter UAS operation, some additional watch standers to do it. And then within the Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology budget, there is a good amount of money to do some additional research on the ability to detect, monitor, and identify UASs in air space.

We have good, strong international partnerships and some other DHS agencies do counter UAS operations like the Secret Service and like the Coast Guard. We are trying to take those best examples to be able to provide to airports what we call a qualified products list, which is equipment that we have tested, we have certified—it meets a certain performance threshold and we have determined that it is affordable for maintenance and reliability.

Senator LANKFORD. Right. But this is for countering the threat? This is detection and countering threat.

Mr. PEKOSKE. Initially, detection monitoring identification just to know what threat is there, and then follow on, on the countering.

Senator LANKFORD. Okay. Please tell me you are spending more on science than you are on attorneys in this process.

Mr. PEKOSKE. We definitely are.

Senator LANKFORD. Okay, thank you. You listed three of them there and I just want to be able to figure out where the priorities were on it. And known negotiations to attorneys. We need at least one in the country.

But that is always my concern, is that we spend a lot on consultants and about chasing things rather than the actual application of it. So I look forward to seeing that. 28 enough to be able to do that? You have got a core 30 facilities there that you are doing the evaluation on. Is 28 staff enough for that?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes, 28 is enough because we are using a lot of Federal Air Marshals support to deal with multiple assessments and we partner strongly with the FBI on this as well.

AIRBORNE TOXINS

Senator LANKFORD. Okay, thank you. We will want to be able to get an update on that and how that is going. In your detection obviously you are looking for immediate threats to an aircraft, to the staff, to the pilots, all those things coming into the aircraft. One of the threats that is out there is an airborne release of fentanyl or other chemicals as well.

How is it going on doing your detection of trying to move from explosives and a firearm to different airborne toxins like fentanyl or something else that may be getting into an aircraft?

Mr. PEKOSKE. So we are making some progress on that but candidly, you know, most of our focus is on explosives because the explosive set is very dynamic, it changes over time. We look at the intelligence. We look at what our adversaries are developing and try to stay ahead of them in that regard.

And that spills all the way over to for example canine training because we train canines for a certain odor set that has got to be constantly refreshed. But that, not to minimize the threat from Fentanyl and any other airborne agent.

Senator LANKFORD. Okay. I would only say I know that Customs and Border Patrol, other folks are working on technology to do rapid scanning for things like fentanyl, opioids, and all of the things that are coming in. Once they are transported into the system, as you mentioned before, if someone gets through into the system in any airport, they can get through to every airport on it.

If drugs and contraband or some other things are getting in, and some of those could be airborne released and become lethal or become an issue as well, all of those technologies I would encourage you to work with other areas of DHS and the technology they are using for screening to see if there is a way to be able to actually build that in the algorithm of what we are using for screening as well.

There are several different companies that are out there that do the rapid testing like you do for explosives on your hands, for random testing. They do that exact same type of testing, to be able to actually test for fentanyl or other things as well that might also be helpful for us to be able to help do some other detection and that might be something that can be built into the screen that you already do.

So, it is not a second type of test, but if you are already doing that swab, it would show up as well in that algorithm. So if there are ways that we can help or things that you need engagement on, pleased to be able to continue to see your work on that. Thank you.

SCREENING TECHNOLOGY

Senator CAPITO. Thank you, Senator. I had a couple of other questions and I am sure Senator Tester does too so we will proceed that way. I am not sure I quite understand why we have 300 CT scanners now and this budget asks for 30 more, and I know you have been asked this question a couple different ways. What is the

maximum number that you think you need in the end? And why are we only asking for 30 now as opposed to keeping those numbers ramped up to an achievable number?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes, Chairman. You know, the CT acquisition is my highest priority acquisition program because of the significant improvement it makes in our ability to detect. You provided in the fiscal year 2020 budget a little over \$200 million for CT as well. And so we will take that money and apply it—once this contract is in place, that money will be, those funds will be available to us.

So if you take the \$200 plus million that are in the fiscal year 2020 budget plus the \$30 million we are requesting in the fiscal year 2021 budget. That will give us a good start on the acquisition. We think the total number of X-rays is probably around 2,400 because we are planning for growth. Air travel is increasing it roughly 4 percent year-over-year.

The other aspect that I would highlight for you is that we have very strong partnerships with the carriers in the airports on technology, and the Congress provided those the legal authority to accept technology as a gift from the private sector. And we can also accept services as a gift from a private sector entity now. We have found the carriers in the airports to be very generous in gifting this technology.

Senator CAPITO. So is that occurring right now?

Mr. PEKOSKE. That is occurring right now. Yes, ma'am.

Senator CAPITO. So are you saying that the money that we gave in fiscal year 2020 combined with this money is only going to go for the 300 initial? Are you saying this was for the 30?

Mr. PEKOSKE. No, no. The 300 initial were funded in fiscal year 2019.

Senator CAPITO. Okay, so that is done. So you will combine that so it will be more than 30 in the end?

Mr. PEKOSKE. We will.

Senator CAPITO. Okay. But still that is so slow if your requirement—and of course the technology is going to change in the next 10 years. So by the time you get the CT scanner to Yeager airport, it is going to be off to something else.

Mr. PEKOSKE. Well, actually we think the CT technology is an enduring technology, but what will change is all the software that goes into that technology. And so one of the reasons that we wanted to put them all in this new procurement is where we have several different algorithm development processes going on at the same time. And we, for example, just now issued a new release on a testing basis that has vastly improved detection capability. So we are going to step up the capability over time. But we just found that both the vendors and the agency needed a bit more time to make sure as we deploy these.

Senator CAPITO. Okay. I know also in rural airports, and one of the issues is and it was pointed out when I went on the tour with you is, sometimes there is confined spaces or there is not enough place to conveniently locate these machines. There are a little larger so that reconfiguring the airport is a challenge for our smaller airports, so I understand that.

Let me talk about the CAT procurement. It is along the same lines. You are deploying that now but there is no plan for this same

technology to go into the smaller airports. How do you intend to ensure that the smaller airports are going to have something like this or this kind of security? I mean, we obviously saw Senator Tester mention 9/11.

We saw that the perpetrators came in through the smaller airport. And so I know you take each airport just too seriously. If you could respond to that.

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes, ma'am. You know, we fully intend to start a continuation for the CAT program, beginning in likely fiscal year 2022 to be able to address the smaller airports. When this program was initially put in place several years ago, it was just for the larger airports, but to your point, you know, the smaller airports are airports we need to pay just as much attention to.

The other part is that at the smaller airports, it was sometimes difficult to make the high-speed data secure connections at the smaller airports than it would be at a large airport.

Senator CAPITO. Well, that would be rural broadband, right?

Mr. PEKOSKE. That is right.

TSA STAFFING

Senator CAPITO. That is our other committee. We talk about that all time. Let me just see if I can kind of rapid fire really quickly. How many TSA agents do you have right now, approximately?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Approximately 45,000.

Senator CAPITO. And this budget provides you for an additional—

Mr. PEKOSKE. A very small number, actually. It provides us for about a 1.7 percent increase, but we think that—and we should always try to find as much efficiency in our process as we can. The thing that is very important here, and one of the reasons why those pay initiatives are in the budget is, as you know, TSA has an attrition rate amongst that 45,000 person workforce of about 17 percent on average across the system. That was last year. This year has already come down to somewhere around 12 percent is running right now.

What I hope happens, and I know hope is not a method but I think we have got some analysis to support this, is that as we put out these pay initiatives, our retention will go up. And I am putting a lot of attention on making sure that we address all of the workplace issues that our officers and anybody in TSA has identified in the annual surveys we do.

I mean, I read those things when I visit an airport, I visit a field office, for example. I look at their individual survey results so I know what the workforce has said about how we are doing as an agency. So it is a very concerted effort to bring the attrition numbers down so that I don't spend money recruiting and training people that are going to leave in a very short period of time.

Senator CAPITO. Well, I commend you too on the plan that you have. Obviously the two gentleman behind you are part of that where your detailing off the front lines, TSA agents and others to make sure that you are listening exactly to what is going on in the day-to-day life of a TSA agent and what their specific concerns can be. So I think that obviously gone to the benefit.

Senator Tester.

REAL ID

Senator TESTER. Thank you, Senator Capito. I would just say that a lot of the numbers I am having a hard time making them add up in my mind and that we are going to have a 4 percent increase in flyers, we have got a 1 percent increase in potential bringing folks on. You are going to have to bump up your salaries, which I agree by the way, at least at the smaller airports where you got folks coming in, working three hours, leaving and coming back.

So I hope you can make that work. If you do, we need to put you work on the Appropriations committee. Maybe the lead staffer. I want to talk about Real ID for a second. You exist to keep our traveling passengers safe.

The outfit that really benefits is the airlines, and I know you worked very, very well with the airlines, but there might be a possibility—when I get my ticket on this, or if it is a paper ticket, if they would put on that ticket, if you don't have a Real ID, this ticket is worthless, it might help you. Because every time I get on a plane, I look at that and it is like having a thing on a pack of cigarettes that says, if you smoke this it is going to cause cancer, it might be a possibility.

Have you approached the airlines about doing something like that?

Mr. PEKOSKE. We have, sir. Some airlines have voluntarily started to do that. We are looking at a requirement for not just purchasing of tickets because oftentimes tickets are purchased by third-party vendors.

Senator TESTER. But don't you still have to get a ticket from Delta or United or from a third party vendor.

Mr. PEKOSKE. Yes, sir.

And you get that ticket at check-in. So part of what we are looking at is, as you check in, it is going to say, hey, remember you have got to have a Real ID driver's license.

Senator TESTER. You are right, though. There are some—I mean I am trying to get as many—but it is amazing how many people travel with these things now and don't have paper tickets, which would be pretty damn simple and pretty cost-effective, I would think. Just a thought.

Mr. PEKOSKE. And that CAT technology, by the way, Senator, you don't need a boarding pass for TSA purposes once the CAT.

Senator TESTER. Bingo. That is right. No, I mean I went through an Indianapolis Airport that had it. I was pretty amazed because I asked them do you want to see my ticket and they said, no. I said, why not?

[Laughter.]

PRECHECK

Senator TESTER. At any rate, TSA PreCheck reached a milestone of 10 million. Congratulations. I am also aware that TSA entered into some partnerships with some private companies to increase enrollment. As TSA PreCheck expands, what is your overall goal? Everybody?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Well, everybody won't qualify, but we would like to see as many applicants as we possibly can because we know a lot about—these are called trusted travelers. We know a lot about trusted travelers. And so we adjust our screening process to accommodate.

Senator TESTER. Bingo and I love it. How many additional folks are going to be registered by the private sector vendors? What have you been told?

Mr. PEKOSKE. Well, you know, we are seeing PreChecks, Senator, increased by about 18 percent year-over-year, and one of the things that we are doing is we are taking people that used to get—

Senator TESTER. Got to get more. I mean this the first time you went with private sector vendors?

Mr. PEKOSKE. We should get more with having a private sector vendor right now. This adds two additional vendors.

Senator TESTER. Okay, so won't that increase it?

Mr. PEKOSKE. It will and it will also put price competition in there as well because those vendors may want to bundle other things that they offer, and they will compete on price for PreCheck for the things that don't involve the checks that we do as a Government.

Senator TESTER. And so you are confident that it will be taken care by fees and not add additional cost to the agency?

Mr. PEKOSKE. I am and I am hoping to see a much higher level of PreCheck registration for a different reason too is that PreCheck is going to be even faster than what it is today.

Senator TESTER. Yes. Well, I can tell you that the line at DCA, it is often quicker to go through the line that is not PreCheck because it is so long. Truthfully, I mean it has been a very successful program, very successful.

Mr. PEKOSKE. Right, but we need to work to address some of those disincentives to make sure that PreCheck on average, Senator, is always reliably five minutes or less. Every once in a while it will spike up, but it comes down very, very fast.

Senator TESTER. So the heart and soul of your organization is the guy sitting right behind you and all the people that he represents, and I will just tell you that we are going to be working on this budget moving forward. You make good decisions with good information. You need to give us good information, okay? Thank you. Appreciate it.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you. Well, this concludes today's hearing. Administrator Pecoske, we appreciate you appearing before the subcommittee, really do, and your fine work. You are always very thorough and very simple in your explanations, which I appreciate because well, we are simple people here and we need those explanations. But in all seriousness, talking to the American public, you have to be as direct as you possibly can.

Senator TESTER. And neither one of us are lawyers.

ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE QUESTIONS

Senator CAPITO. Yes. The hearing record will remain open for two weeks from today. Senators may submit written questions for the record. We ask that the Department respond to them within a reasonable amount of time.

SUBCOMMITTEE RECESS

Senator CAPITO. I will say this, last week's hearing with the Acting head of the Department, I did get the answer to my question back in less than a week. So if he is listening, thank you very much for that. So this subcommittee stands in recess. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 11:05 a.m., Tuesday, March 3, the subcommittee was recessed, to reconvene subject to the call of the Chair.]