

STATEMENT OF NORMAN Y. MINETA
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, JUSTICE, STATE AND THE JUDICIARY,
ON THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO COMBAT TERRORISM

MAY 8, 2001

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, it is a pleasure to appear before you and have the opportunity to address the Department of Transportation's (DOT) contributions to our government's overall effort to combat terrorism. As many of you know, I had the honor of serving on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence for 6 years. In 1997 the President asked me to serve as an advisor on his Commission for Critical Infrastructure Protection.

Today, I want to tell you why the Department of Transportation is a critical component of our Government's effort to fight terrorism. The first reason is because our Department is responsible for transportation infrastructures, which are priority targets for terrorists. Because we live in a country that prides itself on the openness of its democracy, Americans are always at some risk of a terrorist attack. The Department of Transportation may not be the first agency *you* think of when the topic turns to terrorism. But, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I can assure you our transportation systems are always among the first targets the *terrorist* thinks of when planning an attack against the United States.

The second reason is a consequence of the first. Because our Department manages the Nation's transportation systems we have operating administrations that must develop and implement safety measures that contain counterterrorism elements. This occurs throughout the Department but two significant examples are the Federal Aviation Administration and the United States Coast Guard, which I am proud to be before you today as the Coast Guard's Service Secretary.

Just two weeks ago, I activated DOT's Crisis Management Center to respond to a series of simulated attacks against the maritime, surface and aviation sectors of our national security transportation infrastructure. These attacks were staged as part of the Joint Chiefs of Staff exercise "Positive Force 2001." DOT took action in response to hypothetical crises.

But, the crises are not always hypothetical. When DOT dispatched our Coast Guard Port Security Units to the Persian Gulf last fall in response to the terrorist attack on the USS Cole, those servicemen and women knew it was not a drill. They remain on station.

Recent history shows us, throughout the world, terrorists target transportation systems. The terrorist bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway, and the deliberate derailment of Amtrak's Sunset Limited -- each an attack against a transportation target.

It is important to review why these and other transportation targets are the terrorists' choice. Only then can we begin to take measures to counteract their actions. Terrorists attack transportation systems because they make attractive targets. Airplanes, buses, subways and cruise ships carry large numbers of people within concentrated, predictable areas and on set timetables. We design them to be convenient to the public. But, apart from the aviation security system, that also makes these common modes of transportation easily accessible to terrorists and their explosive devices or other weapons.

Let me give you some examples of what I'm talking about. Ten years ago, a cruise ship of 70,000 gross tons was the largest in the world. Today, we have an entire class of cruise ships that exceed 140,000 gross tons. These new mega-ships carry upwards of 5000 passengers and crewmembers. A successful terrorist attack on any one of these ships could result in a catastrophic number of casualties, and threaten the economic viability of the entire industry.

Other transportation systems can assist the terrorist in maximizing damage and casualties. Rail and truck transportation typically move large volumes of hazardous materials through metropolitan areas. Vessels on our waterways carry even larger volumes. In 1999, 1.1 billion short tons of hazardous materials, primarily petroleum and chemicals, were shipped on U.S. inland waterways and in U.S. foreign waterborne commerce. The deliberate release of these types of hazardous materials through terrorist or criminal action would result in significant health risk and environmental damage.

Our job at the Department of Transportation is to guard against these scenarios. We use intelligence and interagency cooperation to heighten security awareness. And when the worst happens, we are among first agencies called in to deal with the aftermath.

The task of protecting our transportation system is complex and requires close coordination between our regulatory, intelligence, and law enforcement organizations. When we think about the U.S. transportation system, we usually think first about our more than 5 thousand public-use airports. Early on, the aviation system was the target of choice for many terrorists. But, our transportation system also consists of 2 million miles of oil and natural gas pipelines, nearly 4 million miles of public roads, more than 500 major urban public transit operations, and more than 300 ports on the coasts, Great Lakes, and inland waterways. As we continue to improve aviation security measures, I assure you, terrorists will seek alternative, softer targets.

We know our aviation system and airports are targets; but we don't often think about our marine ports as security targets. The Interagency Report on Crime and Security in U.S. Seaports, reports our maritime borders are more porous and have low security levels when compared to our airports and land borders. Almost 6000 foreign-flag vessels make a cumulative 50,000 port calls each year – many of which offer an opportunity for a terrorist attack in a variety of ways.

In addition to the traditional physical security threats, the information age brings with it new vulnerabilities. We need to protect our critical information systems as well as

our physical infrastructure. As we modernize our transportation infrastructure by integrating technology with automation, we also make their associated information systems more interdependent and interconnected. These systems become targets for attacks by hackers and cyber-terrorists. Without going into detail that will unintentionally provide a roadmap, I can simply say transportation systems are increasingly interdependent and therefore the potential damage caused by a successful cyber attack could be devastating and reverberate throughout the system.

As I said earlier, DOT is the focal point for ensuring the safety of the traveling public. We exercise our own authorities and seek to maximize transportation security through regulations, guidelines, inspections, cooperative agreements, and government investments. Within DOT, our Office of Intelligence and Security coordinates intermodal and interagency intelligence matters and security-related actions.

DOT is also an active player in our Government's counterterrorism community. We are represented in a variety of national-level forums, including the National Security Council's Policy Coordinating Committee on Counterterrorism and National Preparedness and the Inter-Agency Intelligence Committee on Terrorism. We have been fully involved in security planning and crisis and consequence management initiatives for national and international events that raise special security concerns.

One such event is the upcoming Salt Lake City Winter Olympics where over two thousand athletes from 85 nations will compete in competitions taking place at venues scattered across 3 thousand square miles. These sporting events will attract an estimated three million spectators, and a worldwide television audience of 3.5 billion viewers. We only need to remember the 1972 Olympics in Munich to realize the possible threat.

Effective deterrence, prevention and response activities affecting U.S. transportation assets and programs must be coordinated between federal law enforcement authorities, DOT, state and local officials, and the transportation community. The willingness of intelligence and law enforcement agencies to share threat information with

DOT greatly enhances our ability to work with the transportation industry to increase security awareness and, if necessary, implement security countermeasures. To facilitate information exchange, DOT and its operating administrations maintain representatives in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Counterterrorism Division and National Infrastructure Protection Center, the Department of State's Office of Intelligence and Threat Assessment, and the Central Intelligence Agency's Counter Terrorism Center.

Two DOT operating administrations directly involved with U.S. counterterrorism efforts are the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Although neither agency's primary mission is to combat terrorism, both administer safety or security measures that contribute to our government's efforts to combat terrorism.

The FAA oversees the largest and most complex of all aviation systems in the world. Security for this system was originally designed to defeat hijackers, which it has effectively done for nearly 30 years. However, the evolving threat of terrorism necessitates constant monitoring and updating of security requirements with new technologies and practices.

With Congress' support, we at DOT are meeting these threats on several fronts. We are purchasing and installing hundreds of units of advanced security equipment to detect weapons and explosive devices known to be used by terrorists. We maintain an aggressive aviation security research and development program to find less intrusive ways to discover those devices. We have increased our compliance testing to ensure that complacency does not weaken our vigilance. Congress has provided direction and support for our security activities at the Nation's airports with the enactment last November of the Airport Security Improvement Act of 2000.

From a systems security standpoint, our nation's air traffic control relies on a complex, information-centric infrastructure. To protect this critical infrastructure, the FAA has initiated a multi-layered approach to security, including certification and

authorization for new and legacy systems, and sophisticated intrusion detection to head off cyber attacks. After extended discussions, funding for this effort increased substantially in FY01. However, significant, ongoing efforts will be required over the next several years.

The Coast Guard also plays a vital role in America's response against terrorism. Three weeks ago, I attended a memorial service for two young Coast Guardsmen who gave their lives in the line of duty. Their deaths went largely unnoticed by the public at large, but they exemplified the valor of the 35,000 men and women who stand as the first line of defense on our waterways.

The Coast Guard's multi-mission approach and specialized abilities across the threat spectrum of the maritime environment permit a relatively small organization to respond to public needs in a wide variety of maritime activities and to shift emphasis on short notice when the need arises. For instance, in the wake of the attack on the USS Cole, the U.S. Central Command requested additional forces to enhance its antiterrorism and force protection capabilities. The Coast Guard answered the call. Today we have Coast Guard units deployed around the world, including in the Persian Gulf, to do our best to avoid a repeat of the attack on the Cole.

A significant element of the government's effort to respond to terrorist acts involves the transition from crisis to consequence management during, or in the aftermath of, an incident. Consequence management, which involves a number of organizations including the Coast Guard and the Research and Special Program Administration's Office of Emergency Transportation, refers to measures to protect public health and safety, restore essential government services, and provide emergency relief to governments, businesses, and individuals affected by the consequences of terrorism. DOT's Office of Emergency Transportation manages Emergency Support Function Number 1 of the Federal Response Plan. This consequence management activity involves transporting response teams, such as urban search and rescue teams, equipment and supplies into the area where a terrorist attack has occurred.

Mr. Chairman, the United States enjoys the safest and best transportation system in the world. However, we will not rest on our laurels. Of the many issues facing DOT and our transportation systems, the threat of terrorism remains a serious and worrisome concern.

At the outset of my remarks, I mentioned the recent activation of the DOT's Crisis Management Center in response to simulated terrorist attacks as part of a Joint Chiefs' exercise. In the exercise, the Department did our part; we answered the bell. Let me assure you today, Mr. Chairman, if our next activation should come, God forbid, in response to a real terrorist attack, the DOT will be ready.

This completes my prepared statement, and I would be pleased to respond to any questions from you and members of the Committee.