STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

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Chairmen Davis, Rouzer, Ranking Members DelBene, Costa, and distinguished Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today to discuss U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) role in agriculture security, a critical component of our national security that we preserve through collaboration with other Federal agencies and non-federal stakeholders.

When the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was created in 2003, agricultural quarantine and inspection (AQI) duties relative to agricultural import and entry functions transitioned from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to CBP. As the lead DHS agency for border security, CBP continues to work closely with USDA, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and other domestic and international partners to protect the Nation from a variety of evolving dynamic threats, including those posed by plant pests, biological threats, select agents, and foreign animal diseases, arriving at our air, land, and sea ports of entry (POEs). The introduction of a plant pest or foreign animal disease poses a very serious threat to U.S. agriculture and our natural resources. Furthermore, the potential economic impact is massive; according to the USDA Wildlife Services: Economic and Ecological Impacts of Invasive Species, 2000, invasive species cause an estimated $136 billion in lost agriculture revenue annually.

Each year, CBP agriculture specialists intercept thousands of "actionable pests" – those identified through scientific risk assessment and study as being dangerous to the health and safety of U.S. agricultural resources. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2015, CBP agriculture specialists interdicted approximately 1.6 million prohibited plant materials, meat, and animal byproducts at POEs, while also intercepting more than 165,000 pests from entering the United States.

When the agriculture inspection mission transitioned to CBP from APHIS, I transferred along with it. Throughout my 34 years of service with CBP and USDA, leading agricultural compliance and inspection and pest exclusion and eradication programs, I learned first-hand the challenges and risks involved with securing our Nation from agricultural threats, while facilitating lawful travel and trade that is so critical to our economy. Today, I serve as the Executive Director of CBP's Office of Field Operations, Agriculture Programs and Trade Liaison (APTL) Office. We are responsible for safeguarding and protecting American agriculture from the risks associated with the entry, establishment, or spread of plant pests and pathogens, noxious weeds, and foreign animal diseases. We also provide leadership, expertise, and innovation to defend the United States from the threats of bio- and agro-terrorism.

Agricultural inspections have traditionally focused on unintentional introduction of pests or diseases – those unnoticed in someone's luggage or hitchhiking on the floor of a container. With the added danger of agro-terrorism, that is, the intentional introduction of agro/biological agents, toxins, and plant pests or animal diseases, the role of the CBP agriculture specialists at our POEs is more crucial than ever. CBP's AQI programs are a key component of our border security mission. These programs utilize a risk-based strategy and multilayered security approach that incorporates sophisticated targeting, collaboration with our Federal partners, and advanced detection capabilities.

Frontline Agriculture Security

CBP's inspection and detection activities are conducted by a cadre of highly-trained CBP agriculture specialists (CBPAS). CBPAS use their science-based education, background, and

expertise to apply a wide range of Federal, state, and local laws and agency regulations in the process of determining the admissibility of agriculture commodities while, at the same time, preventing the introduction of harmful pests, diseases, and potential agro-terrorism into the United States. CBPAS seize prohibited or infested agricultural items, which, if allowed to enter, could cause great harm to our Nation's agricultural and natural resources. CBPAS also plan, conduct, and supervise remedial actions such as treating, disinfecting, and safeguarding prohibited or restricted agricultural commodities. Additionally, CBPAS provide scientific and technical expertise on pathways of entry with a focus on threat analysis, interdiction, and intelligence-driven targeting for preventing the entry of prohibited agricultural products and agents of agricultural and biological terrorisms into the United States through POEs.

Most CBPAS have a bachelor's or higher degree in the sciences, such as botany, entomology, plant pathology, agriculture, biology or a related field. Once on board, the current CBPAS Basic Academy curriculum is 51 days long, and consists of USDA quarantine regulations, a scientifically oriented curriculum for plant pest identification, as well as a CBP law enforcement oriented curriculum. This comprehensive training, provided by USDA and CBP, prepares our CBPAS to effectively conduct inspectional and regulatory activities for our AQI operations. Our CBPAS also receive up to 18 weeks of port-specific post academy training.

When agriculture operations transitioned to CBP in 2003, approximately 1,565 Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) Officers from approximately 135 POEs came on board from the USDA. Today, CBP has deployed more than 2,400 CBP agriculture specialists at approximately 182 POEs. Additionally, CBPAS are present at specific Preclearance stations outside of the United States, effectively pushing our border security protective measures outward and mitigating foreign animal disease and plant pest risk to trade and travelers prior to entry into the United States. At ports where we do not have CBP agriculture specialists, CBP officers are cross-trained to detect agriculture items of interest.

Agriculture security threats exist nationwide, across all modes – air, land, and sea – and in both the trade and travel environments. In the trade environment, each year, CBP processes nearly 30 million cargo containers that arrive by ship, plane, truck, and train at our POEs across the country. CBPAS use automated systems to place holds on targeted shipments and conveyances and work with specialized x-ray machines that detect organic materials. They check containers and trucks for smuggled agricultural products or packaging materials, such as wooden pallets that might contain invasive species that could harm our agriculture and environment. In a similar capacity, at international mail and express consignment (ECO) facilities, CBPAS screen shipments for the presence of infested or prohibited agricultural materials.

In the travel environment – air, land, and sea—CBP processes more than 360 million passengers each year. We also inspect commercially imported products, as well as modes of transportation, such as aircraft, cargo ships, open railcars and trucks. This is because agriculture threats in the travel environment include prohibited plant and animal products and by-products that are either intentionally or unintentionally packed in a passenger's baggage or vehicle. CBP agriculture specialists enforce USDA regulations and conduct agriculture quarantine inspections related to those travelers and their accompanying baggage. Agricultural canines specifically trained to detect meat and plant materials are an additional invaluable screening asset for international passenger pathways.

Efforts to Secure America from Agriculture Threats

In both the travel and trade environments, and across all modes, CBP's multilayered approach to agriculture security necessitates a comprehensive awareness of threats, substantial information sharing and coordination, and advanced detection capabilities. Our targeting activities, Federal partnerships, and advanced detection capabilities increase CBP's awareness of what may be inside shipments or carried by travelers and enhance our ability to assess whether it poses a risk to the American people. CBP uses pest alerts and foreign animal disease notifications from the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service; agriculture quarantine inspection data; intelligence; and advanced information to identify high risk shipments to support agriculture port operations across all environments and conveyances.

Targeting Capabilities

Many of the same analysis tools used in support of CBP's anti-terrorism activities related to the movement of cargo and travelers are also used to target potentially harmful agricultural items that may be approaching our borders in a shipment or with an individual traveler. For example, analysts at the National Targeting Center (NTC) use the Automated Targeting System (ATS) to proactively analyze advance passenger and cargo information before departure from foreign ports. This critical decision support tool assists CBP officers and CBPAS in identifying shipments or travelers that warrant a more comprehensive screening or inspection upon arrival at a POE. Furthermore, at the CBP Commercial Targeting and Analysis Center (CTAC), CBP and our Federal partner agencies combine resources, leverage expertise and capabilities, and share information to identify potentially unsafe imported products, target potentially high-risk shipments, and reduce redundant inspection activities.[1]

To enhance agriculture targeting, CBP developed the framework for a National Agriculture Cargo Targeting Unit (NACTU) at the NTC. This new agriculture unit focuses solely on agriculture threats to identify potential and repeat violators that may import shipments with pests, prohibited products, contaminants, or smuggled products in all cargo pathways (rail, air, sea, land, ECO). NACTU serves as a conduit to house agriculture intelligence at a national level and enables dissemination of information to local ports. Flagging high-risk shipments in a time sensitive manner and comprehensive entity research enables the local ports to save time and facilitates trade by removing the focus from low risk and compliant agricultural items.

CBP's targeting capabilities and programs are critical aspects of CBP's ability to effectively and efficiently identify potentially high-risk shipments or travelers and intercept agricultural threats before they arrive at a POE.

Detection Capabilities

In addition to our targeting capabilities, CBP deploys a cadre of specialized technology, and other resources to screen passengers and cargo to prevent the introduction of harmful plant pests and foreign animal diseases in the United States.

[1] Commercial Targeting and Analysis Center Partner Agencies include Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Food Safety Inspection Service, Food and Drug Administration, Consumer Product Safety Commission, Environmental Protection Agency, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, National Marine Fisheries Services, and Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

CBP's agriculture canines are among our most effective assets within our AQI program, and we continue to expand this valuable resource. In 2003, when USDA transferred PPQ Officers to CBP, approximately 74 canine teams were included. Today, about 118 CBP agriculture canine teams provide screening at the border crossings, Preclearance locations, air passenger terminals, cruise terminals, cargo warehouses, and mail facilities that process international passengers and commodities.

CBP's agriculture detector dogs are a key operational component when screening passenger baggage and cargo to prevent the introduction of harmful plant pests and foreign animal disease from entering the United States. A trained agriculture canine (beagle, beagle mixes or Labrador retrievers) can scan a piece of luggage or cargo for hidden or forgotten fruits and meats in mere seconds, thereby saving time and resources for the ports to detect prohibited agricultural products through x-ray or physical inspections. CBP agriculture canine teams operate in airports, seaports, mail and express consignment facilities, and at border POEs detecting agriculture products.

All CBP agriculture specialist canine handlers and their canine partners complete the initial 10-13 week CBP Agriculture Specialist Canine Training at the USDA National Detector Dog Training Center (NDDTC). All the detector dogs at the NDDTC are adopted from rescue shelters in the United States or come to the program from private donations.

CBP is also making great use of technology to transform business processes. CBP is expanding the Enforcement Link Mobile Operations – Cargo (ELMOc) program by deploying mobile devices to CBPAS in all environments (air, land and sea border ports). CBPAS will have remote access available at their workstation, allowing them to close out exams without having to return to ports (real-time release). This facilitates trade with quicker release of cargo and increases the speed-to-market value (delivering containers hours to a day earlier). This is a mobile solution to better facilitate mission critical operations and address the needs of CBPAS to perform inspections of cargo without being bound to a physical location.

Collaboration with Government Partners

CBP's targeting programs and detection capabilities are further strengthened by our extensive partnerships with other Federal agencies and industry stakeholders. CBP enforces laws on behalf of 47 Federal entities. We work closely with our DHS partners, as well as other Federal agencies such as APHIS, FDA, and the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). We collaborate with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

CBP's agricultural security activities are supported through a close partnership with APHIS. APHIS establishes agriculture rules, regulations, policies, and training based on pest risk assessments and market access programs. CBP, in turn, implements internal policies to operationalize those regulations. This includes how CBPAS will identify shipments for exams and what safeguards to institute in response to pest detection.

APHIS also collaborates with CBP to develop trade facilitation programs, such as the National Agriculture Release Program (NARP). NARP was developed to identify those agriculture commodities that are imported in very high volumes, but have been determined to be very low risk for introducing potentially harmful plant pests and diseases. Once these commodities are

included into the program, they are inspected at lower rates, freeing-up CBP resources to focus on high risk commodities. If at any point the number of serious agriculture pest interceptions on a commodity is deemed unacceptable, that commodity will be removed from NARP.

APTL Programs and Private Sector Engagement

CBP's mitigation strategy of agricultural security threats involves training, outreach, and partnerships with industry. APTL maintains a number of robust pest exclusion programs centered on some of the most devastating pests, which include the Asian Gypsy moth (AGM) and the Khapra beetle (KB), and risks associated with pests in wood packaging material (WPM) as well as other contaminants.

AGM is a very serious forest pest that can hitchhike on the superstructure of vessels and cargo, feeds on more than 500 plant species, and can fly up to 25 miles a day, dispersing eggs across vast interior woodlands, causing economic and environmental damage due to loss of trees, plants and the costs to trap, contain, and eradicate the population. Native to India, the KB is one of the world's most destructive stored-product pests and is considered one of the top 100 worst invasive species worldwide. Infestations can result in 30 percent (up to 70 percent) grain damage, making the products unpalatable and unmarketable and restricting export of U.S. grain, cereal products, and seeds. WPM poses a high risk for the introduction of serious exotic pests of trees. International standards,[2] as defined by the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures ISPM 15, dictate that WPM must be treated to eliminate the pest risk before it is used for international shipments. There are also potential threats from contaminants (soil, plant debris, hay, straw, grass). Conveyance contamination provides a pathway for invasive species into the United States which can cause serious harm to crops and livestock. Invasive species are expensive to control and can reduce agricultural production, property values, and water availability.

CBP continues to expand its knowledge of harmful pest behavior, habits, pathways, and host materials and provides regular training, conducted or endorsed by APHIS, to CBPAS and CBP Officers on methods to detect and prevent the introduction of pests. Our efforts also include conducting outreach with the trade community to promote best practices. For example, CBP incorporates outreach as part of our WPM program. This outreach is designed to open lines of communication with trade and transportation communities and leverage their support for utilizing compliant WPM and sound agricultural safeguarding measures. APTL collaborates with CBP Attachés; Centers for Excellence and Expertise (CEE) — specifically, the Agriculture and Prepared Products CEE in Miami, Florida — the Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT); and the Advisory Committee on Commercial Operations of Customs and Border Protection (COAC) to educate industry about the agricultural risks associated with hitchhiking pests and contaminants such as AGM, Federal noxious weeds, plant parts, and soil.

CBP uses every opportunity to help industry associate the impact of contaminants to their business processes, including providing information to industry to ensure that their conveyances are cleaned prior to loading cargo destined to the United States. When trade minimizes carrier contaminants, they also reduce delays in the cargo release cycle and decrease shipping expenses for quarantined containers that must be cleaned or treated.

[2] 7 C.F.R. § 319.40

Operation Effectiveness

CBP agriculture specialists continue detecting and sharing best-practices to prevent introduction of harmful pests into the United States where millions of dollars in forest resources are at stake. With the growth of our APTL programs, CBP is aggressively seeking opportunities to enhance our efforts to detect and interdict these agricultural security threats. For example, CBP intercepted AGM in 76 instances in 2014. This was a record year for CBPAS with regard to confirmed AGM interceptions.

We have also expanded our KB pest exclusion through the development of a KB detection training program for agriculture specialists and CBP officers. As a result, KB interceptions soared from 2007 to 2012; so much so that APHIS implemented two federal orders increasing import requirements for some KB host materials. CBP, in cooperation with USDA, develops additional pest exclusion training programs for its CBPAS and CBP officers as new threats and risks for U.S. agriculture are identified. APTL measures and attributes the success of increased KB interceptions to KB training performed by APTL beginning in 2009. 1,971 of CBPAS were trained in KB detection, identification, safeguarding, and destruction. Following this training, two federal orders were distributed to the field offices that increased import requirements for KB host materials. Since the implementation of this training program in 2009, interception of KB are almost 12 times higher (14 in 2009, 162 in 2015).

Conclusion

CBP's agricultural program is a critical component of our Nation’s effort to protect agricultural products from plant pests and foreign animal diseases. In coordination with our partners, CBP’s agriculture security efforts facilitate legitimate trade and travel while protecting our Homeland, natural resources, and the U.S. economy.

Chairman Davis and Chairman Rouzer, Ranking Members DelBene and Costa, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions.