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The Special Counsel

[REDACTED]

September 15, 2025

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Re: OSC File No. DI-23-000586

Dear Mr. President:

I am forwarding to you reports transmitted to the Office of Special Counsel (OSC) by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in response to the Special Counsel's referral of a disclosure of wrongdoing by employees at the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Boston, Massachusetts.¹ OSC has reviewed the disclosure, the agency reports, and the whistleblower comments, and, in accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 1213(e), I have determined that the agency's findings appear reasonable. The following is a summary of the allegations, findings, and whistleblower's comments in response.

Mr. [REDACTED], a Transportation Security Manager, who consented to the release of his name, disclosed that the Advanced Imaging Technology (AIT) machines at Boston Logan International Airport (Boston Logan) failed to detect known security threats during TSA officer training exercises. Specifically, Mr. [REDACTED] alleged AIT machines failed to detect [REDACTED] during a training exercise on March 3, 2023, and failed to detect [REDACTED] during a TSA officer training exercise on March 11, 2023. Mr. [REDACTED] also alleged that Boston TSA management and the Boston Federal Security Director (FSD) failed to investigate these potential security vulnerabilities when they were notified of the incidents on March 11, 2023.

The agency investigation did not substantiate the whistleblower's allegations, finding that the AIT machines did not fail to detect known security threats because the training

¹ The allegations were referred to then-Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas for investigation pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 1213(c) and (d). Then-Secretary Mayorkas delegated the authority to review and sign the report to the TSA Administrator. Then-Deputy Administrator Holly Canevari, who is authorized to act for the Administrator, signed and transmitted the report. TSA Investigations investigated the allegations.

[REDACTED]

exercises were not conducted in accordance with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). TSA's subject matter expert on AIT equipment indicated that SOPs are designed to ensure the greatest chance of AIT technology performing accurately for both detection and false alarm; technical tests have confirmed that deviating from these protocols may cause a significant loss in detection.

The investigation revealed that the individual who walked through the AIT machine with [REDACTED] during the training on March 3, 2023, was wearing a jacket, which is not consistent with the SOP that requires passengers to divest outer garments. A re-test of the Boston Logan AIT machine was conducted on February 6, 2025, using the same [REDACTED]. The agency reported that the AIT machine, operating with updated software, reliably detected [REDACTED] using the standard TSA screening protocol.

The agency agreed that the AIT machine did not detect [REDACTED] during the training exercise on March 11, 2023, but, the agency found, this was not a failure. The training aid—[REDACTED]—used by the officers was never intended to be used for screening by the AIT machine in the first place. Rather, it was approved only as an overt training aid, used to provide the screening workforce an understanding of how [REDACTED] can look and feel. Testing and expert interviews revealed that the training aid was not [REDACTED] the AIT machine is designed to detect. As such, if an AIT had alerted to the training aid, such alert would have been considered a false alarm and an error. The agency reported that AIT algorithms are intended to minimize false alarms on non-threat items and anatomical anomalies in order to decrease physical contact between passengers and TSA officers.

The agency found that Boston Logan leadership conducted an immediate review of the incidents and took appropriate actions, in compliance with applicable SOPs, once they were notified of the alleged security vulnerability. The agency reported that the AIT machines were taken out of service and recalibrated in compliance with the Screening Policies SOP. Since the recalibration was successful, the AIT machines were put back into service. Additionally, although not required by SOP, Boston Logan leadership requested a technician service the AIT machines to ensure they are working properly.

In his comments, Mr. [REDACTED] maintains that the failure of the AIT machines to alarm during the identified training exercises creates a major security vulnerability at airports. Specifically, Mr. [REDACTED] remains concerned that the agency does not require AIT machines to alarm on [REDACTED] as physical anomalies. He is also concerned that the agency found the re-creation

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

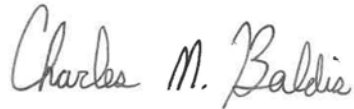
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testing results sufficient when the AIT machine only alerted on [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]² He believes the results of the investigation show that AIT machines do an inferior job in detecting possible threats when compared to other forms of security, such as x-rays or pat downs, yet they are the only form of physical screening many passengers go through before boarding an aircraft.

I thank the whistleblower for bringing these allegations to OSC. The agency has conducted a thorough review of the allegations, including conducting multiple interviews with the agency's AIT and [REDACTED] experts and testing of [REDACTED] by the Transportation Security Laboratory. Accordingly, I have concluded the agency reports include the information required by statute and the findings appear reasonable.

As required by 5 U.S.C. § 1213(e)(3), I have sent a copy of this letter, the agency reports, and whistleblower comments to the Chairs and Ranking Members of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, and the House Committee on Homeland Security. OSC has also filed redacted copies of these documents and the letter referring the matter to DHS in OSC's public file, which is available online at www.osc.gov. This matter is now closed.

Respectfully,



Charles N. Baldis
*Senior Counsel and Designee
of Acting Special Counsel Jamieson Greer*

Enclosures

² The agency report states that the AIT machine alarmed in [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] is the default setting for all AIT scanners at Boston Logan.
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]