

Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service

May 2, 2014

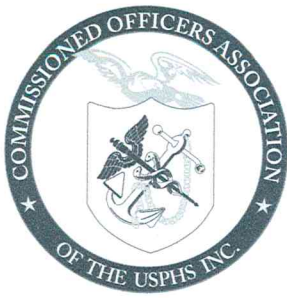
The Hon. John S. Pistole, Administrator
United States Transportation Security Administration
601 12th Street South
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Administrator Pistole:

Perhaps you are unaware that TSA is delivering a daily slap in the face to thousands of commissioned officers of one of this country's uniformed services: the commissioned officers of the United States Public Health Service. I am confident that this insult is unintentional and arises from a lack of understanding of who these officers are and what they do for this country.

You have undoubtedly heard of the U.S. Surgeon General, a Presidentially-appointed individual who wears a Rear Admiral's rank and uniform. What you may not know is that there are some 6800 other commissioned officers who report to the Surgeon General, and they, too, carry military rank, wear military uniforms, receive military benefits, and are subject to deployments both in this country and overseas. Over 1000 of them deployed several years ago when Hurricane Sandy struck the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut area, and they have deployed in recent years to both Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet your TSA denies them the privilege of participating in the TSA expedited screening program. I find it most ironic that members of the U.S. Coast Guard—including Coast Guard civilians—are eligible to participate in this program, while the Public Health Service Officer with the rank of Rear Admiral who serves as the Coast Guard's Surgeon General is not eligible, nor are the U.S. Public Health Service commissioned officers who provide health care to the Coast Guard and work along-side members of the Coast Guard. There is something wrong here.

I note from your web site that with regard to members of the USPHS Commissioned Corps and the Commissioned Corps of NOAA, "TSA continues to work with various federal government agencies to expand participation to additional vetted



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employees in the future.” This is terrific-sounding language, but I am unaware of any effort on the part of TSA to reach out to the U.S. Public Health Service and expand the pre-screening program to include these medical professionals. In other words, these are just words, with no follow-through on the part of TSA.

We at the Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service stand ready to assist TSA in its outreach efforts. Please have one of your staff contact me at 301 731-9080 or at jcurrie@coausphs.org, and we will work with you all to make TSA’s words into a reality. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

James T. Currie, Ph.D
Colonel, USA (Ret.)
Executive Director
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S.
Public Health Service