

STATEMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY OF THE COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM AND THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION OF THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES CONCERNING THE REVIEW OF UNITED STATES PARK POLICE WEAPONS ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAM

August 2, 2013

Chairmen Bishop and Chaffetz, Ranking Members Grijalva and Tierney and Members of the Committees, thank you for the invitation to appear before you today to discuss the recent findings issued by the Department's Inspector General's (IG) Office on firearms accountability within the United States Park Police (USPP).

The Department of the Interior (Department) witnesses are Kim A. Thorsen, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Public Safety, Resource Protection and Emergency Services, Jonathan B. Jarvis, Director of the National Park Service (NPS), and Teresa Chambers, Chief of the USPP.

The USPP was founded in 1791 and is one of the nation's oldest uniformed federal law enforcement agencies. The USPP provides law enforcement services to designated areas within the National Park Service (NPS), primarily in the Washington, DC, New York City, NY and San Francisco, CA metropolitan areas. The members of the USPP are professional police officers and dedicated public servants who help us protect millions of visitors each year and protect some of our most valued national icons, including the Washington Monument, the Jefferson Memorial, the Statue of Liberty, and the Golden Gate Bridge. They play an important role in the overall law enforcement program within the National Park Service (NPS) and the Department of the Interior (Department).

On June 27, 2013, the IG issued its review of USPP weapons accountability. The IG's review raises significant issues of concern regarding USPP firearms management. The accountability of weapons used by our law enforcement personnel is of critical importance, and we take the issues raised very seriously. The IG report provided a number of important recommendations to address these issues. We appreciate the IG's efforts. We are committed to implementing these recommendations which will improve accountability in this critical area.

In the last 30 days, since issuance of the IG's report, we have taken immediate actions to address the IG's recommendations.

The first priority has been to conduct a thorough physical inventory of all government-owned firearms in USPP custody, in accordance with recommendation 3 from the IG report. To conduct this physical inventory, we created a team of senior officials of the NPS and the Department's Office of Law Enforcement and Security (OLES) to personally contact all officers within the USPP and to personally inspect every USPP firearm, whether issued to an officer or secured in a USPP facility. The team visited USPP facilities in San Francisco, New York City,

and Washington DC. With the exception of three officers who are currently deployed overseas on military assignments or on extended leave, the team has met with each USPP officer.

The team has ensured that each inspected firearm has been entered into and tracked in the Department's Financial and Business Management System (FBMS). The initial assessment of the team is that approximately 98% of the physical inventory of firearms in the custody of the USPP were previously entered in this system. We are continuing our efforts to complete the inventory, including any reconciliation with existing records.

The team is also reviewing the USPP's approaches to administrative oversight, training, and coordination. We are committed to ensuring the members of the USPP maintain the highest standard of accountability with its firearms inventories.

With regard to the other recommendations from the IG report, we either have already addressed, or are in the process of addressing each one of them. For example:

- We are in the process of reviewing all USPP guidance to confirm that it complies with NPS and Departmental regulations, policies and procedures.
- USPP has ceased using informal property accountability systems, and we have transitioned all of the USPP firearms to our new property accountability system.
- USPP is developing a schedule to ensure quarterly inventories of all firearms.
- The Chief of the USPP will personally approve all USPP firearms purchases. The Chief had already put this in place prior to the issuance of the IG report.

In addition, the NPS has asked the USPP to detail all work that has been done, to date, on all of the IG's recommendations and the actions planned to successfully address the ones that have not been completed.

The Department's OLES, which is responsible for policy development, coordination, evaluation, and support of the Departmental programs concerning law enforcement, will work with the NPS and the USPP to provide additional oversight. OLES periodically audits the Department's bureaus for compliance with Departmental law enforcement policies. Currently, the OLES is conducting a program compliance assessment on bureau firearms programs.

We want to assure the Committees that the Department, the NPS and the USPP take very seriously the accountability of weapons used by our law enforcement personnel. We will work together to monitor compliance with the IG's direction on this matter.

Thank for your attention to this important issue. We are happy to answer any questions you may have about our efforts to manage and account for USPP firearms.