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TSA GUIDE





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Whether you're on official travel, TDY, or R&R, enjoy smoother trips with TSA PreCheck. Membership is free for U.S. Service members and DoD Civilians, so your security screening is expedited without having to remove shoes, laptops, 3-1-1 liquids, belts, or light jackets.

Trips are better when traveling together, so be sure friends and family have TSA PreCheck, too. Many credit cards help cover enrollment costs and benefits last for five years.



tsa.gov/precheck/credit-cards-offer

How to use your TSA PreCheck benefits.

Military Members:

Update your DTS profile and airline frequent flier profiles with your DOD ID (CAC ID) number as your Known Traveler Number (KTN). When booking travel, confirm your DOD ID number is in the KTN field.

Civilians:

Opt-in via milConnect then update your DTS and airline frequent flier profiles, using your DoD ID as your KTN. When booking travel, confirm your DoD ID number is in the KTN field.



Learn more at
tsa.gov/travel/special-procedures/military-travelers



Section 1

Letter from the TSA Administrator

Greetings Stars and Stripes readers:

As Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration, I lead a workforce of over 60,000 who work tirelessly every day to achieve our mission of protecting the nation's transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement of people and commerce.

Since coming to TSA in August 2017, after 33 years serving our country in the Coast Guard, I have been continually inspired by the similarities between the mission and values at TSA and those of our armed forces. Since our inception, after the attacks of September 11, veterans have been called to serve in TSA, and I am honored to say that today almost 20% our workforce are veterans. Veterans, and the leadership skills and patriotism they bring to the table, are a foundational part of our success, and that's why we have made it a priority to increase the number of veterans and disabled veterans we hire at TSA.

Our goal with this guide is to give you a deeper and broader understanding of TSA and the people who make us who we are. We hope the travel tips in this guide make your travels, alone or with family, easier and less stressful. We also hope you will learn something new about the many different ways TSA keeps travelers safe across our entire transportation system beyond the checkpoint.

If you are active-duty and looking toward a transition to civilian life, a member of the reserve components of the military, or a veteran looking for a job, I hope you will consider joining us at TSA so we can further our mission together. As you will see in the employee stories in this guide, we have opportunities to suit a wide variety of skill sets



Administrator David P. Pekoske
Transportation Security Administration

that stretch across the entire transportation ecosystem, and we are always looking for talented individuals like you.

On behalf of everyone at TSA, thank you for your service.

David P. Pekoske

Table of Contents

Section 1 – Letter from the TSA Administrator.....3

Section 2 – TSA PreCheck® for Military and DoD Civilians
Expedited Screening Benefits for Active/Reserve
Military and DoD Civilians.....4

Section 3 – At the Checkpoint
Screening Assistance for Veterans and
Wounded Warriors5
Traveling With Your Firearm Is Easy When You
Prepare, Pack, Declare.....5
Still have questions? Contact TSA!5
TSA Officers Share Top Six Checkpoint “Dos and
Don’ts” for Travelers6

Section 4 – Beyond the Checkpoint
A TSA Canine’s Work is Never Done7
Did You Know? TSA Partners to Keep Pipelines Safe7
Surf’s Up for Wounded Warriors:
TSA Helps Veterans Get to the Beach.....8
Honor Flight Takes Off from the Caribbean.....8

Section 5 – Veterans @ TSA
Employee Spotlight: Insider Threat Analyst Chris Scott9
Faces of TSA.....9

Section 6 – Come Work @ TSA
For Veterans, Working for TSA Great Fit, Smooth Transition.....10

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Section 2 – TSA PreCheck® for Military and DoD Civilians

Expedited Screening Benefits for Active/Reserve Military and DoD Civilians

Military members and Department of Defense (DoD) civilians receive TSA PreCheck® as a benefit of your employment and service. Benefits apply to all official and personal travel departing from a U.S. airport.

TSA PreCheck is an expedited screening program offered at more than 200 airports and by over 90 airlines, helping travelers enjoy a smoother security screening process with no need to remove shoes, laptops, 3-1-1 liquids, belts or light jackets.

TSA PreCheck benefits are valid for both official and personal travel.

Find out more:



What is TSA PreCheck for military members?

All members of the U.S. armed forces, including those serving in the Reserves and National Guard, can benefit from TSA PreCheck's expedited screening at select airports when flying on participating airlines. Cadets and midshipmen of the U.S. Military Academy, Naval Academy, Coast Guard Academy, and Air Force Academy are also eligible to receive TSA PreCheck screening benefits.

How do I get TSA PreCheck as an active-duty member of the U.S. armed forces?

Use your Department of Defense (DoD) identification number when making flight reservations.

Enter the 10-digit DoD ID number located on the back of the common access card (CAC) as your known traveler number (KTN) when reserving flights or when updating your Defense Travel System profile for official travel.

If the number is not on your CAC, you may obtain it by logging on to [milConnect](https://milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil/) (<https://milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil/>). You will find your ID number under the "My Profile" tab. To ensure future airline reservations automatically include your DoD ID number, save it in your **DTS profile** (<https://tinyurl.com/DTS-Profile>). You may also save your DoD ID number in any frequent flyer program profiles for many participating airlines. U.S.



armed forces members do not need to be in uniform and may use TSA PreCheck while on personal or official travel.

Do my existing TSA PreCheck membership benefits continue after leaving DoD?

No. TSA PreCheck benefits do not continue after leaving DoD. Be sure to enroll upon

retirement or leaving DoD to continue enjoying **TSA PreCheck® benefits** (<https://www.tsa.gov/precheck>).

Are military retirees or veterans eligible for TSA PreCheck?

Because military retirees and veterans are not required to undergo periodic reinvestigations, they are not eligible for TSA PreCheck under TSA's partnership with the Department of Defense. We do encourage veterans to apply for **TSA PreCheck®** (<https://www.tsa.gov/precheck>) to receive expedited screening.

Are active-duty military spouses or non-DoD-affiliated military adult dependents eligible for TSA PreCheck benefits?

TSA PreCheck benefits do not extend to military spouses or non-DoD-affiliated military adult dependents age 18 and over, but there are ways for them to get TSA PreCheck for free.

If you are a credit card member or customer, you may qualify to have part or all of your TSA PreCheck application fee covered. For



more information, check out (<https://www.tsa.gov/precheck/credit-cards-offer>) for the credit cards that feature TSA PreCheck.

Do children of military members need to apply for TSA PreCheck?

It depends on their age and whether they are traveling with a parent or guardian who is enrolled in TSA PreCheck:

- Children 12 and under traveling with an enrolled parent or guardian may accompany them in the TSA PreCheck lanes without restriction.
- Children 13-17 may join enrolled adults when traveling on the same reservation and if the TSA PreCheck indicator appears on the child's boarding pass.
- Any child traveling alone may want to enroll in the program.

Please note: Adults using gate passes to accompany children traveling alone will be directed to standard screening as gate passes are excluded from TSA PreCheck benefits. This applies even if the gate pass holder has enrolled in TSA PreCheck.

How can I opt-in for TSA PreCheck as a DoD/DHS civilian?

DoD/DHS federal civilian employees must opt-in to TSA PreCheck by visiting the [milConnect](https://milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil/) (<https://milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil/>) website. After selecting the "My Profile" and the "CIV" menu tab when logged into the website, users will be guided through the opt-in process for TSA PreCheck. Civilian employees need to opt-in only once. Members of the U.S. armed forces do not need to opt-in.

Military:

Step 1: Update your DTS with your DoD ID number

Step 2: Enter it in the Known Traveler Number (KTN) Field when booking travel.

Section 3 – At the Checkpoint

Screening Assistance for Veterans and Wounded Warriors

Injured or wounded service members, veterans and wounded warriors may contact **TSA Cares** (<https://www.tsa.gov/travel/passenger-support>) to request assistance with the security screening process.

Through TSA Cares, a traveler may request the services of a TSA Passenger Support Specialist (PSS), who can assist during security screening. A PSS is a TSA officer who is specially trained to assist and communicate with individuals with disabilities or medical conditions and travelers who need additional screening assistance. Requesting PSS service does not exempt you from security screening.

Wounded Warriors

TSA verifies the status of individuals identifying themselves as wounded warriors through their appropriate military branch. Following verification, the travel information is provided to the departing/arriving U.S. airports where wounded warriors may experience expedited screening procedures.

Call TSA Cares at (855) 787-2227 at least 72 hours prior to traveling with questions about screening policies, procedures and what to expect at the security checkpoint.



TSA Cares

Assistance for getting through the checkpoint

1-855-787-2227

tsa.gov

Still have questions? Contact TSA!

If you have questions about airport security screening, checkout TSA's What Can I Bring tool (<https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/whatcanibring/all>). If you can't find the answer there, reach out to AskTSA. We can help... if you forgot your ID, lost something at security or want to know what you can bring on a plane.

Text "Travel" to AskTSA (275-872) and use our virtual assistant 24 hours a day, or chat with a live TSA expert from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET, 365 days a year. You can also reach AskTSA on at [@AskTSA on X](#), [Facebook Messenger](#), or [Apple Business Chat](#).

If you prefer speaking with someone, you can call the TSA contact center at 866-289-9673 or [email TSA-ContactCenter@tsa.dhs.gov](mailto:TSA-ContactCenter@tsa.dhs.gov). Federal Relay: 711. Automated information is available anytime in several languages. Representatives are available 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. ET weekdays; 9a.m. to 8 p.m. weekends/holidays.



Traveling With Your Firearm Is Easy When You Prepare, Pack, Declare

Attempting to bring a firearm through a TSA passenger screening checkpoint is a violation of TSA security regulations. Discovery of a firearm results in significant disruptions to the screening checkpoint and puts the traveling public, law enforcement, TSA employees and other airport and airline personnel at risk.

Prepare

Know what you can and cannot bring to the airport before you begin to pack. Please review the list of prohibited items posted on [tsa.gov](https://www.tsa.gov) to ensure you have a seamless experience at the security checkpoint.

Remember, firearms are never allowed to travel through the passenger screening checkpoint. Firearms may only be transported in checked baggage.



Pack

If planning to travel with a firearm, ensure the firearm is completely unloaded and packed in a locked, hard-sided case before coming to the airport. Only the passenger may retain the key or lock combination.

Properly packaged small arms ammunition not exceeding .75 caliber for a rifle or pistol, magazines, and shotgun shells of any gauge may be carried inside of a magazine or container in the same hard-sided case as the firearm but never stored in the firearm itself. For more information on packaging and traveling with ammunition please see the firearms guidance on [tsa.gov](https://www.tsa.gov).

Locked cases that can easily be opened do not meet the requirements for transporting in checked baggage and are not permitted. Passengers may use any brand or type of lock to secure the case, including TSA-recognized locks.

Under TSA screening procedures, if requested, passengers are required to provide keys or a combination to TSA personnel conducting security screening of checked baggage. This requirement is consistent with TSA's statutory responsibility for screening of passengers and property. 49 USC 44901.

Learn More



For more information, please visit [tsa.gov](https://www.tsa.gov).



Declare

Firearms and ammunition are prohibited at TSA passenger screening checkpoints. If you are traveling with a firearm, you must take it directly to the airline ticket counter and declare it to the counter agent. If the firearm is in a hard-sided case that is contained within another piece of checked luggage, the airline must place the declaration form on top of or within immediate proximity of the case. If the firearm is not contained within another piece of checked luggage, the declaration tag should be placed inside the case, with the firearm.

Airlines may have additional requirements for traveling with firearms and ammunition. TSA recommends travelers contact their airline for carriage policies prior to arriving at the airport.

After a firearm is checked at the ticket counter, ask the airline if they have any additional requirements such as waiting in the lobby for a set period of time before proceeding through the TSA security checkpoints to avoid having to leave the secure area to make a correction in the event that the firearm is improperly packed.

TSA's Commitment

TSA is committed to protecting the traveling public, but travelers are also responsible for properly handling, packing, and declaring their firearm. When a passenger is discovered with a firearm at a TSA passenger screening checkpoint, transportation security officers will stop screening and contact local law enforcement. Local law enforcement will take control of the property, verify and secure the firearm, and process the passenger in accordance with local laws. In addition to law enforcement action, TSA fines passengers who bring a firearm to a TSA checkpoint with a civil penalty up to about \$15,000, removes the passenger's TSA PreCheck eligibility for at least five years, and may refer the matter for federal prosecution.

States and localities, airlines, and foreign countries have their own regulations and laws concerning the possession of firearms. Prior to departure, passengers are responsible for familiarizing themselves with, and abiding by, applicable firearms laws, regulations, and policies from the airline, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and all local authorities at the arrival and departure locations. Understanding firearms policies, and planning accordingly, will ensure an uninterrupted, safe, and secure travel experience.



If you are traveling internationally, please check the U.S. Customs and Border Protection site at [cbp.gov](https://www.cbp.gov).

TSA Officers Share Top Six Checkpoint “Dos and Don’ts” for Travelers

By Lisa Farbstein

TSA officers have an insider’s view of what creates a smooth security screening process and what slows down the process. They are keenly attuned to security operations and the every-day ebb and flow at security checkpoints, and they identified a few things passengers should avoid.

Here are their six favorite tips and five things they never do when flying.

Six tips TSA officers want to share

1. When purchasing a ticket online, always enter your full name as it appears on your ID. Do not enter a nickname. The name on your boarding pass should match the name on your ID.
2. Enroll in TSA PreCheck. It’s free for military members, and it’s the best way to travel through a security checkpoint because you can leave on your shoes, belt or light outerwear jacket. It’s typically the lane with travelers who are most familiar with the screening process, so the lane moves quickly. Children ages 17 and under who have the TSA PreCheck indicator on their boarding pass and are traveling on their TSA PreCheck-enrolled parent’s reservation can go through the TSA PreCheck lane with their parent.
3. Download the free **MyTSA App** (<https://www.tsa.gov/mobile>). The app has a handy “What can I bring?” feature that will let you know where to pack an item. It will let you know the estimated wait time at a checkpoint, if there are flight delays at your airport and when the TSA PreCheck lane is open.



4. Wear shoes that are easy to remove and put back on. Slip-on shoes are best, and socks are recommended.
5. If you find yourself in a checkpoint line, use that time wisely. Remove all items from your pockets and place them into your carry-on bag. Empty your pockets completely. That means everything, even non-metallic items from tissues to breath mints. This helps avoid pat-downs.
6. Make sure you put your mobile phone inside your carry-on bag before screening so you don’t leave it behind at the checkpoint.

Five things TSA officers say to never do when flying

1. Do not joke about having an explosive device or claim you have a bomb. The next thing you know, you’ll be having a very serious conversation with a local police officer and you may not make your flight.
2. Never put your pet or child through the checkpoint X-ray unit. (Yes, it does happen.) No need to expose them to X-rays. Remove your pet from its carry-on case and remove your child from their carrier. Carry them through the metal detector.
3. If you want to travel with your firearm, the proper way to pack it is unloaded inside a locked hard-sided case and declared at your airline counter for the gun case to be transported in the belly of the aircraft. Never bring your firearm to a security checkpoint, either in your bag or on your person.



4. Never place small items directly onto the X-ray belt. Phones, keys, boarding passes, etc. will likely fall between the conveyor belt’s rollers. Instead, place these smaller items into a bowl, bin, or better yet in your carry-on bag.
5. Never bring a bottle of water to a security checkpoint; however, you can bring an empty water bottle or reusable insulated container with you and then fill it up on the secure side of the checkpoint.

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Section 4 – Beyond the Checkpoint

A TSA Canine’s Work is Never Done

By Don Wagner

More than 1,000 canine teams are in action at TSA, and their work is never done

Andrew Hotinger, one of the agency’s headquarters canine coordinators, said TSA canine jobs are open to all TSA employees and U.S. citizens, but anyone interested in a canine career needs to be prepared to make a lifelong commitment to their dog.

“We look for people driven by the mission and willing to put in significant time to care for their canine,” said Hotinger. “The handler must be willing to care for the canine 24/7 at work and home. The length of initial training away from home (several months) is a significant consideration. Employment as a canine handler is contingent upon TSA prescreening, physical abilities and successful initial training. Maintaining employment



2020 TSA Canine Handler of the Year Keith Gray, Indianapolis International Airport, and his partner TTirado at the time of TTirado’s retirement last year. (Photo courtesy of Keith Gray)

requires being successful in numerous periodic assessments and annual evaluations, both scheduled and covert.”

However, if you talk with most canine handlers, the job is the most rewarding they have experienced

“This is the only program in TSA that pairs two living beings together to be successful,” Hotinger noted. “It is unique within TSA and needs to be viewed and administered separately, with specific parameters that do not exist in more conventional operations.”

Regimented training is the key to success. It begins at the Canine Training Center at Joint Base San Antonio Lackland in San Antonio, Texas, long before the handler arrives for training. That training helps the handler learn how to work in tandem with their partner and understand their specific behavioral traits.

“We say 80% of the work is done by the canine and 20% by the handler,” said Hotinger, “but it’s a true team effort. Both the handler and canine must be willing to learn, adapt and overcome as they progress. Traditional explosives detection canine training, which is typically geared toward our law enforcement partners, lasts 11 weeks, while training to become a passenger screening canine team takes 16 weeks.”

“Being a canine handler is incredibly demanding when done successfully,” said Hotinger. “Training never ends. Canines have to

maintain proficiency on all trained odors and areas of operation as well as constantly expand their abilities to thwart emerging threats. Handlers must be able to read changes in their canine’s behavior to determine if their partner is responding to trained odor or something novel in the environment. The work is also physically demanding. Canine team training must be consistent with where the handlers may be asked to utilize their canines. This ensures proficiency of the team in real-life settings and includes working and training in all weather conditions.”

The dogs require very strict regimens to remain proficient. So, what’s in it for them?

“Their toy/reward is their paycheck,” Hotinger replied. “They should only get it for successful work and motivation. They need to be very possessive of their reward for their payment to be meaningful.”

Hotinger said in general, TSA uses German shepherds, Belgian Malinois, Labrador



retrievers and German shorthaired pointers, some of which may come from local shelters. Canines generally come into the system and start formal training when they’re 1 to 2 years old but may start earlier if they demonstrate aptitude.

He said people interested in becoming a TSA canine handler should first consider their home life

“Do you live in a location suitable to housing a working canine?” he asked. “Do you have other pets that would be conducive to having a working canine, family considerations, such as children, those who may fear dogs, health considerations such as allergies? Generally, working canines are kept separate from pets and are never treated as pets. Only the handler is able to care for the working canine at home.”

What happens when it’s time for a TSA canine to retire?

“The handler or supervisor will submit a request to retire the canine and generally will ask to adopt [the dog],” Hotinger said. “The determination is made by TSA’s National Explosives Detection Canine Team Program in consultation with the agency’s Canine Training Center and veterinary professionals as needed.”

Remember, when you see a TSA canine team, they are always working hard to ensure the safety and security of everyone around them. Their job is never done!

Did You Know? TSA Partners to Keep Pipelines Safe

When you think about TSA, chances are you think about airports and checkpoints and don’t normally envision surface transportation, especially the nation’s hazardous liquid and natural gas pipeline systems. However, TSA is also primarily responsible for the federal oversight of pipeline physical security and cybersecurity.

During a presentation for the American Public Gas Association, TSA Surface Operations Assistant Administrator Sonya Proctor said TSA’s role in pipeline security started shortly after the agency was created. “We work with our Department of Transportation partners in the **Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Administration (PHMSA)** (<https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/>). They have the safety side of pipeline operations, and we have the security side. We work hand-in-hand.”

Protecting our nation’s pipelines is accomplished through an essential partnership between TSA, PHMSA, the DHS Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and pipeline operators.. Proctor said TSA teams with industry stakeholders to develop these guidelines and successful pipeline security initiatives, including assessments. “Everything we do in the pipeline environment with our pipeline partners has been collaborative. Now, we

are building upon this legacy partnership to address emerging cybersecurity threats.” About 3,000 pipeline companies operate in the U.S. According to CISA, pipelines are part of the National Critical Function set and are so vital to the U.S. that their disruption, corruption, or dysfunction would have a debilitating effect on security, national economic security, and national public health or safety.

The first pipeline security guidelines were developed in 2011 and updated in 2018 when TSA included an expanded section for cybersecurity. This expansion for cybersecurity was later used to develop the first Pipeline Security Directives (SD) in 2021. The pipeline security guidelines have since been updated, removing cybersecurity recommendations that are now part of the SDs.

“Cybersecurity is a huge focus right now across the transportation industry,” said Proctor. “The intelligence community has reported that nation-state actors have the ability to launch cyberattacks that can cause disruptive effects on critical infrastructure. It is anticipated that our adversaries and strategic competitors will increasingly build and integrate cyber espionage and attack and influence our capabilities.”

Following a May 2021 pipeline ransomware attack that disrupted the supply chain, TSA

issued the first pipeline security directives mandating that critical pipeline owners and operators implement urgently needed cybersecurity measures in light of the significant cyber threat facing the industry. Among the requirements, owners/operators must notify CISA of suspicious cyber activity on their systems. Since the initial attack, cyber threats continue to evolve and intensify. With these revisions to the SDs, TSA continues to take significant steps to reduce risks to pipeline infrastructure through collaboration with the agency’s public and private sector partners.

These security directives require the most critical pipeline owners and operators to take necessary action to prevent the disruption and degradation to their infrastructure.

In 2023 TSA announced an update to its SDs regarding oil and natural gas pipeline cybersecurity. This revised directive requires companies to access the effectiveness of their cybersecurity measures. The SDs were developed with input from industry stakeholders and federal partners, including CISA and the Department of Transportation.

“TSA is committed to keeping the nation’s transportation systems secure in this challenging cyber threat environment. This revised SD sustains the strong cybersecurity measures already in place for the oil and natural gas pipeline industry,” said TSA



Oil tankers loading at the Valdez Marine terminal in Valdez, Alaska. (Photo courtesy of Chris Masters)

Administrator David Pekoske. “Earlier versions required the development of processes and cybersecurity implementation plans. This version requires that operators test and evaluate those plans. We will continue to work with our partners in the transportation sector to increase cybersecurity resilience throughout the transportation system and acknowledge the significant work over the past year to protect critical infrastructure.”

For more information on TSA’s pipeline security program and other surface transportation security efforts, visit the **tsa.gov Surface Transportation webpage** (https://www.tsa.gov/for-industry/resources#quickset-surface-transportation_4).

Honor Flight Takes Off from the Caribbean

By Kimberlyn Pepe

One by one veterans wheeled or walked their way into a designated screening area at Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport (SJU) in San Juan, Puerto Rico. An honor guard stood at attention waiting for the VIP guests. “The veterans kept asking, ‘are they here for us?’” recalled TSA Officer Jeffrey Rodriguez. SJU hosted its first Honor Flight, a special flight that brings veterans from around the country to the nation’s capital. Rodriguez



Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport officer talks with 101-year-old veteran. (Photo courtesy of Carlos Z. Cardona)

was one of the many TSA officers assisting the veterans and making the screening process stress-free for the esteemed guests. The event marked the first time veterans were able to take part in an Honor Flight out of the Caribbean to Washington, D.C. Transportation Security Manager Vimarie Sanchez and Rodriguez were the logistic coordinators for the day, overseeing the screening of more than 40 veterans, their guardians and additional staff. SJU officers spent the morning talking and laughing with the veterans, listening to their battlefield stories and memories. Two men stood out among the group. Pushing a walker, a 101-year-old veteran fought in WWII, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, and is a Purple Heart recipient. A second man, 97-year-old veteran, charmed with his tales and good humor. The event was a memorable moment for the veterans who have given so much to their country. Members of the Army National Guard from Fort Buchanan saluted the attendees boarding the plane, and a pastor blessed the flight before takeoff. A water salute ceremoniously ushered the plane to the runway as the veterans departed. Assistant Federal Security Director Robert Cothran reflected on the incredible job his officers did in supporting and screening every person in attendance.



“As each person came off the plane, they received a salute with cheers and clapping,” said Kimberly Carter, deputy assistant federal security director for screening. The veterans were emotional as they returned to the airport from their trip. Some confided in the officers about how years ago they didn’t receive a grand welcome back when they returned from Vietnam. It was a stark difference to the scenes displayed that day. Other veterans had tears in their eyes, knowing people still cared about them and their service. This Honor Flight is just the beginning for SJU. The program is in high demand; more than 300 applicants applied for the inaugural trip. Another flight is already in its planning stages.

“I got to the airport at 2:30 a.m. and saw Sanchez sitting with the officers,” said Cothran. “They were all reviewing the standard operating procedures, asking questions and going over the plan for the day. It brought a smile to my face.”

The return flight was greeted by upbeat patriotic music playing from a band stationed outside the baggage claim area. A second honor guard greeted the returning travelers with salutes, while news reporters waited to speak with the veterans about their time at the nation’s capital.



Surf’s Up for Wounded Warriors: TSA Helps Veterans Get to the Beach

By Wayne Carey

TSA officers from San Jose International Airport (SJC) welcomed Texas veterans who participated in Operation Surf (<https://operationsurf.org/>), a Wounded Warrior program emphasizing the healing power of the ocean to restore hope, renew purpose and revitalize community. SJC TSA officers were at the gate to greet the veterans and moved the entourage through the airport where they were met by an honor guard from San Jose Freedom Riders, local Chapter 39 motorcycle club. “Many of the officers selected for this honor are also combat veterans,” said SJC Assistant Federal Security Director of Screening Emilie Hill Sangetta. “Being able to watch TSA officers who served assist their fellow soldiers was an honor I will never forget.” Even a little rain couldn’t dampen the spirits of the group who then assembled at the front of the terminal and was handed off to the Freedom Riders who escorted the veterans through the rain to their surfing venue. Operations Surf photographer Robert Smith conveyed his observations along with the

executive director of the organization, thanking the TSA team for their support. “It was very thoughtful of them to hang out in the rain with us to send off the participants,” remarked Smith. “The week’s program was deeply healing for all of the participants as is often the case with these programs. Thank you so much for your support!” Former Marine Corps Soldier and SJC Lead TSA Officer Yadira Labate shared her thoughts about the event and TSA San Jose’s involvement. “It was a deeply moving experience for me to be able to help my fellow veterans and express to them our gratitude for their service. How the SJC team bonded together to make this event a positive experience for the heroes made me proud that I am part of the SJC TSA team.”



Freedom Riders San Jose Chapter 39 and San Jose International Airport Lead TSA Officer Yadira Labate meet the Wounded Warrior veterans from Texas. (Photo by Johney Radle)



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afspa.org/fsbp

Check Eligibility

Section 5 – Veterans @ TSA

Employee Spotlight: Insider Threat Analyst Chris Scott



Insider Threat Analyst Chris Scott (Photo by Ryan Thibault)

By Karen Robicheaux

Chris Scott approaches every incident with equal parts of empathy and discretion.

As an insider threat analyst for TSA's Law Enforcement/Federal Air Marshal Service, Scott reviews referrals and incidents that exhibit potential risk indicators of an insider threat and provides data collection and analytic support for the Insider Threat program.

"I genuinely treat each of my insider threat inquiries and assessments with care," said Scott. "More importantly, I am thorough. I treat the reported anomalies and the person of interest with the mindset, 'What if the person was me? What level of care and discretion would I hope someone used when assessing me?'"

Don't confuse the empathy Scott exhibits as weakness. On the contrary, it's one of his strengths and a good reason why employees should feel confident reporting articulable concerns to his office. The tight hold and need-to-know aspect of the process are ironically why his job might be viewed skeptically.

"(Reporting) can be intimidating," he admits. "I think a lot of people are reluctant to report something suspicious involving a colleague because they're afraid to be wrong. There are many things that may look anomalous or suspicious, but once additional information is obtained and assessed from multiple perspectives, it may not be that anomalous after all."

Scott recognizes the sensitivity of his work and remains committed to objectively gathering facts through coordinating with stakeholders across TSA. "When conducting an inquiry, I am cautious because the last thing I want to do is cause undue harm."

Building partnerships

Scott's intentional about building rapport with TSA program offices, aviation, pipeline, mass transit, freight and rail stakeholders with whom he and the insider threat team work.

"The goal is creating a culture of awareness and mindfulness of how potential threats arise and early intervention to prevent them," said Scott. "We're like switchboard operators.

We take a 360-degree holistic approach to assessing an insider, and we connect with appropriate resources to report our findings."

Scott stresses the importance of being observant to the changing behaviors of people with whom you interact. Sometimes destructive behaviors start in small, subtle ways that if detected early, can be addressed before major harm occurs.

"We can identify potential risk indicators," explained Scott. "Let's say somebody's going through a rough spot. If they haven't made a referral to the Employee Assistance Program, we can help in getting them those kinds of services."

Tours in Afghanistan and Iraq cultivated empathy, discretion

As a bored and unchallenged high school underclassman, Scott found purpose once he was introduced to chemistry and physics in his junior and senior years. With acceptance into a good pre-med program not in the cards, he opted for a more nontraditional route to medicine.

Prior to joining TSA's Insider Threat Section in 2017, Scott served 11 years in the U.S. Navy as a hospital corpsman, with deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq.

"Being afforded the opportunity at such a young age to be immersed in a very unique, culturally different environment

and witnessing firsthand true oppression emboldened my empathy, sympathy, and compassion for all persons," said Scott.

He credits his knack of being relatable—no matter a person's rank or position—on his maturation as a corpsman. At TSA, that translates to knowing his audience.

"I try my best to think about how policy could impact the workload of our employees and partners," said a mindful Scott when working on insider threat policies and procedures. "There are many things that sound great in theory and look good on paper but can be problematic for personnel in the field."

What I do matters

"Insider Threat is truly a program that belongs to each and every TSA and transportation industry person. I'm just one person who is fortunate enough to be a member of the office that manages the program. I believe the thing that matters most is our coordination efforts with all stakeholders across the agency, government and industry.

"We do our best to facilitate/coordinate channels of communication that are critical to the counter insider threat mission, but we can only be as effective as the information given to us. The true insider threat MVPs are our people who bring potential insider threat concerns to our attention, so we can coordinate and assess effectively."

Veteran Faces of TSA



Mark Escherich

Military branch: National Guard

Years of service: 30+

TSA role/position: Program Analyst, Veterans Employment Programs

everything we do. Every day matters, so we have to bring our best foot forward. TSA has a mission that is focused on things that are common to veterans' values, and we certainly want to make sure that they're represented in our workforce.

Why should veterans work for TSA?

At TSA, 20% of our workforce are veterans. So, as a veteran working for the federal government, especially TSA, it's a great way for us to continue to serve our nation and, in this case, protect our homeland. I am an individual who is lucky to have found a way to marry two of my passions. As the veteran program manager, still being in uniform adds credibility to the conversation that I get to have with our service members. It really doesn't feel like work.

How have your military skills transferred to your TSA role?

What's really nice about the military culture is across the services there is a foundational stereotype that I found is real. We join the military, we enlist, we become a part of something bigger than ourselves. And through that, we see ourselves as contributing to a greater good, so when it comes to national security, when it comes to the mission of an agency, like our mission here at TSA, we understand that we have an important role in



Ameer Roberson

Military branch: Army and Air National Guard

Years of service: 18

TSA role/position: Deputy Assistant Administrator, Strategic Communications and Public Affairs

and desire to serve. TSA is lucky to have so many veterans in the workforce. Veterans bring leadership, self-discipline, can-do attitudes and commitment.

Plus, most veterans are very agile and versatile, quickly learning new skills and trades. They enrich and deepen our culture and make me proud to serve with them.

What opportunities for growth and advancement are available for veterans at TSA?

Veterans bring a wealth of discipline, knowledge and experience working with people of all types of backgrounds and experiences. They are problem solvers and have high standards. The combination of these skills and experiences provide opportunities for them as transportation security officers, inspectors, canine handlers, finance and human capital specialists among a host of other positions. Veterans are tremendous assets to the workforce and based on what they bring to TSA, and they have the skills needed to move from one position to another in a different field because they bring that discipline, drive for quality and experience working with people at various levels. Plus, TSA and the Department of Homeland Security offer numerous education and training opportunities to help veterans explore new skills or fields.

How do you believe our military veterans are impacting TSA?

Veterans impact TSA every day. They bring their love of country, dedication to mission

Section 6 – Come Work @ TSA

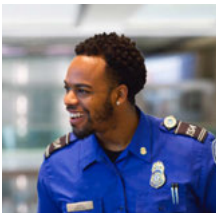


TSA is committed to providing employment opportunities for qualified, eligible veterans. If you're a veteran who was discharged or released from military service under honorable conditions, you could receive preference during the hiring process.

Available career areas include security, mission support, law enforcement and executive positions. **Come work at TSA** (<https://www.tsa.gov/about/jobs-at-tsa>)!

Veterans' preference

Veterans' preference gives eligible veterans an advantage during the hiring process. Family members may also be able to claim veterans' preference if the veteran is unable. For example,



when applying for a TSA job that's open to the general public, qualified veterans and/or their family members may be ranked and placed ahead of other applicants.

Please note that veterans' preference does not guarantee a job and does not apply to internal agency actions such as promotions, transfers, reassignments and reinstatements. For additional information on eligibility for veterans' preference, please visit **FEDS HIRE VETS** (<https://www.fedshirevets.gov/job-seekers/veterans-preference/>)

Disabled veteran leave

Disabled veteran leave supports veterans undergoing medical treatment for their service-connected disability. TSA provides a one-time credit of up to 104 hours of leave to disabled veterans rated at 30% or more, hired on or after November 5, 2016, for their first continuous 12 months of federal employment.

TSA tenure

Veterans can count their service as part of their tenure at TSA, which has a positive impact on their annual leave accrual. For example:

- With 3-15 years of military service, the annual leave accrual rate is 6 hours per pay period or 20 days of leave per year (instead of 4 hours/13 days) with the exception of the final pay period of the year when employees receive 10 hours for a total of 160 hours of annual leave during a calendar year.
- With 15-plus years of military and/or federal service, the annual leave accrual rate starts at 26 days per year (8 hours per pay period).

As a veteran, you may also apply for other vacancies in competitive federal service

agencies and receive retirement credit for military service.

- **Leave-Related Benefits** (<https://www.fedshirevets.gov/federal-employees/leave-administration/>)
- **Federal Retirement** (<https://www.fedshirevets.gov/federal-employees/federal-retirement/#content>)

TSA veterans' community resources

TSA values and respects the contributions and continued service of our veterans and their families. We actively seek opportunities within TSA and military communities to share information on veterans-related benefits and programs. And once hired, employees enjoy access to a multitude of useful veterans-specific resources.

For Veterans: Working for TSA is a Great Fit, Smooth Transition

Veterans working for TSA bring invaluable skills like teamwork, character and a great work ethic—all qualities necessary to achieve the agency's mission.

TSA is fortunate that approximately 13,000 employees, or nearly one in five, are veterans. Members of TSA's workforce who are veterans say they are proud to help keep travelers safe.

"It's no surprise veterans are a great match for TSA," said Administrator David Pekoske. "Our core values of integrity, respect and commitment are consistent with those of the armed

Still Proudly Serving

Tennessee TSA Federal Security Director Stephen Wood (Photo courtesy of TSA)

forces. Our entire organization benefits greatly from the experience, leadership and values veterans bring to accomplishing our mission."

TSA has been named as one of the Ten Best Employers that Hire Veterans by Military.com and Monster.com. One of the criteria used in the survey was the ability to not only attract veterans but also retain them.

The publications also cited TSA's veteran support services such as employee resource groups, tools to match military skills with jobs, and partnerships with veteran family organizations.

TSA asked several veterans why they decided to work for TSA and what they would say to veterans who are considering working for the agency. Veterans say working for TSA has many similarities to serving in the armed forces.

For example, frontline employees need to follow standard operating procedures and work well under pressure. Much of TSA's structure parallels military requirements. Above all, veterans who work for TSA say they're proud to continue to serve and protect our country.

Stephen Wood, a 24-year military veteran, is a federal security director for six airports in Tennessee.

As a colonel in the Army, Wood served as director of operations, Joint Command Network Warfare for the National Security Agency. He

sees similarities between being a veteran and working for TSA. What would he tell veterans who are considering joining the agency?

"Understand the opportunities you can create from the experiences and skills you gained and lessons you learned during service," Wood said. "You can apply that same commitment to mission, continue to protect American values and defend the nation at TSA."

Veterans featured in this story felt the need to do something meaningful after leaving military service. **Amber Chrobak** joined the Army at 17. She served in Germany, deployed to Iraq and trained as a military working dog handler. After graduating with bachelor's and master's degrees, Chrobak joined TSA as a canine handler specializing in explosives detection at Washington Dulles International Airport.

"I need to feel like I'm doing something that matters," said Chrobak. "TSA is one of the only agencies that hires canine handlers directly from the military. It gave me the opportunity to jump right back into familiar territory."

TSA offers a number of programs and benefits for veterans. They can count military service as part of their tenure at TSA, which can increase total annual leave and retirement benefits. Veterans' preference gives eligible veterans an advantage during the hiring process.

Disabled veterans leave supports veterans undergoing medical treatment for disabilities that are the result of their service. And through **TSA Cares** (<https://www.tsa.gov/travel/passenger-support>), injured or wounded service members and veterans can receive special help with the security screening process at airports.

Perhaps the greatest benefit veterans get by working at TSA is the satisfaction that by helping keep passengers safe and secure, they continue to serve their country.

Amber Chrobak joined TSA to become a canine handler specializing in explosives detection at Washington Dulles International Airport. (Photo courtesy of TSA)

BE AN AGENT OF SERVICE



Every day, U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) Agents are on the frontline, safeguarding our communities by keeping dangerous people and substances, like fentanyl, from being smuggled across our borders.

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