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Opening Statement

**Rep. John F. Tierney, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security**

Hearing on "Missing Weapons at the National Park Service: Mismanagement and Lack of Accountability"

August 2, 2013

Thank you, Chairman Chaffetz.

I would like to welcome our witnesses to today's hearing on a recent Inspector General report that identified problems in weapons inventory and accountability program at the U.S. Park Police. I look forward to hearing the witnesses' testimony on their actions and efforts to respond to the findings of the Inspector General's report and make the necessary improvements.

The U.S. Park Police have been on duty in our federal parks for more than 200 years. The force has jurisdiction in all National Park Service areas and provides law enforcement services to designated areas, primarily in the Washington, D.C., New York City and San Francisco, California metropolitan areas.

The IG identified failures in the Park Police's management of its weapons inventory program. While the IG did not find that Park Police weapons were stolen or misused, the lack of accountability left the weapons inventory potentially vulnerable to theft and misuse.

This is a serious matter for the Park Police that requires immediate attention. It is also an opportunity for the Park Police to take the necessary steps to address the accountability and management failures, preserving the integrity of the organization and preventing fraud or theft.

Since the release of the report the National Park Service established a task force that has initiated an exhaustive review of the Park Police weapons inventory, policies and procedures for accounting for weapons and training and oversight of all staff levels to ensure compliance. The task force review began by implementing one of the IG recommendations, conduct a complete inventory and verification of all firearms in Park Police custody. The Park Service has notified the Committee that the task force has accounted for almost all of the Park Police weapons.

The Oversight Committee has particular interest in rooting out and preventing waste, fraud, and abuse in government programs and operations. Established weapons accountability

procedures, adequate training in policies and procedures and effective management oversight all play a role in preventing and detecting fraud or theft of weapons in the government's custody.

While I am concerned that the Park Police allowed the failures in weapons accountability to get to this point, almost all of the Park Police weapons have been properly accounted for, and the Park Service appears to be correcting the problems identified by the IG and implementing their recommendations.

I hope that the Park Service and the IG can continue to work together to make the necessary improvements to the weapons accountability program. We on the Oversight Committee will be monitoring the progress and performance to ensure that Park Police can properly account for and monitor weapons acquired for agency use.

I think we all want to be sure guns are accounted for at all government law enforcement organizations. I think all of the parties here today -- the Park Police, National Park Service, Interior, the IG, and Congress -- have a role in achieving this goal.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses to better understand their response to the IG findings and how they will work together to implement the IG recommendations to establish a professionally responsible firearms management program necessary for a premier police organization within the Federal Government.

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