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Via Email: David.Pekoske@tsa.dhs.gov

Administrator David Pekoske
Transportation Security Administration
Philadelphia Field Office

RE: PFO – Exit Interview Procedures

As you are aware from our prior letters, Clark Hill PLC is the legal representative of the Air Marshal Association and represents the majority of the Federal Air Marshals ("FAMs") in the Federal Air Marshal Service ("FAMS"), specifically those in the Philadelphia Field Office ("PFO"). This letter addresses the various policy violations during the course of a PFO FAM's retirement process. These policy violations either committed or overseen by SAC Altomare are systemic, intentional, and disrespectful practices.

Since Supervisory Air Marshal in Charge ("SAC") Altomare took the role of SAC in May of 2020, the PFO has continued to function as a hostile working environment, wherein flying FAMs are subjected to disparaging treatment. We have identified examples of such treatment in previous letters, including retaliation, discrimination, and we provided specific instances of management being treated more favorably and not being held accountable for policy violations. These listed actions represent uncommon and uncharacteristic behavior for an employee's probationary year of Senior Executive Service ("SES") certification. In our letters, we have also requested redress of these mistreatments and violations, but have been met with silence.

Based on the retirement process as described in TSA MD 1100.30-10 (Employee Exit Clearance), LE/FAMS 1126 (Employee Exit Clearance Guidance), LE/FAMS Form 1126-3 (Employee Exit Interview), LE/FAMS Form F1126-1 (Employee Exit Checklist), and LE/FAMS F1126-2 (Employee Exit Clearance Checklist for Outstanding Debt), it has become apparent that SAC Altomare has been arbitrarily selecting and enforcing only portions of the processes for FAMs retiring from the PFO. Through these selections, SAC Altomare has systematically and intentionally *silenced* FAMs who choose retirement over remaining with the PFO due to SAC Altomare's failed management.

All FAMs hold Top Secret Security Clearances and conduct National Security Functions in their roles; as such, following the policy requirements for the retirement of such individuals is imperative. The workforce is unique, highly restricted, and the tasks thereof are confidential. As a result, certain components of the retirement process, specifically exit interviews, have an impact on the retiring FAM, the remaining FAMs, the PFO as a whole, and national security.

Multiple PFO FAMs who have completed or who are currently undergoing the retirement process have reported the following failures by SAC Altomare with respect to the procedure: (1) absence of an "exit interview" with SAC Altomare; (2) not having been provided the opportunity to recommend suggestions to improve the PFO; (3) not having the opportunity to describe why they are retiring from federal service; and (4) not having the opportunity to make any additional remarks for review by TSA Headquarters. All four of these opportunities are part of the LE/FAMS 1126 "Employee Exit Clearance Guidance", specifically Form 1126-3 regarding exit interviews. However, the process under SAC Altomare has been truncated, and employees are unclear what must be completed for retirement. Copies of the completed exit documents have not been provided to employees.

Many FAMs have retired during the COVID-19 pandemic and this may have contributed to the lack consistency in administering the retirement process. However, this is not an excuse for allowing the SAC to intentionally disregard policy and systematically silence the FAMs choosing to retire. Based on his actions, it seems likely that SAC Altomare avoids many of these exit procedures in order to prevent having to hear thoughts and feedback on his management practices. Further, it is probable that one of the suggestions which would have been made to improve the PFO would have been to remove SAC Altomare. It is more than likely that SAC Altomare is aware of this sentiment and has chosen to silence the workforce by not adhering to certain components of the Employee Exit Clearance process.

Retirement is intended to be an accomplishment wherein an employee is recognized by peers and members of management for their many years of service. In the PFO, multiple FAMs have accelerated their retirement planning since SAC Altomare arrived in May of 2021, specifically due to his management style and choices. More clearly, PFO FAMs are choosing to leave federal employment due to the continuation of a hostile working environment, disrespectful and untrustworthy management, poor workforce morale, decreasing job satisfaction and extreme workloads. Furthermore, SAC Altomare has been accepting mission flights other offices are unable to fulfill and taking on additional projects to ensure his staff are busier than the workforce is able to reasonably support. These scheduling practices take a major toll on FAMs and come at a detriment to public safety. FAMs face exhaustion, high stress, little family time, and little time for physical and personal recoupment. As a result, public safety will suffer, as more FAMs retire due to the PFO-created exhaustive working tempo, experienced FAMs are not retained, and new-hire FAMs require up to a year of training for mission deployments.

Given the above practices and failures, we request a review and an investigation pertinent to the practices in place during the course of a PFO FAMs retirement process. Specifically, SAC Altomare must be held accountable for exhibiting weak leadership, including disallowing comments from the workforce, disrespecting the workforce, being a barrier for recommendations on ways to improve the organization, arbitrarily selecting parts of policy [TSA MD 1100.30-10] to follow, and effectively causing a mass of expedited retirements during his first year assigned to the PFO. Previously, we have requested FAMS Director Ondocin to implement a single-additional year of SES training for SAC Altomare; we now request the immediate *removal* of SAC Altomare for placing undue strain and burden on remaining PFO staff and creating

negative implications in public safety. Please respond to this letter within seven (7) days providing your plan to implement the requested review and investigation.

Sincerely,

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