



U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of Inspector General  
Western Region  
Audit Report

REVIEW OF FOREST SERVICE  
SECURITY OVER AIRCRAFT  
AND AIRCRAFT FACILITIES



Report No.  
08001-2-HQ  
March 2002



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Washington D.C. 20250



DATE: March 29, 2002

REPLY TO  
ATTN OF: 08001-2-HQ

SUBJECT: Review of Forest Service Security Over Aircraft and Aircraft Facilities

TO: Dale Bosworth  
Chief  
Forest Service

Recent terrorist acts in this country underscore the importance of security over the Department's infrastructure. As part of our ongoing review of departmental vulnerability to terrorism, we reviewed the Forest Service's (FS) security over aircraft, to include the air tankers used for aerial dispersal of flame retardant chemicals during firefighting operations. During the peak fire season, the FS could have in operation up to 51 large multi-engine aircraft at its aircraft facilities, each capable of delivering up to 3,000 gallons of fire retardant at one time. Tanker aircraft are vulnerable to theft and could be attractive to terrorists wishing to disperse biological or chemical weapons. We also reviewed security over the facilities at which these aircraft are based.

Based on the results of our review and on comments from FS personnel, we determined that FS-owned and FS-operated aircraft are vulnerable to theft. One FS official stated that almost any aircraft in America could easily be stolen by a qualified pilot and that aircraft are more easily stolen than the average new car with a computerized ignition system. Furthermore, FS and contractor aircraft are usually parked in open parking areas of public airports. Many of these airports are in less populated areas and have limited security.

Our review disclosed that the FS had not assessed the risks of theft and misuse by terrorists of FS-owned aircraft, contracted air tankers, or State forestry aircraft because it did not consider the risk to be significant. However, without a risk assessment, the FS cannot know the significance of any threat. Furthermore, the FS had not provided guidance either to air tanker contractors or to State officials regarding potential threats against aircraft.

Besides using public airports, the FS maintains 73 air bases of its own, used largely at the peak of the fire season. At these times, air tankers need to be in a constant state of readiness in order to respond timely to a fire. Consequently, there are limits to how the

**AUDIT REPORT**

tankers themselves can be physically secured while on the base. For this reason, the FS needs to take a hard look not only at the security of its aircraft but also at the security of the bases themselves. We found that the FS had not developed minimum standards for securing these bases and had not assessed the additional security features needed to bring the facilities up to standard. Four of the seven air tanker bases we visited generally had only a chain link fence around the compound and not all of the gates were secured. Increased security of the aircraft facilities would make the aircraft less vulnerable to theft or misuse while not interfering with the air tankers' ability to respond timely to a fire.

We concluded that FS officials should immediately perform a risk analysis, identifying significant threats and potential actions to mitigate these threats. The risk assessment should be coordinated with risk assessments to be performed by other Federal, State, and local partner agencies. The FS also needs to develop minimum security standards for the facilities at which the aircraft are based and determine what additional security features are needed to achieve the minimum standard. Because some of the facilities received funding under the National Fire Plan, such funding may be available to improve security at the facilities.

Since the September terrorist attacks, the FS has recognized the need to develop minimum security standards and expects to develop them once the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Chief of Physical Security completes his review of the FS' aircraft facilities. In the interim, the FS is working with its Law Enforcement and Investigations Staff to take immediate actions to minimize the risk to the aircraft located at these facilities. For example, the FS stated that it would provide increased security by increasing law enforcement patrols, installing warning signs, placing aircraft in locked hanger facilities when possible, and implementing other appropriate measures to reduce risk to aircraft.

In its official response to the draft report, dated March 29, 2002, attached to this report, the FS stated that it was in complete agreement with OIG on the necessity of assuring the security of its aircraft operations as outlined in our draft report and that it embraced public and employee safety as a core value. The FS further stated in order to address the issue at current budget and staffing levels, it had developed an initial security plan and an interim strategy to prioritize its efforts based upon areas of greatest vulnerabilities and damage potential. In doing so, the FS had identified large air tankers and their associated facilities as its number one priority.

## **BACKGROUND**

The FS owns and operates about 44 aircraft, primarily small planes used as lead planes for fighting fires and other mission delivery functions. In addition, the FS uses about 800 other aircraft under contract to help in accomplishing the agency's mission. Of these, over 50 are large air tankers. Air tankers are airplanes modified with a tanking system to drop fire retardant chemicals in support in support of ground wildfire suppression operations. During the peak fire season, the FS could have up to 51 large

multi-engine aircraft at its aircraft facilities, each capable of delivering up to 3,000 gallons of fire retardant at one time.

FS is also responsible for providing leadership to State agencies involved in managing State and local forested land. These State agencies operate a large number of aircraft ranging from small airplanes to air tankers. Some air tankers operated by State agencies are owned by the FS and loaned to the States for use in the aerial release of fire retardant chemicals.

The FS currently has 73 air tanker bases that it uses in its wildland fire suppression operations. The facilities are strategically placed near forests and are used to house FS-owned aircraft as well as FS-contracted aircraft, such as the large air tankers used for aerial dispersal of flame-retardant chemicals during firefighting operations. Because forest fires are unpredictable, the network of FS air bases allows air tankers to move freely between forests and reload and refuel as needed.

In October 2000, Congress provided the FS with over \$1.1 billion of additional funding through Public Law 106-291 in order to implement the National Fire Plan. Of the additional \$1.1 billion, Congress designated that \$44 million be spent on capital improvement and maintenance of FS fire facilities. Congress specifically designated that \$12 million of the \$44 million be used for the reconstruction and repair of air tanker bases.

## **OBJECTIVE**

Assess FS security over aircraft and aircraft facilities as part of our ongoing review of departmental vulnerability to terrorism.

## **SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY**

We performed the fieldwork between October 2001 and January 2002. To accomplish the objective of our review, we visited 7 of the FS' 73 air tanker bases. We selected the seven air tanker bases primarily because they still had air tankers on site for firefighting purposes. (Fall and winter are not normally part of the firefighting season.) We also interviewed several key FS officials as well as officials from the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

## **AUDIT RESULTS**

### **FINDING NO. 1 - FS HAD NOT ASSESSED THE RISKS OF THEFT AND MISUSE OF AIRCRAFT ON ITS AIRCRAFT FACILITIES BY TERRORISTS**

The FS had not assessed the risks of theft and misuse by terrorists of FS-owned aircraft, contracted air tankers, or State forestry aircraft. According to the acting Assistant Director for Aviation Management, the agency did not consider the risk to be significant but did not have supporting analysis for that conclusion. Even after the events of September 11, the agency had made no plans to conduct a risk assessment.

Furthermore, the FS provided no guidance to either air tanker contractors or to State officials regarding potential threats against aircraft. We concluded that FS officials should immediately perform a risk analysis, identifying significant threats and potential actions to mitigate these threats. The risk assessment should be coordinated with other Federal, State, and local partner agencies.

### **Aircraft Susceptible to Theft**

Based on the results of our review of FS air tanker bases (see Finding No. 2) and feedback from FS personnel, we determined that FS-owned and operated aircraft are vulnerable to theft. An FS official stated that almost any aircraft in America could easily be stolen by a qualified pilot. According to this official, aircraft are more easily stolen than the average new car with a computerized ignition system. For example, the FS had a Beachcraft B-200 turboprop aircraft stolen from an airport in 1994. Furthermore, FS and contractor aircraft are usually parked in open parking areas of public airports. Many of these airports are in less populated areas and have limited facilities. Security at these airports is very limited. In addition, many of the smaller airports are unattended or closed at night. Even at many of the larger facilities, airport security is not always adequate.

### **Types of Aircraft at Risk**

The FS owns and operates 44 small to medium sized aircraft. This number includes two DC-3's, two Dehavilland DHC-6 Twin Otters, and five Short Brothers SH-330's. FS aircraft are often used for smokejumper transport and fire management duties. The FS also contracts with private parties for aircraft support. According to the FS, this may involve up to 800 different aircraft and helicopters during the year. Of these, approximately 51 are large multi-engine aircraft capable of delivering up to 3,000 gallons of fire retardant at one time. In our opinion, tanker aircraft are vulnerable to theft and could be attractive to terrorists wishing to disperse biological or chemical weapons.

While completely securing FS aircraft may be difficult, actions can be taken to reduce the risk of theft of the aircraft most vulnerable to misuse, the air tankers. The FS should consider specific actions such as the following.

- Where available, store aircraft in locked hangars with electronic security systems when not in use. Loader trucks, forklifts, retardant tanks or other equipment could be parked and temporarily disabled so as to block or impede movement of the aircraft. In cases where hangar space is not available and aircraft must be left outdoors, propeller chains, locking high strength tie-down chains, or blocking equipment should be considered. Outdoor security lighting can also reduce risk.
- Explore the possibility of installing hidden security switches to impede unauthorized aircraft use. This must be accomplished in compliance with FAA guidelines governing aircraft modification.

- In cases where FS employees or contractors sleep on the premises, as in some air tanker bases, consider enhanced security lighting, alarms, and dogs.
- Establish contact with the appropriate Federal and local law enforcement agencies to coordinate responses to security breaches at aviation facilities. Post appropriate law enforcement agency telephone numbers in a prominent place and instruct employees and contractors to maintain enhanced security awareness.

We are aware that physically securing the aircraft is not always practical. Chains and cables can be defeated with simple tools. Also, at some locations, aircraft may have to be moved by airport personnel for operational reasons and cannot be locked down. When securing aircraft, care must be taken to avoid damage to sensitive aircraft components. Contractors' large air tankers are rarely kept in hangars due to the lack of adequate hanger facilities or the large rental fees for hanger space.

We reported this condition to the FS Chief on October 19, 2001, in a management alert. In the management alert, we recommended that the FS take immediate action to: (1) assess the vulnerability of FS-owned and operated aircraft to theft and misuse, (2) provide guidance on aircraft security to its partner State forestry agencies, (3) develop security controls to minimize the risk that FS-owned and operated aircraft could be used by terrorists or individuals engaging in other criminal activity, and (4) implement a strategy to ensure that aircraft and the public are adequately protected from potential misuse.

We also recommended that the above strategy be coordinated with appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies in order to ensure all factors and threats are adequately considered and that the agency work closely with contractors and State officials to assist them in their own mitigation efforts. Federal agencies should, at a minimum, include the FAA, the U.S. Air Force, and the U.S. Department of Justice. Furthermore, we recommended that the vulnerability assessment and mitigating actions be initiated immediately and that a cohesive strategy for aircraft security be approved by November 19, 2001.

In its October 26, 2001, written response to the management alert, the FS concurred with all four of our recommendations, with one clarifying point concerning the scope of the effort. The FS did not believe that it was within its authority or ability to provide for the security of the literally hundreds of aircraft that it could access through Call-When-Needed (CWN) contracts. Aircraft under CWN contracts are only under FS control for the period of actual use—in some cases, for only a 2-hour administrative flight.

Otherwise, the FS agreed to take the recommended actions as they relate to 1) aircraft owned by the FS, 2) aircraft under exclusive use contracts with the FS that will have contract periods in effect for the next 45 days, and 3) those aircraft on loan to States under the Federal Excess Personal Property (FEPP) program.

On January 15, 2002, we followed up with the FS Washington Office Branch Chief for Fire and Aviation Management to determine whether the FS had developed and approved the cohesive strategy for aircraft security by November 19, 2001, as was recommended above. According to the Branch Chief, the agency was waiting until USDA's Chief of Physical Security completed his review of the FS' aircraft facilities before developing the strategy. As noted in Finding No. 2 of this report, in response to our management alert on FS aircraft security, the FS had asked the USDA's Chief of Physical Security to conduct a security assessment of its facilities. The Physical Security Chief assembled a team of security specialists and began visiting selected facilities on December 3, 2001. According to the security team's proposed schedule, most of the facilities selected were air tanker bases.

**Recommendation No. 1:**

Assess the vulnerability of FS-owned and operated aircraft to theft and misuse.

**FS Response:**

In its written response to the draft report dated, March 29, 2002, the FS stated that the recommended vulnerability assessment will be conducted by Fire and Aviation Management Staff, Law Enforcement and Investigations Staff, Acquisition Management Staff, and private contractor personnel by June 30, 2002.

**OIG Position:**

We accept FS' management decision on this recommendation.

**Recommendation No. 2:**

Provide guidance on aircraft security to partner State forestry agencies.

**FS Response:**

In its written response to the draft report, dated March 29, 2002, the FS stated that by September 30, 2002, it would work with the National Association of State Foresters to require the appropriate States to conduct a similar vulnerability survey and state the appropriate steps, as a result of the findings of the survey, to ensure the security of the FEPP aircraft.

**OIG Position:**

We accept FS' management decision on this recommendation.

**Recommendation No. 3:**

Develop security controls to minimize the risk that FS-owned and operated aircraft are used by terrorists or by individuals engaging in other criminal activity.

**FS Response:**

In its written response to the management alert, dated October 26, 2001, the FS stated that on September 12, all FS Aviation Managers were notified of the need to heighten their attention to aircraft security and to take measures to ensure control of all FS-owned aircraft and those aircraft under their control through exclusive use contracts. The FS stated that it was taking immediate actions to minimize the risk to aircraft by working with its Law Enforcement and Investigations Staff. The FS further stated that it would provide increased security by increasing law enforcement patrols, installing warning signs, placing aircraft in locked hangar facilities when possible, and implementing other appropriate measures to reduce risk to aircraft.

**OIG Position:**

We accept FS' management decision on this recommendation.

**Recommendation No. 4:**

Implement a strategy to ensure that aircraft and the public are adequately protected from potential misuse.

**FS Response:**

In its written response to the draft report, dated March 29, 2002, the FS stated that it has developed an initial security plan and an interim strategy to prioritize its efforts based upon areas of greatest vulnerabilities and damage potential. In doing so, the FS identified large air tankers and their associated facilities as its number one priority. The FS stated that it has also developed a four-phased approach to address the security concerns related to each of its priorities and that all phases of its plan would be completed prior to the start of the 2003 fire season.

**OIG Position:**

We accept FS' management decision on this recommendation.

**FINDING NO. 2 - FS HAD NOT DEVELOPED MINIMUM SECURITY STANDARDS FOR ITS AIRCRAFT FACILITIES OR ASSESSED THE ADDITIONAL SECURITY FEATURES NEEDED**

In addition to reviewing the security of the aircraft itself, we reviewed security over the facilities at which the aircraft were based. We determined that the FS had not



developed minimum standards for securing the facilities and had not assessed the additional security features needed to bring the facilities up to standard. According to a FS official, there was no reason for the FS to be concerned about security of their aircraft facilities prior to the September terrorist attacks. The FS official stated that although most of their aircraft facilities were secured by nothing more than a chain link fence, only minor security problems had been identified over the past 3 years. During the fire season, air tankers need to be in a constant state of readiness in order to respond timely to a fire; consequently, there are limits to how the tankers themselves can be physically secured while on the base. Increased security of the aircraft facilities would make the aircraft less vulnerable to theft or misuse while not interfering with the air tankers' ability to respond timely to a fire. We also concluded that because some of these facilities received funding under the National Fire Plan, such funding might be available to improve security at the facilities.

To assess the FS' security over its aircraft facilities, we visited 7 of the FS' 73 air tanker bases. We selected the seven air tanker bases primarily because they still had air tankers onsite for firefighting purposes even though the fire season was largely over. We found that four of the air tanker bases visited generally only had a chain link fence around the compound where they were located and that not all of the gates that provided access into the compound were secured. The remaining three air tanker bases were more secure because they were located on municipal airports that also housed both military and commercial aircraft.

We also found that the FAA had not directly contacted any of the air tanker bases visited regarding the need for additional security measures in light of the September terrorist attacks; however, the FS had contacted six of the air tanker bases regarding the need for additional security measures. None of the air tanker bases visited had a security plan in place. Three were in the process of developing one.

As was previously mentioned in this report, in October 2000, Congress provided the FS with over \$1.1 billion of additional funding through Public Law 106-291 in order to implement the National Fire Plan. Of the additional \$1.1 billion, Congress designated that \$44 million be spent on capital improvement and maintenance of FS fire facilities. Congress specifically designated that \$12 million of the \$44 million be used for the reconstruction and repair of air tanker bases. The FS Washington Office allocated the \$12 million to five regions for the reconstruction and repair of air tanker bases.

Three of the regions are planning new projects involving their air tanker bases, and three are planning to build new air tanker bases. According to the FS Engineering Branch Chief at the Washington office, contracts have been awarded for the three projects involving the construction of new air tanker bases, but construction has not yet started. The other projects are still in the planning stages. It may be possible to use funds allocated for the reconstruction and repair of the air tanker bases under the National Fire Plan to help pay for the additional security features needed at those same bases. Consequently, there is still time to assess the additional security features needed and incorporate them into the projects before construction begins.

During our review of air tanker base security, the FS Washington Office Engineering Branch Chief stated that the agency had recognized the need for national standards regarding the security of its aircraft facilities and planned to discuss the development of such standards at its quarterly steering committee meeting. The meeting was held on November 8, 2001. On November 21, 2001, we followed up with the Engineering Branch Chief to determine what the steering committee had accomplished. The Branch Chief informed us that the steering committee did discuss security of the FS' aircraft facilities, only to decide that a team of specialists was needed to adequately address the issue. The Branch Chief noted that the team would consist primarily of fire and aviation management staff most familiar with operations at the FS' aircraft facilities. According to the Branch Chief, no timeframe had been established for assembling the team or conducting the first meeting.

In response to our management alert on FS aircraft security discussed in Finding No. 1, the FS had also asked the USDA's Chief of Physical Security to conduct a security assessment of its facilities. The Physical Security Chief assembled a team of security specialists and began visiting selected facilities on December 3, 2001. According to the security team's proposed schedule, most of the facilities selected thus far were air tanker bases. The security team gave the highest priority to those air tanker bases located in Utah, site of the Winter Olympics. At each site visited, the security team planned to conduct a threat assessment followed by a risk analysis and recommend countermeasures to mitigate the risk.

According to the FS National Air Tanker Base Program Leader, the USDA security team was still in the process of completing its review at the time we drafted this report. The program leader said the FS planned to wait until the USDA security team completed its review of the air tanker bases before it established its own team of specialists to develop the minimum security standards previously discussed. The program leader noted that the specialists needed on the FS review team would be dependent upon what the USDA security team concluded during its review.

Finally, the Branch Chief for Fire Aviation and Support also mentioned that the FS was in the process of awarding new 3-year contracts to air tanker operators starting in the upcoming FY 2002 fire season. It would be prudent for the FS to install additional security provisions in the new contracts to further strengthen air tanker security.

We reported the above conditions to the FS Chief on January 17, 2002, in a management alert. In the management alert, we recommended that the FS develop minimum security standards for FS aircraft facilities, assess the additional security features needed to meet the minimum security standards, and establish a timeframe for meeting them. At those aircraft facilities where work was being conducted or planned under the National Fire Plan, the FS should take the appropriate measures to ensure that these facilities meet the minimum standards. At all remaining aircraft facilities, the FS should quantify the cost to add these additional features, and develop a plan of action for implementing the features. Finally, we recommended that the FS ensure that

the new air tanker contracts incorporate appropriate security provisions prior to award for the upcoming FY 2002 fire season.

In its February 1, 2002, written response to the management alert, the FS concurred with our recommendations. The FS stated that it has worked closely with the USDA Security Officer since the first Management Alert dated October 19, 2001. The USDA Security Officer has contracted a security consultant team that has inspected 13 FS bases. The FS further stated that the USDA does not have a security policy developed, and it is a portion of the task order for the contracted consultant team to develop that policy.

**Recommendation No. 5:**

Develop minimum security standards for FS aircraft facilities and establish a timeframe for meeting the standards.

**FS Response:**

In its written response to the management alert, dated February 1, 2002, the FS stated that it was working with the USDA Security Officer and a private contractor in developing security standards for FS aircraft facilities. The FS also stated that the standards would be finalized by April 15, 2002, and that it continues to seek funding for implementation of prescribed security measures. The FS further stated that if funding were available, it would implement the necessary security measures by July 1, 2002.

**OIG Position:**

We accept FS' management decision on this recommendation

**Recommendation No. 6:**

At those aircraft facilities where work was being conducted or planned under the National Fire Plan, assess the additional security features needed to meet the minimum security standards developed in Recommendation No. 5. Take the appropriate measures to ensure that these facilities meet those standards.

**FS Response:**

In its written response to the management alert, dated February 1, 2002, the FS stated that its standards developed under Recommendation No. 1 would be applied at aircraft facilities being constructed or modified under the National Fire Plan. The FS further stated that appropriate security measures would be in place at the completion of work.

**OIG Position:**

We accept FS management decision on this recommendation.

**Recommendation No. 7:**

At all remaining aircraft facilities, assess the additional security features needed to meet the minimum security standards developed in Recommendation No. 5. Also quantify the cost to add these additional features and develop a plan of action for implementing the additional security features needed to meet the minimum security standards.

**FS Response:**

In its written response to the management alert, dated February 1, 2002, the FS stated that the plan for implementing security standards at all bases would be developed by April 1, 2002, and would reflect funding availability and impact of that availability on completing the proposed work.

**OIG Position:**

We accept FS management decision on this recommendation.

**Recommendation No. 8:**

Ensure that the new air tanker contracts incorporate appropriate security provisions prior to award for the upcoming FY 2002 fire season.

**FS Response:**

In its written response to the draft report dated, March 29, 2002, the FS stated that the FY 2002 contracts had already been awarded. However, the FS did note that the following actions would be completed by December 31, 2002: (1) during the preseason air tanker inspection process, security is addressed with companies and crewmembers; (2) the FS has received voluntary commitment from industry to take proactive security measures; (3) preseason inspections have confirmed air tanker crew awareness and compliance; and (4) verification of field compliance with security measures is added to the duties of the Safety Training Assistance Teams deployed during the 2002 fire season.

**OIG Position:**

We accept FS' management decision on this recommendation.

**CONCLUSION**

The FS written response to this report (see attachment), as well as to two previously issued management alerts, was sufficient to reach management decision for all the report's recommendations. We appreciate the FS' prompt response to the heightened security measures recommended by OIG.

The Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO), U.S. Department of Agriculture, has responsibility for monitoring and tracking final action for the findings and recommendations. Please note that final action on the findings and recommendations should be completed within 1 year of each management decision. Follow your agency's internal procedures in forwarding final action correspondence to OCFO.

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance your staff provided to our auditors during the review.

*/S/*

JOYCE N. FLEISCHMAN  
Acting Inspector General

Attachment

# ATTACHMENT – AUDITEE RESPONSE TO DRAFT REPORT



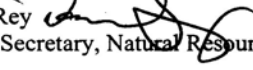
United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Washington  
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14<sup>th</sup> & Independence SW  
P.O. Box 96090  
Washington, DC 20090-6090

INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM FOR JOYCE FLEISCHMAN, ACTING INSPECTOR  
GENERAL, OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

THROUGH: *for* Mark Rey   
Under Secretary, Natural Resources and Environment

FROM: *for* Dale N. Bosworth *Sally Collin* 3/29/02  
Chief

SUBJECT: Response to OIG Draft Report 08001-2-HQ, "Security of Aircraft and  
Aircraft Facilities Owned and Operated by the Forest Service"

FILE CODE: 1430

ISSUE:

Respond to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) audit report (08001-2-HQ) recommendations and reach management decision on recommendations 1, 2, 4, and 8.

DISCUSSION:

The Forest Service (FS) is in complete agreement with the OIG on the necessity of assuring the security of our aircraft operations as outlined in the Draft Audit Report on aircraft and facilities security. We embrace public and employee safety as a core value. In order to address the issue at current budget and staffing levels, we have developed an initial security plan and an interim strategy to prioritize our efforts based upon areas of greatest vulnerabilities and damage potential, which we believe are:

Priority I: Large airtankers and their associated facilities.

Priority II: Agency-owned and agency-contracted aircraft above 12,500 pounds gross takeoff weight, and their associated facilities.

Priority III: All other agency-owned (to include Federal Excess Personal Property aircraft) and agency-contracted aircraft and their associated facilities.

Many proactive efforts related to Priorities I, and II are already underway. Agency pilots and contract operators have incorporated security procedures as part of their preseason training. The following security measures have been or will be implemented by the operators in some combination known only to the flight crews:

- Store aircraft in hangar, when feasible.
- Park the aircraft in a controlled area, when possible.
- Lock the aircraft, when feasible.
- Disconnect the batteries.



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- Implement discrete lockout procedures that will interrupt the ignition process and not allow the engines to be started. These lockout procedures will not require an aircraft configuration change, and consequently will not require FAA certification.
- Use ignition cut-offs and/or prop chains.
- Use lockable wheel chocks.

In additionally, two FS aviation security-working groups met (February 26-27 and March 15-16) to discuss and develop near-term mitigation strategies. These strategies were disseminated to Regional Aviation Officers to share with federal, state, and private industry in their respective regions.

#### SUMMARY

We believe this interim strategy addresses all of the open recommendations where management decision has not been reached (Recommendations 1, 2, 4, and 8, enclosed) contained in the audit report, and we are committed to assuring the security government-owned and contractor-owned aircraft. Please direct any further questions to Tony Kern at (202) 205-1505 or our External Audit Liaison, Linda Washington, on (202) 205-1560.

DALE N. BOSWORTH  
Chief

Enclosure



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United States Department Of Agriculture  
Office Of Inspector General

Draft Audit Report  
08001-2-HQ,  
"Security of Aircraft and Aircraft Facilities Owned and Operated by the Forest Service"  
Issued March 13, 2002

**OIG Recommendation No. 1:** Assess the vulnerability of FS-owned and operated aircraft to theft and misuse.

**Forest Service Response:** We concur. Fire and Aviation Management Staff, Law Enforcement and Investigations Staff, Acquisition Management Staff, and private contractor personnel will conduct the vulnerability assessment. The completion date is June 30, 2002.

**OIG Recommendation No. 2:** Provide Guidance on aircraft security to partner state forestry agencies.

**Forest Service Response:** We concur. The FS will work with the National Association of State Foresters to require the appropriate States to conduct a similar vulnerability survey and state the appropriate steps, as a result of the findings of the survey, to ensure the security of the FEPP aircraft by September 30, 2002.

**OIG Recommendation No. 4:** Implement a strategy to ensure that aircraft and the public are adequately protected from potential misuse.

**Forest Service Response:** We concur. The Forest Service has developed an initial security plan and an interim strategy to prioritize our efforts based upon areas of greatest vulnerabilities and damage potential, which we believe are:

Priority I: Large airtankers and their associated facilities.

Priority II: Agency-owned and agency-contracted aircraft above 12,500 pounds gross takeoff weight, and their associated facilities.

Priority III: All other agency-owned (to include Federal Excess Personal Property aircraft) and agency-contracted aircraft and their associated facilities.

The two Management Alerts and our own concerns have resulted in the development of a four-phased approach to address the security concerns related to the three priorities above:

Phase I: (Completed) Request USDA Office of Property Management (OOPM) Security Officer to include a representative sample of airtanker bases, agency aviation sites, and particularly the agency aviation site in close proximity to the Winter Olympic venues, in a security survey. This phase was completed and the FS received the product of the survey effort on March 14, 2002.



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The report was reduced to compact disc (CD) format and sent to each Regional Aviation Officer with the caveat that it could not be disclosed outside of the USDA.

Phase II: (Incomplete) Use the two management alerts and the OOPM security survey to develop checklist(s) to survey remaining FS sites - completion of checklist(s) by April 30, 2002. Complete national headquarters approval and distribution of the checklists with instruction letters to the Regions by May 15, 2002. The Regions complete the self-assessment of the remaining facilities by June 29, 2002.

Phase III: Following Phase II assessments, identify national priorities and conduct a gap analysis to identify what additional resources are required to bring the prioritized areas up to standard. Draft a national agency policy, brief agency leadership, and achieve approval by the Chief by October 30, 2002.

Phase IV: Implementation by priority to policy standard, including any required contract modifications prior to fires season 2003.

**OIG Recommendation No. 8:** Ensure that the new air tanker contracts incorporate appropriate security provisions prior to award for the upcoming FY 2003 fire season.

**Forest Service Response:** We concur. However the contracts for 2002 were awarded. During the preseason airtanker inspection process, security is addressed with companies and crewmembers. The Forest Service has received voluntary commitment from industry to take proactive security measures. Preseason inspections have confirmed airtanker crew awareness and compliance. Verification of field compliance with security measures is added to the duties of the Safety Training Assistance Teams deployed during the 2002 fire season. All action will be completed by December 31, 2002.



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