

Security of Checked Baggage on Flights Within the United States Federal Aviation Administration

Report Number: AV-1999-113

July 16, 1999

The Office of Inspector General has issued an audit report on Security of Checked Baggage on Flights Within the United States. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) faces many challenges in providing comprehensive testing of new checked baggage security requirements. These challenges include the ability to evaluate new sophisticated automated passenger prescreening procedures, explosives detection equipment operating procedures, and the personnel who are responsible for operating the equipment. The security of checked baggage involves many systems, which are layered and integrated. These systems need to account for the security of about 1 billion pieces of checked baggage processed within the United States annually.

In all our tests of automated passenger prescreening systems worked as intended and correctly identified our testers as selectees. However, test results of other checked baggage security operations, including use of explosives detection equipment already deployed, identified weaknesses in FAA's oversight and air carriers' implementation of the new security requirements.

We found that some passengers were not properly processed for additional security measures based on manual or automated prescreening and, in some cases, air carriers did not use explosives detection equipment appropriately. The recognition of FAA agents by screening personnel may have rendered compliance testing invalid in a few instances. FAA needs to further develop its assessment procedures for all aspects of checked baggage security and execute them comprehensively.

The FAA has determined the report should have limited distribution because it contains sensitive security information. Therefore, the report will not be placed on our website. FAA has also determined that a redacted version of this report will not be made available due to the sensitive nature of the report. If you have questions on the availability of the report, please call Rebecca Trexler, FAA Public Affairs, at (202) 267-8521.