



Highlights of [GAO-08-959T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007 requires the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to implement a system to physically screen 100 percent of cargo on passenger aircraft by August 2010. To fulfill these requirements, the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) TSA is developing the Certified Cargo Screening Program (CCSP), which would allow the screening of cargo to occur prior to placement on an aircraft. This testimony addresses four challenges TSA may face in developing a system to screen 100 percent of cargo: (1) deploying effective technologies; (2) changing TSA air cargo screening exemptions; (3) allocating compliance inspection resources to oversee CCSP participants; and (4) securing cargo transported from a foreign nation to the United States. GAO's comments are based on GAO products issued from October 2005 through February 2008, including selected updates conducted in July 2008.

What GAO Recommends

GAO has made recommendations to DHS and TSA in prior reports to increase the security and screening of air cargo, including completing vulnerability assessments and developing a plan for analyzing compliance inspections. TSA generally agreed with these recommendations and plans to address them.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-959T](#). For more information, contact Cathleen A. Berrick at (202) 512-3404 or berrickc@gao.gov.

AVIATION SECURITY

Transportation Security Administration May Face Resource and Other Challenges in Developing a System to Screen All Cargo Transported on Passenger Aircraft

What GAO Found

DHS has taken steps to develop and test technologies for screening and securing air cargo; however, TSA has not completed assessments of the technologies it plans to use as part of the CCSP. TSA has reported that there are several challenges that must be overcome to effectively implement any of these technologies, including the nature, type, and size of cargo to be screened and the location of air cargo facilities. In addition, the air cargo industry voiced concern about the costs associated with purchasing the screening equipment. GAO will likely review this issue in future work.

TSA plans to revise and eliminate screening exemptions for some categories of air cargo, thereby reducing the percentage of cargo transported on passenger aircraft that is subject to alternative methods of screening. However, TSA plans to continue to exempt some types of domestic and outbound cargo (cargo transported by air from the United States to a foreign location) after August 2010. TSA based its determination regarding the changing of exemptions on professional judgment and the results of air cargo vulnerability assessments. However, TSA has not completed all of its air cargo vulnerability assessments, which would further inform its efforts.

TSA officials stated there may not be enough compliance inspectors to oversee implementation of the CCSP and is anticipating requesting an additional 150 inspectors for fiscal year 2010. They further stated that they have not formally assessed the number of inspectors the agency will need. Without such an assessment, TSA may not be able to ensure that CCSP entities are meeting TSA requirements to screen and secure cargo. To ensure that existing air cargo security requirements are being implemented as required, TSA conducts audits, referred to as compliance inspections, of air carriers that transport cargo. The compliance inspections range from a comprehensive review of the implementation of all security requirements to a review of at least one security requirement by an air carrier or freight forwarder (which consolidates cargo from many shippers and takes it to air carriers for transport). GAO reported in October 2005 that TSA had conducted compliance inspections on fewer than half of the estimated 10,000 freight forwarders nationwide and, of those, had found violations in over 40 percent of them. GAO also reported that TSA had not analyzed the results of compliance inspections to systematically target future inspections.

GAO reported in April 2007 that more work remains for TSA to strengthen the security of cargo transported from a foreign nation to the United States, referred to as inbound air cargo. Although TSA is developing a system to screen 100 percent of domestic and outbound cargo, TSA officials stated that it does not plan to include inbound cargo because it does not impose its security requirements on foreign countries. TSA officials said that vulnerabilities to inbound air cargo exist and that these vulnerabilities are in some cases similar to those of domestic air cargo, but stated that each foreign country has its own security procedures for flights coming into the United States.