



Highlights of [GAO-08-476T](#), a testimony to Chair, Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

In 2003, the Federal Protective Service (FPS) was transferred from the General Services Administration (GSA) to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and is currently tasked with providing physical security and law enforcement services to about 8,800 facilities owned or leased by GSA. To accomplish its mission, FPS currently has a workforce of about 1,100 employees and about 15,000 contract guards located throughout the country.

While there has not been a large-scale attack on a domestic federal facility since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the 1995 terrorist attack on the Oklahoma City Federal Building, it is important that FPS has sufficient resources and an effective approach to protect federal employees and members of the public that work in and visit federal facilities from the risk of crime and terrorist attacks. GAO was asked to provide information and analysis on (1) the extent to which FPS is fulfilling its mission to protect federal employees and facilities and (2) the management challenges FPS faces. To address these objectives, GAO analyzed FPS staffing data and interviewed numerous FPS officials, GSA, tenant agencies, and local police departments.

What GAO Recommends

We have ongoing work addressing these issues and will report our complete evaluation along with any appropriate recommendations at a later date.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-476T](#). For more information, contact Mark L. Goldstein at (202) 512-2834 or goldsteinm@gao.gov.

HOMELAND SECURITY

Preliminary Observations on the Federal Protective Service's Efforts to Protect Federal Property

What GAO Found

Due to staffing and operational issues, FPS is experiencing difficulties in fully meeting its facility protection mission. According to many FPS officials at regions we visited, these difficulties may expose federal facilities to a greater risk of crime or terrorist attack. FPS' workforce has decreased by nearly 20 percent from almost 1,400 in fiscal year 2004 to about 1,100 at the end of fiscal year 2007. In fiscal year 2007, FPS had about 756 inspectors and police officers, and about 15,000 contract guards who are used primarily to monitor facilities through fixed post assignments and access control. FPS is also implementing a policy to change the composition of its workforce whereby it will essentially eliminate the police officer position and mainly utilize inspectors. One consequence of this change is that, with the exception of a few locations, FPS is not providing proactive patrols in and around federal facilities in order to detect and prevent criminal incidents and terrorism related activities before they occur. FPS has also reduced its hours of operation in many locations and has not always maintained security countermeasures and equipment such as security cameras, magnetometers, x-ray machines, radios, building security assessment equipment, and access control systems at some facilities we visited. For example, at one location we visited, a deceased individual had been found, after three months, in a vacant GSA facility that was not regularly patrolled by FPS.

FPS continues to face several management challenges that, according to many FPS officials at regions we visited, have hampered its ability to accomplish its facility protection mission. These include budgetary challenges, a lack of adequate contract guard oversight, and the absence of agreements with local police departments regarding response capabilities or jurisdictional issues at federal facilities. Historically and recently, FPS' revenues have not been sufficient to cover its operational costs. To address its recent revenue shortfall FPS has restricted hiring and travel, limited training and overtime, and eliminated employee performance awards. These measures have had a negative effect on staff morale, contributed to FPS' high attrition rates, and may affect the performance and safety of FPS personnel. Moreover, many FPS officials expressed concern about the lack of oversight of the 15,000 contract guards and poor performance by some guards when responding to crime and incidents at federal facilities. FPS has indicated that they are covering facility protection gaps through increased reliance on local law enforcement but it has not signed any agreements with local law enforcement agencies to ensure local assistance or resolved jurisdictional issues, which could authorize local police to respond to some incidents at federal facilities. Multiple local police departments said they were not aware of FPS' expected reliance on their services.