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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-05-357T](#), a testimony before the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, United States Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

Critical transportation systems crisscross the nation and extend beyond our borders to move millions of passengers and tons of freight each day, making them both attractive targets to terrorists and difficult to secure. Securing these systems is further complicated by the need to balance security with the expeditious flow of people and goods through these systems. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) faces the daunting challenge of determining how to allocate its finite resources to manage risks while addressing threats and enhancing security across all transportation modes. To assist the Congress and TSA in focusing resources on the areas of greatest need, we were asked to describe Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and TSA efforts in managing risks and allocating resources across aviation and surface transportation modes, and in integrating screening, credentialing, and research and development (R&D) efforts to achieve efficiencies.

What GAO Recommends

In prior reports, GAO has made numerous recommendations designed to strengthen transportation security. GAO also has several ongoing reviews related to the issues addressed in this testimony, and will issue separate reports related to these areas at later dates, with additional recommendations as appropriate.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-357T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Cathleen A. Berrick at (202) 512-3404 or berrickc@gao.gov.

TRANSPORTATION SECURITY

Systematic Planning Needed to Optimize Resources

What GAO Found

TSA has undertaken numerous initiatives to strengthen transportation security, particularly in aviation, and its efforts should be commended. For example, since September 11, 2001, TSA has installed explosive detection systems at most of the nation's commercial airports to provide the capability to screen all checked baggage for explosives; expanded screener training and developed performance measures and indicators for the screening systems; and evaluated the security of airport perimeters and access controls and provided funding for security equipment. While these efforts are commendable, we found that TSA has not consistently implemented a risk management approach or conducted the systematic analysis needed to inform its decision-making processes and to prioritize security improvements. Our work has shown that a risk management approach can help inform decision makers in allocating finite resources to the areas of greatest need. For example, we found that since initially deploying equipment to screen checked baggage for explosive at airports in response to congressional mandates, TSA has not conducted the systematic planning needed to optimize the deployment and integration of this equipment. Limited analysis of nine airports showed that the integration of this equipment in-line with airport baggage conveyor systems—rather than continuing to maintain the equipment in a stand-alone mode—could result in significant savings for the federal government. We also found that TSA's efforts to implement a comprehensive risk management approach for its air cargo and rail security programs are ongoing.

The President's fiscal year 2006 budget request proposes two key DHS organizational changes designed to leverage resources and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of various screening, credentialing, and R&D programs. While we applaud DHS's efforts, it will be important for DHS to address several program challenges as the integration moves forward because restructuring alone will not resolve all existing challenges or ensure the successful integration and achievement of DHS's goals. These challenges include developing regulations identifying eligibility requirements for the Transportation Workers Identification Credential, establishing goals with measurable objectives in research and development strategic plans, and using risk assessments to select and prioritize research and development efforts.

Screening Passengers and Cargo are Aviation Security Concerns.



Source: FAA.



Source: Cargo King, Ltd.