



Highlights of [GAO-08-683](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

In 2003, the Federal Protective Service (FPS) transferred from the General Services Administration (GSA) to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). FPS provides physical security and law enforcement services to about 9,000 GSA facilities. To accomplish its mission of protecting GSA facilities, FPS currently has an annual budget of about \$1 billion, 1,100 employees, and 15,000 contract guards located throughout the country. Recently, FPS has faced several challenges protecting GSA facilities and federal employees.

This report provides information and analysis on (1) FPS's operational challenges and actions it has taken to address them, (2) funding challenges FPS faces and actions it has taken to address them, and (3) how FPS measures the effectiveness of its efforts to protect GSA facilities. To address these objectives, we conducted site visits at 7 of FPS's 11 regions and interviewed FPS, GSA, tenant agencies, and local law enforcement officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends, among other things, that the Secretary of DHS direct the Director of FPS to develop and implement a strategic approach to better manage its staffing resources, evaluate current and alternative funding mechanisms, and develop appropriate measures to assess performance. DHS concurred with our recommendations.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-683](#). For more information, contact Mark Goldstein at (202) 512-2834 or goldsteinm@gao.gov.

HOMELAND SECURITY

The Federal Protective Service Faces Several Challenges That Hamper Its Ability to Protect Federal Facilities

What GAO Found

FPS faces several operational challenges that hamper its ability to accomplish its mission, and the actions it has taken may not fully resolve these challenges. FPS's staff decreased by about 20 percent between fiscal years 2004 and 2007. FPS has managed the decreases in its staffing resources in a manner that has diminished security at GSA facilities and increased the risk of crime or terrorist attacks at many GSA facilities. For example, with the exception of a few locations, FPS no longer provides proactive patrols at GSA facilities to detect and prevent criminal incidents and terrorism-related activities. FPS also continues to face problems with managing its contract guard program and ensuring that security countermeasures, such as security cameras and magnetometers, are operational. For example, according to FPS, it has investigated significant crimes at multiple high-risk facilities, but the security cameras installed in those buildings were not working properly, preventing FPS investigators from identifying the suspects. To address some of its operational challenges, FPS is moving to an inspector-based workforce, which seeks to eliminate the police officer position and rely primarily on FPS inspectors for both law enforcement and physical security activities. FPS believes that this change will ensure that its staff has the right mix of technical skills and training needed to accomplish its mission. FPS is also hiring an additional 150 inspectors and developing a new system for completing building security assessments. However, these actions may not fully resolve FPS's operational challenges because, for example, inspectors might not be able to fulfill both law enforcement and physical security roles simultaneously.

FPS also faces funding challenges, and the actions it has taken to address them have had some adverse implications. To fund its operations, FPS charges each tenant agency fees for its security services. In fiscal years 2005 and 2006, FPS's projected expenses exceeded its collections and DHS had to transfer funds to make up the difference. FPS also instituted cost-saving measures such as restricting hiring and travel and limiting training and overtime. According to FPS, these measures have affected staff morale, safety and increased attrition. FPS has been authorized to increase the basic security fee four times since it transferred to DHS, currently charging tenant agencies 62 cents per square foot for basic security services. Because of these actions, FPS's collections in fiscal year 2007 were sufficient to cover costs, and FPS projects that collections will also cover costs in fiscal year 2008. However, FPS's primary means of funding its operations—the basic security fee—does not account for the risk faced by specific buildings, the level of service provided, or the cost of providing services, raising questions about equity. Several stakeholders also expressed concern about whether FPS has an accurate understanding of its costs to provide security at federal facilities.

FPS has developed output measures, but lacks outcome measures to assess the effectiveness of its efforts to protect federal facilities. Its output measures include determining whether security countermeasures have been deployed and are fully operational. However, FPS has not developed outcome measures to evaluate its efforts to protect federal facilities that could provide FPS with broader information on program results. FPS also lacks a reliable data management system for accurately tracking performance measures. Without such a system, it is difficult for FPS to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of its efforts. allocate