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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-07-754T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Border, Maritime, and Global Counterterrorism; Committee on Homeland Security; House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The United States has a vital national interest in maritime security. The safety and economic security of the United States depend in substantial part upon the secure use of the world's waterways and ports. In an effort to further the progress made through the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002, the Security and Accountability for Every Port Act (SAFE Port Act) was passed and became effective in October 2006.

This testimony, which is based on past GAO work, synthesizes the results of this work as it pertains to the following:

- overall port security,
- facility security at U.S. ports,
- the international supply chain and cargo container security, and
- customs revenue collection efforts.

What GAO Recommends

While this testimony makes no recommendations, in the past GAO has made many recommendations on issues covered in this statement. The Department of Homeland Security is in various stages of implementing these recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-754T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Stephen L. Caldwell at (202) 512-9610 or CaldwellS@gao.gov.

MARITIME SECURITY

Observations on Selected Aspects of the SAFE Port Act

What GAO Found

With the Coast Guard generally implementing earlier port security requirements, the SAFE Port Act called for changes to several ongoing programs. For example, it called for interagency operational centers at high-risk ports within 3 years. Three centers currently operate, but agency coordination will pose a challenge. Also, the act established a port security exercise program, but more exercises could challenge stakeholders' ability to maintain coordination and quickly report results. Additionally, an expansion of foreign port security assessments may be challenged by greater workloads and the need for additional staff.

Many port facility security requirements are being implemented, but not always on schedule. While the Coast Guard has approved, and verified through inspection, facility security plans, the SAFE Port Act requires inspections more often and some without notice. The Coast Guard will be challenged by the number of trained inspectors it needs. Worker credentialing programs were also modified by the act. One such program has seen substantial delays in the past, but is receiving more support. Efforts to avoid duplication in these programs will be challenged by the need for extensive coordination within and among federal departments.

The SAFE Port Act codified existing major container security programs and also added guidance for these programs. It also required programs to test new technologies or combine existing technologies for scanning containers. While more container security activity is occurring overseas, challenges remain in the continued implementation of these efforts. These challenges include the inability to directly test the security measures used by different companies in their supply chains, particularly overseas.

Since its formation, the Department of Homeland Security has faced challenges in maintaining its customs revenue functions. For example, the Department failed to maintain the legislatively mandated staffing levels, lacks a strategic workforce plan to help ensure it has a sufficient number of skilled staff to effectively perform customs revenue functions, and does not publicly report on its performance of customs revenue functions, which would help ensure accountability.

Cargo Container Transportation and Screening



Source: CBP.