



Highlights of [GAO-07-583T](#), a report to congressional subcommittees

Why GAO Did This Study

The four rail attacks in Europe and Asia since 2004, including the most recent in India, highlight the vulnerability of passenger rail and other surface transportation systems to terrorist attack and demonstrate the need for greater focus on securing these systems. This testimony is based primarily on GAO's September 2005 passenger rail security report and selected recent program updates. Specifically, it addresses (1) the extent to which the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has assessed the risks facing the U.S. passenger rail system and developed a strategy based on risk assessments for securing all modes of transportation, including passenger rail, and (2) the actions that federal agencies have taken to enhance the security of the U.S. passenger rail system.

What GAO Recommends

GAO has previously recommended that the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) complete risk assessments, develop rail security standards based on best practices, and consider implementing practices used by foreign rail operators. DHS, the Department of Transportation (DOT), and Amtrak generally agreed with these recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-583T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Norman J. Rabkin at (202) 512-8777 or rabkinn@gao.gov.

PASSENGER RAIL SECURITY

Federal Strategy and Enhanced Coordination Needed to Prioritize and Guide Security Efforts

What GAO Found

The DHS Office of Grants and Training (OGT) and TSA have begun to assess the risks facing the U.S. passenger rail system. However, GAO reported in September 2005 that TSA had not completed a comprehensive risk assessment of passenger rail. GAO found that, until TSA does so, it may be limited in its ability to prioritize passenger rail assets and help guide security investments. GAO also reported that DHS had begun, but not yet completed, a framework to help agencies and the private sector develop a consistent approach for analyzing and comparing risks among and across critical sectors. Since that time, TSA has reported taking additional steps to assess the risks to the passenger rail system. However, as of March 2, 2007, TSA has not issued the required Transportation Sector Specific Plan and supporting plans for passenger rail and other surface transportation modes, based on risk assessments. Until TSA does so, it lacks a clearly communicated strategy with goals and objectives for securing the transportation sector, including passenger rail.

After September 11, DOT initiated efforts to strengthen passenger rail security. TSA has also taken actions to strengthen rail security, including issuing security directives, testing security technologies, and issuing a proposed rule for passenger and freight rail security, among other efforts. However, federal and rail industry stakeholders have questioned the extent to which TSA's directives were based on industry best practices. OGT has also acted to help improve passenger rail security by, for example, providing funding for security enhancements to rail transit agencies and Amtrak through various grant programs. DHS and DOT have taken steps to better coordinate their respective rail security roles and responsibilities. In particular, DHS and DOT updated their memorandum of understanding to clarify their respective security roles and responsibilities for passenger rail.