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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-05-790](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The threat of terrorism has made physical security for federal real property assets a major concern. Protecting these assets can be particularly complex and contentious for agencies whose missions include ensuring public access such as the Department of the Interior (Interior) and the General Services Administration (GSA). GAO's objectives were to (1) identify any challenges that Interior faces in protecting national icons and monuments from terrorism, as well as related actions intended to address these challenges; and similarly, (2) determine any challenges GSA faces related to the protection of federal office buildings it owns or leases and actions that have been taken.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of the Interior (1) link the results of its risk assessments and related risk rankings to its funding priorities and (2) develop guiding principles for balancing security initiatives with Interior's core mission. Interior did not comment on our recommendations. GAO also recommends that the Administrator of GSA establish a mechanism—such as a chief security officer position or formal point of contact—so it is better equipped to address security-related matters related to its federal building portfolio. GSA concurred with the recommendation.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-790.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Mark Goldstein at (202) 512-2834 or GoldsteinM@gao.gov.

HOMELAND SECURITY

Actions Needed to Better Protect National Icons and Federal Office Buildings from Terrorism

What GAO Found

Interior faces a range of major challenges in protecting national icons and monuments from terrorism—these include balancing security and public access; addressing jurisdictional and competing stakeholder issues; and securing assets in rugged, remote areas. In addition, there was concern among Interior officials about the department's ability to leverage limited resources for security. Since September 11, 2001, Interior has improved security at high-profile sites, created a central security office to oversee its security efforts, developed physical security plans required by Homeland Security Presidential Directive 7, and developed a uniform risk management and ranking methodology. As Interior moves forward, linking the results of its risk rankings to security funding priorities at national icons and monuments is an important next step. Also, given Interior's complex and often contentious environment, setting forth the guiding principles by which the department balances its core mission with security could have benefits. Other organizations have used guiding principles to foster greater transparency in complex environments.

GSA also faces a range of major challenges, some similar to Interior's, that include balancing security and public access, addressing jurisdictional and competing stakeholder issues, securing federally leased space, and adjusting to the transfer of the Federal Protective Service (FPS) from GSA to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Actions GSA has taken to address the challenges include working to develop security standards for securing leased space and establishing a memorandum of agreement with DHS on security at GSA's facilities. However, despite these actions, GSA lacks a mechanism—such as a chief security officer position or formal point of contact—that could serve in a liaison role with FPS and tenant agencies, work to address the challenges GSA faces related to security at its buildings, and enable GSA to better define its overall role in security given the transfer of FPS to DHS.

Examples of Security Measures at National Icons and Federal Buildings



Source: GAO.

(From left to right): Jersey barrier and snow fencing at the Jefferson Memorial; security camera at Mt. Rushmore; and bollards in the front of a federal building in New York.