

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Office of Inspector General

Improvements Needed in TSA's Federal Flight Deck Officer Program



This report represents a public summary of the full report, which is designated as Sensitive Security Information

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Preface

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) was established by the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (*Public Law 107-296*) by amendment to the Inspector General Act of 1978. This is one of a series of audit, inspection, and special reports prepared as part of our oversight responsibilities to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness within the department.

This report addresses the Transportation Security Administration's implementation of the Federal Flight Deck Officer program and identifies areas where operational effectiveness can be improved. It is based on interviews with employees and officials of relevant agencies and institutions, direct observations, and a review of applicable documents.

The recommendations herein have been developed to the best knowledge available to our office, and have been discussed in draft with those responsible for implementation. It is our hope that this report will result in more effective, efficient, and economical operations. We express our appreciation to all of those who contributed to the preparation of this report.

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Summary

Subsequent to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Congress passed the Homeland Security Act of 2002, which is also referred to as Public Law 107-296. Title XIV of the Act is the Arming Pilots Against Terrorism Act (APATA), as amended, and establishes the Federal Flight Deck Officer (FFDO) program. The FFDO program selects, trains, deputizes, arms with handguns, and supervises volunteer airline pilots and other flight deck crewmembers for the purpose of defending the flight decks of passenger and cargo aircraft.

Our audit objective was to determine whether the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) procedural or process requirements presented barriers to pilot participation and performance in the FFDO program.

TSA was required to establish the procedural requirements to carry out the program within 3 months of the enactment of the APATA. These procedural requirements were to address such items as:

- The type of firearm.
- The type of ammunition.
- The standards and training needed to qualify.
- Storage and transportation of firearms.
- Methods for identifying and selecting a pilot for the FFDO program.

We surveyed a sample of FFDOs to identify pilot concerns about the FFDO program. Pilot concerns included not being given time off to attend training, the remote location of the training and the amount of time used to get to the training site, TSA's weapons carriage policy, and the type of credentials used to identify FFDOs. These concerns may have dissuaded pilots from participating in the program, thus reducing the number of FFDOs.

In December 2005, management of the FFDO program was assigned to TSA's Office of Law Enforcement-Federal Air Marshal Service (OLE-FAM). TSA's OLE-FAM established focus groups to foster communications among the FFDO community, the airline industry, and professional associations; and to address FFDO operational concerns.

Also, OLE-FAM management established a FFDO working group to assess recommendations on proposals concerning FFDO credentials and badges,

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checkpoint requirements, weapons issues (including transport, storage, and qualifications), communications protocols, training, and industry liaison.

While TSA has now trained and deputized FFDOs and has addressed various procedural and process issues, more needs to be accomplished to maximize the use of FFDOs on international and domestic flights. TSA continue to work with FFDOs, Federal Security Directors, and industry to improve FFDO program effectiveness.

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