



Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General

Penetration Testing of Law Enforcement Credential Used to Bypass Screening

(Unclassified Summary)





Homeland
Security

September 3, 2009

Preface

The Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General 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 strengths and weaknesses of the Transportation Security Administration's procedures to ensure that Transportation Security Officers and airport law enforcement officers are able to prevent armed individuals using counterfeit law enforcement credentials from bypassing security measures and gaining access to sterile areas. It is based on interviews with Transportation Security Officers, airport law enforcement officers, and Transportation Security Administration officials, direct observations, field testing, and a review of applicable documents.

The information herein has been developed to the best knowledge available to our office, and have been discussed in draft with those responsible for implementation. We trust 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.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard L. Skinner".

Richard L. Skinner
Inspector General

OIG

*Department of Homeland Security
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Background

The Transportation Security Administration is responsible for overseeing aviation security and ensuring the safety of the air traveling public. This includes the procedures for verifying the legitimacy of armed law enforcement officers who are exempt from standard passenger screening. We assessed the effectiveness of Transportation Security Officers and airport law enforcement officers in detecting fraudulent law enforcement credentials and preventing unauthorized individuals from accessing airport sterile areas.

We conducted unannounced, covert testing using fake law enforcement badges and credentials at eight domestic airports between December 1, 2008, and February 27, 2009. During this time, the Transportation Security Administration implemented the use of the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System for verifying the identification and authorization of state and local law enforcement officers flying armed. The National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System is a pre-existing system that links state, local, federal, and international law enforcement agencies to facilitate exchange of critical data.

The objectives of our audit were to determine whether: (1) the Transportation Security Administration has adequate policies and procedures to prevent armed individuals from using counterfeit law enforcement credentials to bypass security measures before gaining access to airport sterile areas, and (2) Transportation Security Officers and airport law enforcement officers are following established policies and procedures to prevent armed individuals posing as law enforcement officers from unauthorized access to these areas.

Results of Audit

The number of tests conducted, the names of the airports tested, and the quantitative and qualitative results of our testing are classified. We have shared that information with the department, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), and appropriate congressional committees.

We identified vulnerabilities in the security of the law enforcement officer (LEO) flying armed program at the eight domestic airports where we conducted testing. As a result of our testing, we made five recommendations. TSA concurred with three recommendations, partially concurred with one recommendation, and did not concur with our last recommendation. When fully implemented, these recommendations should strengthen the armed law enforcement officer specialized screening process.

We gave a copy of our draft report to TSA for review and comment. The unclassified portion of TSA's response to our draft report is summarized below.

TSA's Response

TSA appreciates the work done by the Office of Inspector General on this engagement and continues to make progress implementing program changes to close vulnerabilities with respect to the LEO flying armed program.

With the implementation of the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System pre-registration requirements for state and local LEOs and the advent of Personal Identity Verification credentials compliant with Presidential Directive Number 12 for Federal LEOs, significant opportunities for abuse of the program will be closed.

TSA developed an enhanced verification process for state and local LEOs flying armed using the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System. This process, along with a check of other required identifying documents will be used by TSA for verification at the LEO checkpoint.

In addition, TSA is developing and testing comprehensive identification credential verification technology for use at airports. An operational pilot program is scheduled to begin shortly with deployment anticipated for 2010. TSA will consider the application of this technology to the LEO flying armed process for federal LEOs.

Appendix A

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