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# Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-06-597T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Federal Workforce and Agency Organization, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

It has been over 3 years since the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) assumed responsibility for passenger and baggage screening at commercial airports. This testimony focuses on the progress TSA is making in strengthening aspects of aviation security and the challenges that remain. Particularly, this testimony highlights (1) progress TSA has made, and challenges it faces, in managing a federalized security workforce—including federal security directors (FSD) and transportation security officers (TSO)—with operational responsibility for ensuring security of passengers and their baggage; and (2) actions TSA has taken, and the challenges it faces, to ensure appropriate regulatory oversight of other airport security activities.

## What GAO Recommends

In prior reports, GAO has made numerous recommendations designed to strengthen aviation security with respect to aviation workforce planning, deployment, and oversight. TSA generally agreed with our recommendations and is taking actions to implement them. GAO also has ongoing reviews related to TSA staffing models and other aviation security issues, and may make additional recommendations as appropriate.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-597T](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-597T).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Cathleen A. Berrick at (202) 512-3404 or [berrickc@gao.gov](mailto:berrickc@gao.gov).

## AVIATION SECURITY

# Transportation Security Administration Has Made Progress in Managing a Federal Security Workforce and Ensuring Security at U.S. Airports, but Challenges Remain

## What GAO Found

TSA has made progress in managing, deploying, and training a federalized aviation security workforce, including FSDs (the lead authority at U.S. airports) and TSOs (formerly known as screeners). FSDs have, for example, formed partnerships with key federal and private-sector stakeholders at airports engaged in security and operations. We reported, however, that the guidance on FSD authority is outdated and lacks clarity, particularly regarding security incidents when FSDs must coordinate with other stakeholders. Regarding TSOs, TSA has taken and has planned actions to strengthen the management and deployment of the TSO workforce. TSA has, for instance, developed a screening allocation model to determine TSO staffing levels at airports. However, FSDs have reported concerns that despite such a model, attracting, hiring, and retaining an adequate part-time TSO workforce remains a challenge. We have reported that, while TSA has expanded training opportunities for TSOs, insufficient TSO staffing and other problems hinder the ability of TSOs to take training. To evaluate TSO performance, TSA has collected performance data by conducting covert (undercover, unannounced) tests at passenger screening checkpoints.

TSA has taken steps to strengthen key areas of aviation security for which it has regulatory and oversight responsibility, including domestic air cargo security, but faces challenges related to oversight and performance measurement. We reported in October 2005, for example, that while TSA had significantly increased the number of domestic air cargo inspections conducted, performance measures to determine to what extent air carriers and others are complying with air cargo security requirements had not been developed. Without such performance measures, and a systematic analysis of these results of air cargo security inspections, TSA's ability to target its workforce for future inspections, and fulfill oversight responsibilities, will be limited. Further, while TSA has incorporated elements of risk-based decision making into securing air cargo, its efforts are not yet complete. To address these and other issues, TSA officials stated that they plan to compile additional information on air cargo inspections to enhance their ability to conduct compliance inspections of air carriers using covert testing, and to require random inspection of air cargo.

### Screening Passengers and Cargo Are Aviation Security Concerns



Source: FAA.



Source: Cargo King Ltd.