



Highlights of [GAO-07-660](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has primary responsibility for securing air cargo transported into the United States from another country, referred to as inbound air cargo, and preventing implements of terrorism from entering the country. GAO examined (1) what actions DHS has taken to secure inbound air cargo, and how, if at all, these efforts could be strengthened; and (2) what practices the air cargo industry and foreign governments have adopted that could enhance DHS's efforts to strengthen inbound air cargo security, and to what extent DHS has worked with foreign governments to enhance their air cargo security efforts. To conduct this study, GAO reviewed relevant DHS documents, interviewed DHS officials, and conducted site visits to seven countries in Europe and Asia.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DHS develop a risk-based inbound air cargo security strategy; develop a systematic process to improve interagency communication; and analyze air cargo security practices used by air cargo industry stakeholders and foreign governments to determine their applicability to the United States. DHS generally concurred with GAO's recommendations. However, we have concerns that DHS's plans may not fully address our recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-660.

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

AVIATION SECURITY

Federal Efforts to Secure U.S.-Bound Air Cargo Are in the Early Stages and Could Be Strengthened

What GAO Found

Within DHS, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) have taken a number of actions designed to secure inbound air cargo, but these efforts are still largely in the early stages and could be strengthened. For instance, TSA completed a risk-based strategic plan to address domestic air cargo security, but has not developed a similar strategy for addressing inbound air cargo security, including how best to partner with CBP and international air cargo stakeholders. In addition, while TSA has identified the primary threats to inbound air cargo, it has not yet assessed inbound air cargo vulnerabilities and critical assets. Moreover, TSA's air cargo security rule incorporated a number of provisions aimed at enhancing the security of inbound air cargo. This final rule also acknowledges that TSA amended its security directives and programs to triple the percentage of cargo inspected on domestic and foreign passenger aircraft. However, TSA continues to exempt certain types of inbound air cargo transported on passenger air carriers from inspection. Further, TSA inspects domestic and foreign passenger air carriers with service to the United States to assess whether they are complying with air cargo security requirements, but currently does not conduct compliance inspections of all air carriers transporting inbound air cargo. Moreover, TSA has not developed performance goals and measures to determine to what extent air carriers are complying with security requirements. In addition, CBP recently began targeting inbound air cargo transported on passenger and all-cargo aircraft that may pose a security risk and inspecting such cargo once it arrives in the United States. TSA and CBP, however, do not have a systematic process in place to share information that could be used to strengthen the department's efforts in securing inbound air cargo, such as the results of TSA air carrier compliance inspections and foreign airport assessments.

The air cargo industry and foreign governments have implemented various security practices that could provide opportunities for strengthening DHS's overall air cargo security program. TSA officials acknowledged that compiling and analyzing security practices implemented by foreign air cargo stakeholders and foreign governments may provide opportunities to enhance U.S. air cargo security, and have begun an initial review of practices in select foreign countries. TSA has also begun working with foreign governments to coordinate security practices to enhance security and improve oversight, referred to as harmonization, but these efforts may be challenging to implement. For example, some foreign countries do not share the United States' view regarding air cargo security threats and risks, which may make the harmonization of air cargo security practices difficult to achieve.