



Highlights of [GAO-03-253](#), a report to the Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

The aviation industry and business traveler groups have proposed the registered traveler concept as a way to reduce long waits in airport security lines caused by heightened security screening measures implemented after the September 11 terrorist attacks. In addition, aviation security experts have advocated this concept as a way to better target security resources to those travelers who might pose greater security risks. The Aviation and Transportation Security Act of November 2001 allows the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to consider developing a registered traveler program as a way to address these two issues.

GAO completed this review to inform Congress and TSA of policy and implementation issues related to the concept of a registered traveler program.

AVIATION SECURITY

Registered Traveler Program Policy and Implementation Issues

What GAO Found

Under a variety of approaches related to the concept of a registered traveler program proposed by industry stakeholders, individuals who voluntarily provide personal background information and who clear background checks would be enrolled as registered travelers. Because these individuals would have been pre-screened through the program enrollment process, they would be entitled to expedited security screening procedures at the airport.

Through a detailed literature review and interviews with stakeholders, GAO found that a registered traveler program is intended to reduce the inconvenience many travelers have experienced since September 11 and improve the quality and efficiency of airport security screening. Although GAO found support for this program among many stakeholders, GAO also found concerns that such a program could create new aviation security vulnerabilities.

GAO also identified a series of key policy and program implementation issues that affect the program, including

- Criteria for program eligibility;
- Level of background check required for participation;
- Security-screening procedures for registered travelers;
- Technology options, including the use of biometrics to verify participants;
- Program scope, including the numbers of participants and airports; and
- Program cost and financing options.

Stakeholders offered many different options on how best to resolve these issues.

Finally, GAO identified several best practices that Congress and TSA may wish to consider in designing and implementing a registered traveler program.

GAO concluded that a registered traveler program is one possible approach for managing some of the security vulnerabilities in our nation's aviation systems. However, decisions concerning key issues are needed before developing and implementing such a program.

TSA felt that GAO's report offered a good overview of the potential and the challenges of a registered traveler program. The agency affirmed that there are no easy answers to some of the issues that GAO raised and that these issues need more study.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-253.

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Gerald Dillingham (202-512-3650).