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Aviation Group Client Update

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TSA NEEDS TO EVALUATE COST AND EFFECTIVENESS OF SECURITY COUNTERMEASURES

On September 11, 2017, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released aviation [research](#) pertaining to Transportation Security Administration security countermeasures in light of threats to aviation.

Background. GAO conducted this research to assess the effectiveness of the aviation security program considering that the TSA has spent billions on aviation security programs since September 11, 2001.

Summary. This report examines the extent to which TSA has (1) information on the effectiveness of selected passenger aviation security countermeasures and (2) systematically analyzed the cost and effectiveness tradeoffs among countermeasures.

Findings. TSA has data on the effectiveness of some, but not all its passenger aviation security countermeasures. TSA data includes passenger prescreening, checkpoint and checked baggage screening, and explosives detection canines. GAO also found that although TSA is taking steps to improve the quality of this information, it does not have effectiveness data for its Behavior Detection and Analysis (BDA) program and the U.S. Federal Air Marshal Service (FAMS). Other findings include TSA's tool to compare the security effectiveness of security countermeasures, but no efforts underway to systematically evaluate potential cost and effectiveness tradeoffs across all countermeasures despite DHS policy and TSA's strategic plan calling for the systematic evaluation of costs and effectiveness of TSA's chosen mix of aviation security countermeasures. GAO concluded that without such an analysis, TSA is not well positioned to strike an appropriate balance of costs, effectiveness, and risk.

Recommendations. GAO recommends that TSA (1) explore and pursue methods to assess the deterrent effect of TSA's passenger aviation security countermeasures, with FAMS as a top priority to address, and (2) systematically evaluate the potential cost and effectiveness tradeoffs across aviation security countermeasures.

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact Shelley Ewalt.

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McBreen & Kopko's Aviation Group represents air carriers, fixed base operators (FBOs), airport managers, aviation service providers, and business aircraft owners and operators on a wide range of aviation issues including regulatory matters, commercial transactions, aircraft finance matters, and bankruptcy and creditors' rights.

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For further information please visit <https://www.gao.gov/assets/690/687059.pdf>

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