

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-14-128T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

As part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), FPS is responsible for protecting federal employees and visitors in approximately 9,600 federal facilities under the control and custody of the General Services Administration (GSA). Recent incidents at federal facilities demonstrate their continued vulnerability to attacks or other acts of violence. To help accomplish its mission, FPS conducts facility risk assessments and provides oversight of approximately 13,500 contract security guards deployed to federal facilities.

This testimony is based on the results of our September 2013 report (released by the Subcommittee today), previous reports, and preliminary results of work GAO conducted for a report that GAO plans to issue to the Chairman later this year. GAO discusses (1) challenges FPS faces in ensuring contract security guards deployed to federal facilities are properly trained and certified and (2) the extent to which FPS and select federal agencies' facility risk assessment methodologies align with standards issued by the ISC. To perform this work, GAO reviewed FPS and guard company documentation and interviewed officials about oversight of guards. GAO also reviewed FPS's and eight federal agencies' risk assessment documentation and compared it to ISC's standards. These agencies were selected based on their missions and types of facilities.

What GAO Recommends

DHS and FPS agreed with GAO's recommendations in its September 2013 report.

View [GAO-14-128T](#). For more information, contact Mark Goldstein, (202) 512-2834 or GoldsteinM@gao.gov

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HOMELAND SECURITY

Challenges Associated with Federal Protective Service's Contract Guards and Risk Assessments at Federal Facilities

What GAO Found

The Federal Protective Service (FPS) faces challenges ensuring that contract guards have been properly trained and certified before being deployed to federal facilities around the country. In a September 2013 report, GAO found that providing active-shooter-response and screener training is a challenge for FPS. For example, according to officials at five guard companies, their contract guards have not received training on how to respond during incidents involving an active-shooter. Without ensuring that all guards receive this training, FPS has limited assurance that its guards are prepared for such a threat. Similarly, officials from one of FPS's contract guard companies stated that 133 (about 38 percent) of its approximately 350 guards have never received screener training. As a result, those guards may be using x-ray and magnetometer equipment at federal facilities that they are not qualified to use, raising questions about their ability to properly screen access control points at federal facilities—one of their primary responsibilities. We were unable to determine the extent to which FPS's guards have received active-shooter-response and screener training. FPS agreed with GAO's 2013 recommendation that they take steps to identify guards that have not had required training and provide it to them. GAO also found that FPS continues to lack effective management controls to ensure its guards have met its training and certification requirements. For instance, although FPS agreed with GAO's 2010 and 2012 recommendations that it develop a comprehensive and reliable system for managing information on guards' training, certifications, and qualifications, it still does not have such a system. Additionally, 23 percent of the 276 guard files GAO examined (maintained by 11 of the 31 guard companies we interviewed) lacked required training and certification documentation. Examples of missing items include documentation of initial weapons and screener training and firearms qualifications.

GAO's preliminary results indicate that several agencies, including FPS, do not use a methodology to assess risk at their facilities that aligns with the Interagency Security Committee's (ISC) risk assessment standards. Risk assessments help decision-makers identify and evaluate security risks and implement protective measures to mitigate the risk. ISC's standards state that agencies' facility risk assessment methodologies must: 1) consider all of the undesirable events identified by ISC as possible risks to federal facilities, and 2) assess the threat, vulnerability, and consequence of specific undesirable events. Most commonly, agencies' methodologies that GAO reviewed are inconsistent with ISC's standards because they do not assess facilities' vulnerabilities to specific undesirable events. If an agency does not know its facilities' potential vulnerabilities to specific undesirable events, it cannot set priorities to mitigate these vulnerabilities. In addition, as GAO reported in August 2012, although federal agencies pay FPS millions of dollars to assess risk at their facilities, FPS's risk assessment tool is not consistent with ISC's risk assessment standards because it does not assess *consequence* (i.e., the level, duration, and nature of loss resulting from undesirable events). As a result, FPS and the other non-compliant agencies GAO reviewed may not have a complete understanding of the risks facing approximately 57,000 federal facilities located around the country (including the 9,600 protected by FPS).