

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-117](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

TSA, within the Department of Homeland Security, is responsible for securing the nation's civil aviation system while facilitating the movement of passengers and commerce at approximately 440 airports nationwide. TSA tests passenger and baggage screening technologies developed by industry to ensure they support TSA missions. In reviews from 2010 to 2014, GAO found that TSA encountered challenges in acquiring and deploying technologies. The Transportation Security Acquisition Reform Act contained a provision for GAO to assess TSA's test and evaluation activities for security-related technologies. This report assesses the extent to which (1) TSA's test and evaluation process helps it meet mission needs through the acquisition of passenger and baggage screening technologies, and (2) TSA has taken steps to improve the test and evaluation process.

GAO reviewed DHS and TSA acquisition and test policies, analyzed testing and acquisition documentation for technologies tested in the past five years, observed the testing process at DHS and TSA facilities, and spoke with DHS, TSA, and industry officials.

## What GAO Recommends

TSA should finalize its third party testing strategy before implementation and conduct and document a comprehensive assessment of testing data to identify key factors contributing to any acquisition inefficiencies. DHS concurred with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-16-117](#). For more information, contact Michele Mackin at (202) 512-4841 or [mackinm@gao.gov](mailto:mackinm@gao.gov).

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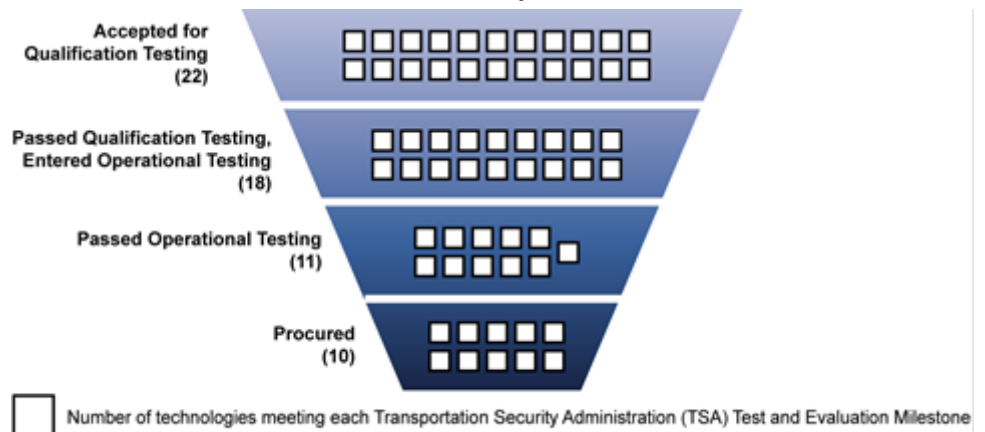
## TSA ACQUISITIONS

### Further Actions Needed to Improve Efficiency of Screening Technology Test and Evaluation

## What GAO Found

The Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) test and evaluation process has enabled TSA and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials to identify passenger and baggage screening technologies that will meet mission needs, but technology failures during testing have contributed to inefficiencies in the acquisition process. Consistent with departmental guidance and acquisition best practices, TSA's test and evaluation process provides information regarding the ability of technologies to meet mission needs before agency officials decide whether to begin full production, saving the agency from investing in potentially expensive yet ineffective equipment. From June 2010 to July 2015, half of the 22 systems that TSA tested successfully completed qualification and operational testing. TSA procured all but 1 of the 11 successful systems. Technologies that entered the test and evaluation process and were immature required significant modifications and retesting.

**Number of Passenger and Baggage Screening Systems (Including Upgrades) Completing TSA Test and Evaluation Phases from June 2010 to July 2015**



Source: GAO analysis of TSA data. | GAO-16-117

TSA has taken steps to improve its test and evaluation process by helping ensure technologies are mature before entering testing, but it is too soon to tell whether these actions will address all of the factors that contribute to acquisition inefficiencies. A key action TSA is taking involves developing a third party testing strategy, through which a third party will help ensure systems are mature prior to entering TSA's test and evaluation process. TSA plans to implement its approach in 2016, but it has yet to finalize key aspects of the strategy. For example, TSA has not identified whether there are a sufficient number of eligible third party testers or established a mechanism to oversee that testing. Without a finalized strategy, TSA risks unintended consequences, such as increasing acquisition costs. Further, TSA has not conducted or documented a comprehensive assessment of testing data and thus may be missing opportunities to identify additional areas for improvements to its acquisition process. An assessment of this data, such as costs incurred, could help TSA guide future reforms to the test and evaluation process to help ensure they address contributing to any acquisition inefficiencies.