



Highlights of [GAO-09-859T](#), a report to U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

## Why GAO Did This Study

To accomplish its mission of protecting about 9,000 federal facilities, the Federal Protective Service (FPS) currently has a budget of about \$1 billion, about 1,200 full time employees, and about 13,000 contract security guards.

This testimony discusses GAO's preliminary findings on (1) the extent to which FPS ensures that its guards have the required training and certifications before being deployed to a federal facility, (2) the extent to which FPS ensures that its guards comply with their assigned responsibilities (post orders) once they are deployed at federal facilities, and (3) security vulnerabilities GAO recently identified related to FPS's guard program. To address these objectives, GAO conducted site visits at 6 of FPS's 11 regions, interviewed numerous FPS officials, guards, contractors, and analyzed FPS's policies and data. GAO also conducted covert testing at 10 judgmentally selected level IV facilities in four cities. A level IV facility has over 450 employees and a high volume of public contact.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO has ongoing work on this issue and will report its complete evaluation along with any recommendations at a later date.

View [GAO-09-859T](#) or [key components](#). For more information, contact Mark Goldstein at (202) 512-2834 or [goldsteinm@gao.gov](mailto:goldsteinm@gao.gov).

## HOMELAND SECURITY

### Preliminary Results Show Federal Protective Service's Ability to Protect Federal Facilities Is Hampered By Weaknesses in Its Contract Security Guard Program

#### What GAO Found

FPS does not fully ensure that its contract security guards have the training and certifications required to be deployed to a federal facility. FPS requires that all prospective guards complete about 128 hours of training including 8 hours of x-ray and magnetometer training. However, in one region, FPS has not provided the x-ray or magnetometer training to its 1,500 guards since 2004. Nonetheless, these guards are assigned to posts at federal facilities. X-ray training is critical because guards control access points at facilities. Insufficient x-ray and magnetometer training may have contributed to several incidents where guards were negligent in carrying out their responsibilities. For example, at a level IV facility, an infant in a carrier was sent through an x-ray machine due to a guard's negligence. Moreover, GAO found that FPS does not have a fully reliable system for monitoring and verifying guard training and certification requirements. GAO reviewed 663 randomly selected guard records and found that 62 percent of the guards had at least one expired certification including a declaration that guards have not been convicted of domestic violence, which make them ineligible to carry firearms.

FPS has limited assurance that its guards are complying with post orders. FPS does not have specific national guidance on when and how guard inspections should be performed. FPS's inspections of guard posts at federal facilities are inconsistent and the quality varied in the six regions GAO visited. GAO also found that guard inspections are typically completed by FPS during regular business hours and in locations where FPS has a field office; and seldom on nights and on weekends. However, on an occasion when FPS did conduct a post inspection at night it found a guard asleep at his post after taking the pain killer prescription drug Percocet. FPS also found other incidents at level IV facilities where guards neglected or inadequately performed their assigned responsibilities. For example, a guard failed to recognize or did not properly x-ray a box containing handguns at the loading dock at a facility. FPS became aware of the situation because the handguns were delivered to FPS.

GAO identified substantial security vulnerabilities related to FPS's guard program. GAO investigators carrying the components for an improvised explosive device successfully passed undetected through security checkpoints monitored by FPS's guards at each of the 10 level IV federal facilities where GAO conducted covert testing. Of the 10 level IV facilities GAO penetrated, 8 were government owned, 2 were leased, and included offices of a U.S. Senator and U.S. Representative, as well as agencies such as the Departments of Homeland Security, State, and Justice. Once GAO investigators passed the control access points, they assembled the explosive device and walked freely around several of floors of these level IV facilities with the device in a briefcase. In response to GAO's briefing on these findings, FPS has recently taken some actions including increasing the frequency of intrusion testing and guard inspections. However, implementing these changes may be challenging, according to FPS.