



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
Department of Homeland Security

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For Information Contact:
Office of Public Affairs (202) 254-4100

DHS OIG Finds Notorious Felon Allowed to Use TSA Pre✓® Lanes

A recent report by the DHS Inspector General determined that a convicted felon who had been involved in numerous felonious criminal activities and was also a former member of a domestic terrorist group was permitted to travel with expedited screening through Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Pre✓®. The report, OIG-15-45 “Allegation of Granting Expedited Screening Through TSA Pre✓® Improperly,” stemmed from a whistleblower disclosure which alleged that a notorious felon was improperly cleared for TSA Pre✓® screening and was allowed to use the Pre✓® lanes.

After an extensive investigation of the allegation and assessment of the TSA Pre✓® initiative, we determined that TSA provided a TSA Pre✓® indicator and barcode on the traveler’s boarding pass. After checking the traveler’s boarding pass and identification, an alert Transportation Security Officer (TSO) at the airport recognized the felon and alerted his supervisor. However, the supervisor directed the TSO to take no action and allow the traveler to continue through the TSA Pre✓® lane.

We determined that this traveler had not applied for TSA Pre✓® through the TSA Pre✓® Application Program, but that TSA granted TSA Pre✓® screening to this passenger through the risk assessment rules in the Secure Flight program.

The OIG made two recommendations to TSA to prevent this from occurring again. Additionally, the OIG recently issued a classified report to TSA concerning the need to modify the Pre✓® vetting and screening processes, with specific recommendations.

“Mitigating and reducing passenger screening vulnerabilities is important to our nation’s aviation security,” said Inspector General John Roth. “Incidents like this highlight the need for TSA to modify their Pre✓® procedures.”