

TSA's Office of Intelligence and Analysis Has Improved Its Field Operations





DHS OIG HIGHLIGHTS

TSA's Office of Intelligence and Analysis Has Improved Its Field Operations

September 20, 2017

Why We Did This Inspection

The Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) Office of Intelligence and Analysis (OIA) identifies security risks to prevent attacks against the U.S. transportation system. OIA's Field Intelligence Division (FID) helps accomplish this mission in the field. We responded to allegations of security and operational challenges in OIA and FID. We also examined how effectively OIA uses its field entities to accomplish its mission.

What We Recommend

We are making two recommendations to improve the effectiveness of OIA operations.

For Further Information:

Contact our Office of Public Affairs at (202) 254-4100, or email us at DHS-OIG.OfficePublicAffairs@oig.dhs.gov

What We Found

Although a complainant alleged there were systemic security and operational challenges in OIA, we identified few documented security incidents over the past 5 years, all of which OIA addressed with corrective actions. Further, OIA has improved the effectiveness of FID and the Field Intelligence Officer program by hiring qualified, experienced intelligence professionals and implementing clear policies and procedures to guide officers, but it could enhance training of Field Intelligence Officers. In addition, OIA is addressing identified weaknesses in coordination among its watches and perceived delays in intelligence reporting.

OIA Response

TSA concurred with our recommendations and is taking steps to address them. Based on the component's response to the draft report, we consider both recommendations resolved and open.



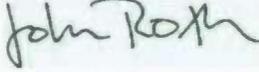
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Department of Homeland Security

Washington, DC 20528 / www.oig.dhs.gov

September 20, 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable David P. Pekoske
Administrator
Transportation Security Administration

FROM: John Roth 
Inspector General

SUBJECT: *TSA's Office of Intelligence and Analysis Has Improved
Its Field Operations*

Attached for your action is our final report, *TSA's Office of Intelligence and Analysis Has Improved Its Field Operations*. We have incorporated TSA's formal comments.

The report contains two recommendations aimed at improving the operations of TSA's Office of Intelligence and Analysis. TSA concurred with both recommendations. Based on information provided in your response to the draft report, we consider both recommendations resolved and open. As prescribed by the Department of Homeland Security Directive 077-01, *Follow-Up and Resolutions for the Office of Inspector General Report Recommendations*, within 90 days of the date of this memorandum, please provide our office with a written response that includes your (1) agreement or disagreement, (2) corrective action plan, and (3) target completion date for each recommendation. Also, please include responsible parties and any other supporting documentation necessary to inform us about the current status of the recommendation.

Once TSA has fully implemented the recommendations, please submit a formal closeout letter to us within 30 days so that we may close the recommendations. The memorandum should be accompanied by evidence of completion of agreed-upon corrective actions and of the disposition of any monetary amounts. Please send your response or closure request to the Office of Inspections and Evaluations at OIGInspectionsFollowup@oig.dhs.gov.

Consistent with our responsibility under the *Inspector General Act*, we will provide copies of our report to congressional committees with oversight and appropriation responsibility over the Department of Homeland Security. We will post the report on our website for public dissemination.

Please call me with any questions, or your staff may contact Laurel Loomis Rimon, Acting Assistant Inspector General, Office of Inspections and Evaluations, at (202) 254-4100.



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Background

The mission of the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) Office of Intelligence and Analysis (OIA) is to identify security risks to prevent attacks against the U.S. transportation system. OIA is one of 13 organizations in the Department of Homeland Security's Intelligence Enterprise, the Department's primary mechanism for integrating and managing its intelligence programs, projects, and activities.

OIA accomplishes its mission in the field through its Field Intelligence Division (FID). In fiscal year 2016, Congress authorized 87 Field Intelligence Officer (FIO) positions within FID; as of March 31, 2017, 77 FIOs were onboard. OIA assigns FIOs to airports across the United States, using a risk-based method that incorporates factors such as passenger volume, TSA workforce staffing levels, and locations of aircraft or freight rail operators' headquarters.

FIOs support OIA's intelligence efforts through threat awareness briefings and sharing information with TSA field personnel, including Federal Security Directors (FSD) at airports. FIOs coordinate with FSDs by sharing relevant intelligence and threat information with local transportation stakeholders such as local law enforcement and security staff for airports, airlines, rail, and pipelines. FIOs may create location-specific briefings for TSA staff and other stakeholders. In conjunction with DHS, FIOs also coordinate their efforts with other Federal intelligence representatives, particularly at local fusion centers.¹

TSA OIA staffs three 24/7 "watches" through which it continuously gathers intelligence, operational, and strategic threat information related to transportation and disseminates it to stakeholders, including TSA leadership. The FID's Transportation Security Operations Center (TSOC) Intelligence Section connects and combines real-time intelligence and operational information across all modes of transportation and coordinates with other Federal, state, and local entities to prevent and respond to transportation security-related incidents. Specifically, the TSOC Intelligence Section provides FIOs with current operational information during suspicious incidents. There are two 24/7 watches outside FID: the Indications and Warning Watch, which provides strategic transportation threat information to TSA leadership, and the National Transportation Vetting Center, which vets transportation workers and passengers to identify threats. Within the National Transportation Vetting

¹ To maximize detection, prevention, investigation, and response to all hazards, including criminal or terrorist threats, multiple Federal, state, and local entities collaborate and share resources, expertise, and information through 78 fusion centers located throughout the country. See 6 U.S.Code § 124h(j)(1).



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Center, the Encounters Analysis Branch gathers, researches, and disseminates information on known and suspected terrorists.

Results of Inspection

Although a complainant alleged there were systemic security challenges in OIA, we identified few documented security incidents over the past 5 years, all of which OIA addressed with corrective actions. Further, OIA has improved the effectiveness of FID and FIOs by hiring qualified, experienced intelligence professionals and implementing clear policies and procedures to guide FIOs, but OIA could enhance initial and recurring FIO training, as well as training in intelligence report writing. In addition, OIA is addressing identified weaknesses in coordination among its watches and perceived delays in intelligence reporting.

OIA Addressed Rare Security Incidents

In response to September 2015 allegations of “systemic and endemic security challenges” at OIA and questions about resolution of security incidents in the field, we reviewed documented security incidents in OIA associated with gathering and sharing intelligence information. The documented incidents were relatively rare. Specifically, from FY 2012 through FY 2016, the two TSA offices that handle infractions related to Top Secret/Secure Compartmentalized Information and collateral (Secret and Confidential) information documented 16 security incidents in OIA, an average of fewer than 4 security incidents per fiscal year. Fifteen of the 16 were Top Secret/Secure Compartmentalized Information incidents, which included scanning classified documents on unclassified scanners, emailing classified material on an unclassified network, and improperly transporting classified material. One of the 16 documented incidents involved an FIO in the field; in this FY 2012 collateral security incident, an FIO left classified electronic equipment unsecured when it should have been kept in a GSA-approved security container. OIA took appropriate corrective actions to address and resolve the 16 incidents, including “sanitizing” affected equipment,² changing policies to prevent incidents from reoccurring, requiring additional training for employees involved in the security incidents, and counseling employees. Given the rarity and nature of the documented incidents, as well as OIA’s corrective actions, there appears to be no indication of pervasive security challenges at OIA.

² Sanitizing affected equipment includes deleting classified documents from the unclassified networks and cleaning any trace of the documents from affected systems or networks.



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OIA Improved the Field Intelligence Officer Program

The September 2015 allegation also questioned the operations of the FIO program, the program's purpose, and the job qualifications for FIOs. Recently, OIA has worked to improve the FIO program. In contrast to previous hiring practices, OIA now only hires FIOs with experience in the intelligence field. OIA has also implemented policies and procedures to guide FIOs in accomplishing their mission.

According to the Branch Manager of the FIOs, OIA previously hired FIOs without intelligence backgrounds, such as former Federal Air Marshals, who are law enforcement officers. OIA said its standard practice since July 2016 has been to hire only individuals with extensive experience in intelligence-related work, such as providing incident management and direct intelligence support to operations and intelligence reporting. Current vacancy announcements also require specialized experience in intelligence matters, including experience applying analytical intelligence techniques, giving technical intelligence advice to senior leadership, and evaluating and validating intelligence data sources. In December 2016, FID standardized its new hiring practices for reviewing, interviewing, and selecting FIOs.³

OIA has also implemented policies and procedures for FIOs. In July 2016, OIA issued the first version of the *Field Intelligence Officer Standard Operating Procedures*, which includes:

- roles and responsibilities of FIOs in providing intelligence support, threat awareness briefings, and in sharing information with TSA operational field components;⁴
- procedures for briefing TSA staff about watch-listed travelers;
- guidance for communication within TSA, with external Government partners, and with other transportation security stakeholders;
- procedures for requesting information and responding to internal and external requests for information; and
- weekly reporting requirements to OIA headquarters.

FID also hosts an annual FIO conference that brings all FIOs together in Washington, DC. The conference includes expert speakers, discussions of the OIA strategic plan, and FIO networking opportunities. The annual conference is

³ TSA OIA SOP 100.3-3: *Interview, Selection, and Hiring Process*, December 1, 2016

⁴ TSA operational field components include FSDs, the TSA screening workforce, and Office of Law Enforcement/Federal Air Marshal Service Special Agents in Charge.



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an opportunity for FIOs, who normally work on their own at airports, to interact with each other.

Field Intelligence Officers Need More Training

Although OIA has hired experienced intelligence professionals and implemented clear policies and procedures for FIOs, OIA and FID could enhance their training. During interviews, FIOs told us they did not receive any specific training upon being hired and instead relied on on-the-job opportunities or past experience to guide them. In addition, it was unclear whether FIOs received recurring intelligence training. Also, some interviewees expressed interest in attending the DHS Reports Officer Course, which is designed to train people in writing Intelligence Information Reports. These reports provide raw, unevaluated information of intelligence value and are written by trained Reports Officers. According to OIA documents, only 11 of 77 (14 percent) FIOs had been to the Reports Officer Course. Some FIOs found a way around the lack of Reports Officer training by submitting their draft Intelligence Information Reports to a DHS Reports Officer or to FIOs assigned to their region who had Reports Officer training. This may be a good work-around, but sending more FIOs to the Reports Officer Course is more sustainable. Although some FIOs said their heavy workloads limited their ability to schedule training, OIA should prioritize this training.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the TSA Assistant Administrator for Intelligence and Analysis clarify intelligence training requirements for Field Intelligence Officers when they are initially hired and on a recurring basis, as well as ensure all Field Intelligence Officers receive Reports Officer training.

TSA Management Comments

We evaluated TSA's formal written response, including technical comments, and determined no changes to the report were necessary. A summary of the written response to the report and the recommendations, as well as our analysis of the response, follow each recommendation. TSA's response, in its entirety, is included as appendix A.

TSA concurred with Recommendation 1. TSA OIA plans to refine and implement clear training requirements for new FIOs, as well as recurrent training. OIA has fielded a New Hire Training Program that combines online self-paced training, on-the-job shadowing, and a thorough headquarters orientation for new FIOs. The office is also incorporating training into regional FIO meetings. OIA estimated this would be completed by May 31, 2018.



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OIA has also facilitated Reports Officer training for 12 FIOs, 2 per region, to achieve an initial operating capability for report writing in the field. The office has determined that two Reports Officers per region is adequate for its current reporting needs. It will continue to assess its operational requirements, as well as budgetary constraints and FIOs' other primary duties, to determine whether to provide Reports Officer training to more FIOs.

OIG Analysis of TSA Management Comments

TSA OIA's planned actions are responsive to Recommendation 1. We consider the recommendation resolved and open. We will close this recommendation when TSA OIA provides documentation showing implementation of its new hire and reoccurring training programs.

OIA Is Taking Action to Address Weaknesses in Information Sharing

In reviewing how FIOs share intelligence within OIA and with stakeholders, such as FSDs, we identified weaknesses in coordination among the three 24/7 watches, as well as in perceived delays in production of Field Intelligence Notes (FIN). OIA has begun addressing these weaknesses.

OIA Is Taking Steps to Improve Coordination Among Its Watches

FIOs often request information from the three OIA watches, as well as provide information to the watches. For example, FIOs may request information from the National Transportation Vetting Center's Encounter Analysis Branch regarding individuals traveling through their area. Conversely, FIOs may provide information to the TSOC Intelligence Section during emergency events or suspicious incidents. Several managers from the three watches expressed concern about coordination among the three OIA watches (TSOC Intelligence Section, Indications and Warning Watch, and the National Transportation Vetting Center), including:

- which watch should take the lead during security incidents;
- confusion about communication among the watches, which could lead to delays in sharing information with the field, especially the FIOs; and
- duplication of effort among the watches.

Specifically, one manager thought the watches were not differentiated enough from each other, and another described communication among them as "horrible."



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According to an OIA official, senior leaders recognized these problems. In November 2016, OIA created a working group to address and unify the essential functions of the three watches. The purpose of the working group is to streamline and unify the functions of the watches, ensure accurate and timely warnings of transportation threats, and establish systematic procedures for real-time transportation-related incidents. The working group includes the Executive Director of Operations, the managers of the three watches, and the Senior Intelligence Officer. As of March 2017, the group had met 14 times. Thus far, the group has created an incident report checklist, which assigns specific responsibilities to each watch during a national incident, and has drafted communications procedures designating a lead watch during an incident.

OIA Is Working to Shorten the Field Intelligence Note Review Process

In addition to sharing information received through the watches, FIOs are responsible for sharing information with the TSA workforce, including FSDs, by providing intelligence briefings, participating in working groups related to transportation and homeland security issues, and producing intelligence products. FSDs we interviewed were positive about the intelligence information they received from the FIOs. One FSD said he used such information to keep the TSA workforce updated on adversaries' tactics and techniques. Another said that during a security incident at the airport, the FIO communicated with him immediately.

FIOs also share information externally through intelligence products, such as FINs, which review single situations or threats to transportation security that may be particularly relevant to TSA field personnel or other transportation stakeholders. Survey feedback from FY 2016 for FINs showed consumers thought the products were timely. Only 4 of 137 (3 percent) of survey respondents were "somewhat" or "very" dissatisfied with the timeliness of FINs. Further, production of FINs in the past two fiscal years has increased steadily. In FY 2015, OIA produced 12 FINs; by FY 2016, production had doubled to 27 FINs.

Although surveys indicate that stakeholders were generally satisfied with timeliness of FINs and OIA is producing more, OIA officials and FIOs expressed concern about the length of time it takes to move intelligence products, such as FINs, through the review process. Before they can be publicly disseminated, FINs must be reviewed by multiple TSA and DHS offices and managers, including TSA's Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, Office of Chief Counsel, and the Sensitive Security Information Program Office, as well as senior OIA leadership.



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In FY 2016, it took an average of 40 days to produce FINs. One senior OIA official said this multi-stepped review process can be time consuming, citing one product that was under review for at least 5 months. Two FIOs expressed concerns about the slowness of the process, with one asserting the OIA review and production management was so slow that by the time of dissemination, products lost their relevance.

According to senior OIA officials, a working group of FIOs and headquarters personnel is trying to speed production of FINs by revising the review process, including removing some levels of review or having multiple offices review the product concurrently. Also, TSA is shifting to the TSA System for Analytic Review and Approval, an automated production management system to initiate, track, and edit OIA's intelligence products. According to officials, OIA staff should be able to access the system by summer 2017. In addition, through dissemination of a daily spreadsheet, OIA tracks how long intelligence products spend in each step of the production process and alerts individuals when their input is required. However, based on OIA-provided documents, OIA does not appear to have timeliness standards for its intelligence products.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that the TSA Assistant Administrator for Intelligence and Analysis establish timeliness standards for intelligence products, such as Field Intelligence Notes.

Management Comments

TSA OIA concurred with Recommendation 2. TSA will develop timeliness standards for intelligence production within OIA. Since OIA publishes intelligence products with the concurrence of other TSA offices and external agencies, the standards for timeliness of production will apply only to the process within OIA. TSA estimated this would be completed by May 31, 2018.

OIG Analysis of Management Comments

TSA's planned action is responsive to Recommendation 2. We consider the recommendation resolved and open. We will close this recommendation when TSA provides timeliness standards for OIA intelligence products.



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Objective, Scope and Methodology

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) was established by the *Homeland Security Act of 2002* (Public Law 107-296) by amendment to the *Inspector General Act of 1978*.

In September 2015, the OIG received a complaint alleging “systemic and endemic security challenges have existed within the TSA Office of Intelligence (TSA OIA) since its inception.” The complainant questioned the operations of the FIO program, specifically, the program’s purpose, job qualifications for FIOs, and how security incidents in the field were resolved. The objective of our review, other than addressing relevant sections of the complaint, was to assess whether TSA OIA effectively coordinates with its field entities and stakeholders to meet its mission.

Between November 2016 and January 2017, we interviewed OIA employees, including: the Executive Director, Directors from the Threat Analysis Division and FID; Watch Managers from Indications and Warning Watch, the National Transportation Vetting Center’s Encounter Analysis Branch, and TSOC’s Intelligence Integration Branch; and FIOs. Interviews were also conducted with (Assistant) Federal Security Directors and the Deputy Assistant Administrator of the Office of Security Operations. We collected information regarding the training and performance measures for FIOs, intelligence products written by FIOs, security incidents involving FIOs and other OIA employees, and policies and procedures for the FIO program.

We conducted this inspection between November 2016 and March 2017 under the authority of the *Inspector General Act of 1978*, as amended, and according to the Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation issued by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency.

The Office of Inspections and Evaluations’ major contributors to this report are Angela Garvin, Chief Inspector; Erika Lang, Lead Inspector; Anthony Crawford, Intelligence Officer; Renita L. Hunter-Caracciolo, Senior Inspector; Erika Algeo, Inspector; Kelly Herberger, Communications and Policy Analyst; and Michael Brooks, Independent Referencer.



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Appendix A
TSA Comments to the Draft Report

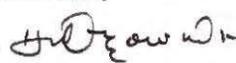
AUG - 7 2017

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
601 South 12th Street
Arlington, VA 20598



**Transportation
Security
Administration**

MEMORANDUM FOR: John Roth
Inspector General
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

FROM: Huban A. Gowadia, Ph.D. 
Acting Administrator
Transportation Security Administration

SUBJECT: Management's Response to OIG Draft Report: *TSA's Office of Intelligence and Analysis Has Improved Its Field Operations*,
Project No. 17-008-ISP-TSA

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appreciates the work of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

The Department is pleased to note the OIG's positive recognition of the various actions the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Office of Intelligence and Analysis (OIA) has taken to address the few identified security incidents over the past 5 years and the improvements in hiring practices and training of Field Intelligence Officers. We acknowledge work remains in bettering our intelligence production process, namely its timeliness.

TSA OIA appreciates the OIG's acknowledgement of the importance of our field intelligence operations and recognition of the significant investments we have made to ensure its success. We welcome continued honest and open discussions with the OIG staff on their independent views concerning improving TSA OIA programs.

TSA remains committed to enhancing field operations, and we concur that your principal recommendations merit investing resources to enhance TSA OIA capabilities with our field programs. The draft report contained two recommendations with which the Department concurs.

Recommendation 1: We recommend that the TSA Assistant Administrator for Intelligence and Analysis clarify intelligence training requirements for Field Intelligence Officers when they are initially hired and on a recurring basis, as well as ensure all Field Intelligence Officers receive Reports Officer training.

Response: Concur. TSA OIA will further refine and implement clear training requirements for new Field Intelligence Officers (FIOs), as well as recurrent training. TSA OIA will also develop and implement a plan for FIOs to participate in Reports Officer classes. This plan will take into consideration other training requirements, resources, and availability of Reports Officer classes.



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TSA OIA has offered FIOs senior analyst Intelligence Community (IC)-sponsored training such as the IC Advanced Analyst Course. TSA OIA also recently fielded a New Hire Training Program that incorporates online self-paced training, on-the-job shadowing, as well as a more thorough headquarters orientation to provide essential skills and unique expectations of FIOs as they integrate into their new positions. TSA OIA also provides training during scheduled regional FIO meetings to receive training to maintain intelligence skill levels. Courses delivered through these regional meetings include the Writing Excellence Program, derived from IC standards, as well as hands-on training in the use and practical application of specific U.S. Government watch listing-related database systems. TSA OIA has also coordinated for Reports Officer training for 12 FIOs, two per region.

The estimated closure date (ECD) is May 31, 2018.

Recommendation 2: We recommend that the TSA Assistant Administrator for Intelligence and Analysis establish timeliness standards for intelligence products, such as Field Intelligence Notes.

Response: Concur. TSA will develop timeliness standards for intelligence production within OIA. OIA publishes intelligence products with the concurrence of other TSA offices, including the Office of Civil Rights and Liberties, Ombudsman, and Traveler Engagement, Office of Chief Counsel, and Sensitive Security Information Program. In many cases, our production also requires coordination with external agencies. The standards for timeliness of production will apply to the portions of the process within OIA, while also taking into consideration the review required by offices external to OIA and agencies external to TSA.

The ECD is May 31, 2018.



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Appendix B
Report Distribution

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