



Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General

Evaluation of Newly Deployed and Enhanced Technology and Practices at the Passenger Screening Checkpoint

(Unclassified Summary)





Homeland
Security

March 31, 2010

Preface

The Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General was established by the *Homeland Security Act of 2002* (Public Law 107-296) by amendment to the *Inspector General Act of 1978*. This is one of a series of audit, inspection, and special reports prepared as part of our oversight responsibilities to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness within the department.

This report addresses the strengths and weaknesses of the Transportation Security Administration's newly deployed and enhanced screening technologies and associated procedures to assist Transportation Security Officers in preventing threat items from entering airport sterile areas and potentially onboard aircraft. It is based on interviews with Transportation Security Officers and Transportation Security Administration officials, direct observations, field testing, and a review of applicable documents.

We judgmentally selected airports to be tested based on their utilization of all technologies being evaluated, passenger throughput, and geographic locations. At the time we selected the eight airports we reviewed, there were 16 locations that utilized all three technologies.

The recommendations herein have been developed to the best knowledge available to our office, and have been discussed in draft with those responsible for implementation. This information is being provided in advance of the agency's procurement of additional equipment for the passenger screening checkpoints. We trust this report will result in more effective, efficient, and economical operations. We express our appreciation to all of those who contributed to the preparation of this report.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard L. Skinner".

Richard L. Skinner
Inspector General

OIG

*Department of Homeland Security
Office of Inspector General*

Background

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is responsible for overseeing aviation security and ensuring the safety of the air traveling public, including the screening of all passengers and property transported on passenger aircraft. As complex threats to aviation security evolve, TSA continues its mitigation efforts through the deployment of advanced technologies at the passenger screening checkpoint. A recent incident demonstrates the importance of continued development and enhancement of aviation security technologies. On December 25, 2009, a passenger on an international flight bound for the United States attempted to bring down the aircraft, with 278 passengers on board, by igniting an explosive device that was concealed in his clothing. Fortunately, as a result of quick action on the part of passengers and crew members, the fire was extinguished and tragedy was avoided.

The use of new and innovative passenger screening technology is intended to prevent harmful and prohibited items from entering airport sterile areas and potentially onboard aircraft. To date, TSA has deployed a number of enhanced technologies and developed specific protocols at passenger screening checkpoints.

We evaluated Advanced Imaging Technology, Advanced Technology X-ray equipment, and Liquid Container Screening, all used to screen passengers or their carry-on items. We also tested Transportation Security Officer performance in checking passengers' travel documents.

Results of Audit

The number of tests conducted, the names of the airports tested, and the quantitative and qualitative results of our testing are classified. We have shared that information with the department, the Transportation

Security Administration (TSA), and appropriate congressional committees.

We identified vulnerabilities in the screening process at the passenger screening checkpoint at the eight domestic airports where we conducted testing. As a result of our testing, we made eight recommendations. TSA concurred with seven recommendations and partially concurred with one. When fully implemented, these recommendations should strengthening the overall effectiveness of the screening process at the passenger screening checkpoint.

We gave a copy of our draft report to TSA for review and comment. The unclassified portion of TSA's response to our draft report is summarized below.

TSA's Response

TSA appreciates the work done by the Office of Inspector General and will analyze the audit results as part of its ongoing efforts to assess and improve passenger checkpoint screening. The agency acknowledges that improvements can be made in the operation of new passenger screening technologies to prevent individuals with threat objects from entering airport sterile areas undetected. To this end, TSA will continue to take the necessary steps to increase the effectiveness of each technology.

Appendix A
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Appendix B

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