

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-24-107824](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Transportation and Maritime Security, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Twenty-three years after 9/11, the threat of terrorist attacks to civil aviation and the need for effective security measures remains of significant concern. FAMS deploys air marshals on selected flights to deter and address such threats. In June 2023, FAMS issued a roadmap that describes the mission, vision, and priorities of the agency.

This statement discusses GAO's portfolio of work on FAMS and its progress addressing prior GAO recommendations.

This statement is based on prior GAO reports published from May 2016 through June 2021, along with updates on FAMS's efforts to address previous GAO recommendations. For these reports, GAO reviewed TSA and FAMS documentation, analyzed data, and interviewed agency officials. For recommendation updates, GAO reviewed FAMS and TSA documentation and met with officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO made 20 recommendations related to FAMS in the reports covered by this statement. DHS agreed with all of them. As of August 2024, 17 have been implemented; one has been partially implemented; two have been closed—no longer valid. GAO will continue to monitor the agency's progress

View [GAO-24-107824](#). For more information, contact Tina Won Sherman at (202) 512-8461 or ShermanT@gao.gov.

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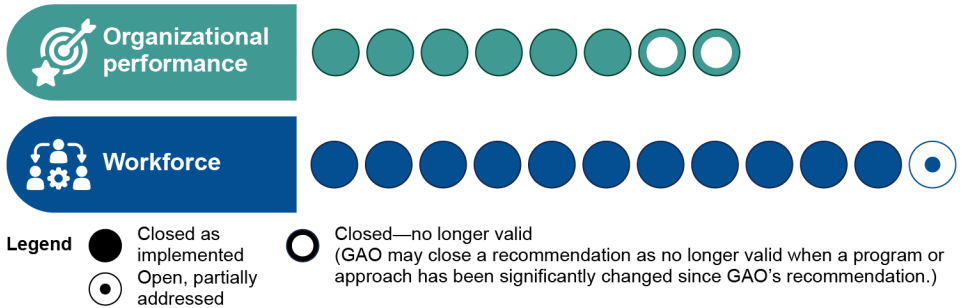
FEDERAL AIR MARSHAL SERVICE

Recommendations to Address Organizational Performance and Workforce Challenges Largely Implemented

What GAO Found

The Federal Air Marshal Service (FAMS) is a component within the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Transportation Security Administration (TSA). In prior work, GAO identified various challenges affecting FAMS. These generally fall into two areas: (1) organizational performance and (2) workforce management. As of August 2024, FAMS and TSA have largely implemented GAO's 20 recommendations.

Summary Status of GAO Recommendations to the Federal Air Marshal Service from Calendar Years 2016-2021, by Type of Challenge and Status, as of August 2024



Source: GAO analysis; Icons-Studio/stock.adobe.com (icons). | GAO-24-107824

One example of a closed recommendation to address organizational performance relates to the effectiveness of TSA's aviation security countermeasures. In 2017, GAO reported on the costs and effectiveness of TSA's passenger aviation security countermeasures, including FAMS. GAO found that TSA did not have methods to assess its effectiveness in deterring attacks on the U.S. aviation system. As a result, GAO recommended that TSA explore and pursue methods to do so. TSA addressed this by commissioning several studies and using them to inform leadership decisions about new or revised countermeasures. As a result, TSA should now be better positioned to understand and improve its efforts to deter attacks on the U.S. aviation system.

The open, partially addressed, recommendation to address workforce management challenges focuses on FAMS's tracking of the time its air marshals spent on and off their shifts. In 2020, GAO found that FAMS did not monitor air marshals' work hours against its guidelines for shift lengths and rest periods. GAO recommended that FAMS monitor the extent to which air marshals' actual shifts and rest hours are consistent with scheduling guidelines. As of August 2024, FAMS developed reports with this information, but it had not used them to help manage its workforce.