



Highlights of [GAO-10-341](#), a report to congressional requesters

## 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 1,225 full-time employees, and about 15,000 contract security guards. FPS obligated \$659 million for guard services in fiscal year 2009.

This report assesses the challenges FPS faces in managing its guard contractors, overseeing guards deployed at federal facilities, and the actions, if any, FPS has taken to address these challenges. To address these objectives, GAO conducted site visits at 6 of FPS's 11 regions; interviewed FPS officials, guards, and contractors; and analyzed FPS's contract files. 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 recommends, among other things, that the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) direct the Director of FPS to (1) identify other approaches that would be cost-beneficial for protecting federal buildings, and (2) increase contract guard program oversight and step up enforcement when noncompliance occurs. DHS concurred with seven of GAO's eight recommendations. DHS did not fully concur with GAO's recommendation to issue a standardized record-keeping format to ensure that contract files have required documentation.

View [GAO-10-341](#) or [key components](#). For more information, contact Mark Goldstein at (202) 512-2834 or [goldsteinm@gao.gov](mailto:goldsteinm@gao.gov).

## HOMELAND SECURITY

### Federal Protective Service's Contract Guard Program Requires More Oversight and Reassessment of Use of Contract Guards

#### What GAO Found

FPS faces a number of challenges in managing its guard contractors that hamper its ability to protect federal facilities. FPS requires contractors to provide guards who have met training and certification requirements, but 7 of 7 guard contractors we reviewed were not in compliance with this requirement. Specifically, we reported in July 2009 that 62 percent, or 411, of the 663 guards employed by 7 of FPS's 38 contractors and deployed to federal facilities had at least one expired certification, including those showing that the guard has not committed domestic violence, which make the guards ineligible to carry firearms. As of February 2010, according to FPS data, 435 of the 663 guards are now fully certified, 167 are not fully certified, and 61 guards are no longer working on the contract. FPS's guard contract also states that a contractor who does not comply with the contract is subject to enforcement action. FPS did not take any enforcement actions against these 7 contractors for noncompliance. In fact, FPS exercised the option to extend their contracts. FPS also did not comply with its requirement that a performance evaluation of each contractor be completed annually and that these evaluations and other performance-related data be included in the contract file.

FPS also faces challenges in ensuring that many of the 15,000 guards have the required training and certification to be deployed at a federal facility. In July 2009, we reported that since 2004, FPS had not provided X-ray and magnetometer training to about 1,500 guards in one region. As of January 2010, these guards had not received this training and continued to work at federal facilities in this region. X-ray and magnetometer training is important because guards control access points at federal facilities. In addition, once guards are deployed to a federal facility, they are not always complying with assigned responsibilities (post orders). For example, we identified security vulnerabilities when GAO investigators successfully passed undetected through security checkpoints monitored by FPS guards with components for an improvised explosive device concealed on their persons at 10 level IV facilities in four cities in major metropolitan areas. Since July 2009, FPS has conducted 53 similar tests, and in over half of these tests some guards did not identify prohibited items, such as guns and knives.

In response to GAO's July 2009 testimony, FPS has taken a number of actions that once fully implemented could help address challenges it faces in managing its contract guard program. For example, FPS has increased the number of guard inspections at federal facilities in some metropolitan areas. FPS also revised its X-ray and magnetometer training; however, guards will not all be fully trained until the end of 2010, although they are deployed at federal facilities. FPS recognized that its guard program has long-standing challenges and in 2009 contemplated a number of changes to the program, including assuming responsibility for all guard training and/or federalizing some guard positions at some federal facilities. However, FPS has not taken any actions in pursuing these ideas.