



Highlights of [GAO-10-506T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service and the District of Columbia, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Recent events including last month's attack on Internal Revenue Service offices in Texas, and the January 2010 shooting in the lobby of the Nevada, federal courthouse demonstrate the continued vulnerability of federal facilities and the safety of the federal employees who occupy them. These events also highlight the continued challenges involved in protecting federal real property and reiterate the importance of protecting the over 1 million government employees, as well as members of the public, who work in and visit the nearly 9,000 federal facilities.

This testimony is based on past GAO reports and testimonies and discusses challenges Federal Protective Service (FPS) faces in protecting federal facilities and tenant agencies' perspective of FPS's services. To perform this work, GAO visited a number of federal facilities, surveyed tenant agencies, analyzed documents, and interviewed officials from several federal agencies.

What GAO Recommends

GAO makes no new recommendations in this testimony. DHS concurred with GAO's past recommendations for FPS, but FPS has not completed many related corrective actions.

View [GAO-10-506T](#) or [key components](#). For more information, contact Mark L. Goldstein at (202) 512-2834 or goldsteinm@gao.gov.

HOMELAND SECURITY

Ongoing Challenges Impact the Federal Protective Service's Ability to Protect Federal Facilities

What GAO Found

Over the past 5 years GAO has reported that FPS faces a number of operational challenges protecting federal facilities, including:

- *FPS's ability to manage risk across federal facilities and implement security countermeasures is limited.* FPS assesses risk and recommends countermeasures to the General Services Administration (GSA) and its tenant agencies, however decisions to implement these countermeasures are the responsibility of GSA and tenant agencies who have at times been unwilling to fund the countermeasures. Additionally, FPS takes a building-by-building approach to risk management, rather than taking a more comprehensive, strategic approach and assessing risks among all buildings in GSA's inventory and recommending countermeasure priorities to GSA and tenant agencies.
- *FPS has experienced difficulty ensuring that it has sufficient staff and its inspector-based workforce approach raises questions about protection of federal facilities.* While FPS is currently operating at its congressionally mandated staffing level of no fewer than 1,200 full-time employees, FPS has experienced difficulty determining its optimal staffing level to protect federal facilities. Additionally, until recently FPS's staff was steadily declining and as a result critical law enforcement services have been reduced or eliminated.
- *FPS does not fully ensure that its contract security guards have the training and certifications required to be deployed to a federal facility.* GAO found that FPS guards had not received adequate training to conduct their responsibilities. Specifically, some guards were not provided building-specific training, such as what actions to take during a building evacuation or a building emergency. This lack of training may have contributed to several incidents where guards neglected their assigned responsibilities.

GSA has not been satisfied with FPS's performance, and some tenant agencies are unclear on FPS's role in protecting federal facilities. According to GSA, FPS has not been responsive and timely in providing security assessments for new leases. About one-third of FPS's customers could not comment on FPS's level of communication on various topics including security assessments, a response that suggests that the division of roles and responsibilities between FPS and its customers is unclear.

FPS is taking some steps to better protect federal facilities. For example, FPS is developing a new risk assessment program and has recently focused on improving oversight of its contract guard program.