

Highlights of [GAO-13-469T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Transportation Security, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

TSA acquisition programs represent billions of dollars in life cycle costs and support a range of aviation security programs, including technologies used to screen passengers and checked baggage. Within DHS, TSA is responsible for establishing requirements for testing and deploying transportation system technologies. Since 2010, GAO has reported that DHS and TSA faced challenges in managing acquisition efforts, including deploying technologies that did not meet requirements and were not appropriately tested and evaluated.

As requested, this testimony discusses (1) the extent to which TSA addressed challenges relating to developing and meeting program requirements, testing new screening technologies, and delivering capabilities within cost and schedule estimates for selected programs, and (2) DHS efforts to strengthen oversight of component acquisition processes. This testimony is based on GAO products issued from January 2010 through January 2013, including selected updates conducted in March 2013 on TSA's efforts to implement GAO's prior recommendations and preliminary observations from ongoing work. To conduct the updates and ongoing work, GAO analyzed documents, such as the AIT road map, and interviewed TSA officials.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO has made recommendations to DHS and TSA in prior reports to help strengthen its acquisition processes and oversight. DHS and TSA generally concurred and are taking actions to address them.

View [GAO-13-469T](#). For more information, contact Steve Lord at (202) 512-4379 or [lords@gao.gov](mailto:lords@gao.gov).

May 8, 2013

## HOMELAND SECURITY

### DHS and TSA Continue to Face Challenges Developing and Acquiring Screening Technologies

## What GAO Found

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has taken and is taking steps to address challenges related to developing, testing, and delivering screening technologies for selected aviation security programs, but challenges remain. For example, in January 2012, GAO reported that TSA faced challenges developing and meeting key performance requirements for the acquisition of advanced imaging technology (AIT)—i.e., full-body scanners. Specifically, GAO found that TSA did not fully follow Department of Homeland Security (DHS) acquisition policies when acquiring AIT, which resulted in DHS approving nationwide AIT deployment without full knowledge of TSA's revised specifications. DHS required TSA to notify DHS's Acquisition Review Board (ARB) if AIT could not meet any of TSA's five key performance parameters or if TSA changed a key performance parameter during testing. However, GAO found that the ARB approved TSA for full-scale production without reviewing the changed parameter. DHS officials said that the ARB should have formally reviewed this change to ensure that TSA did not change it arbitrarily. GAO recommended that TSA develop a road map that outlines vendors' progress in meeting all key performance parameters. DHS agreed, and developed a road map to address the recommendation, but faces challenges implementing it—e.g., due to vendor delays. Additionally, in January 2013, GAO reported that TSA faced challenges related to testing and deploying passenger screening canine teams. Specifically, GAO concluded that TSA began deploying these canine teams to airport terminals in April 2011 prior to determining the canine teams' operational effectiveness. In June 2012, DHS and TSA began conducting operational assessments to help demonstrate canine teams' effectiveness. Also, TSA began deploying teams before it had completed an assessment to determine where within the airport the canine teams would be most effectively utilized. GAO recommended that on the basis of DHS assessment results, TSA expand and complete testing to assess the effectiveness of canine teams in areas of the airport deemed appropriate. DHS agreed and officials said that as of April 2013, TSA had concluded testing in collaboration with DHS of canine teams in airport sterile areas—in general, areas of an airport for which access is controlled through screening of persons and property—and is testing teams on its own in airport sterile and public areas.

DHS has some efforts under way to strengthen its oversight of component investment and acquisition processes, but additional actions are needed. In September 2012, GAO reported that while DHS had initiated efforts to address the department's acquisition management challenges, most of DHS's major acquisition programs continue to cost more than expected, take longer to deploy than planned, or deliver less capability than promised. GAO identified 42 DHS programs that experienced cost growth, schedule slips, or both, with 16 of the programs' costs increasing from a total of \$19.7 billion in 2008 to \$52.2 billion in 2011—an aggregate increase of 166 percent. GAO concluded that DHS recognized the need to implement its acquisition policy more consistently, but that significant work remained. GAO recommended that DHS modify acquisition policy to better reflect key program and portfolio management practices and ensure acquisition programs fully comply with DHS acquisition policy. DHS agreed, and in September 2012 officials stated that it was in the process of revising its policy to more fully reflect key program management practices.