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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-08-187](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) Container Security Initiative (CSI) aims to identify and examine high-risk U.S.-bound cargo at foreign seaports. GAO reported in 2003 and 2005 that CSI helped to enhance homeland security, and recommended actions to strengthen the program. This report updates information and assesses how CBP has (1) contributed to strategic planning for supply chain security, (2) strengthened CSI operations, and (3) evaluated CSI operations. To address these issues, GAO interviewed CBP officials and reviewed CSI evaluations and performance measures. GAO also visited selected U.S. and CSI seaports, and met with U.S. and foreign government officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that CBP enhance data collected on CSI team performance, host government examinations, and related performance measures. CBP concurred with the recommendation to enhance data on team performance. It partially concurred with the need to enhance data on host examinations, stating that it already conducts actions to improve such data. However, these actions do not systematically collect data on people, processes, or technology used by host governments to examine U.S.-bound containers. CBP partially concurred with the need to enhance performance measures, but stated it already captures core program functions. We still see room for improvement.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-187](#). For more information, contact Stephen L. Caldwell at (202) 512-9610 or caldwells@gao.gov.

SUPPLY CHAIN SECURITY

Examinations of High-Risk Cargo at Foreign Seaports Have Increased, but Improved Data Collection and Performance Measures Are Needed

What GAO Found

By collaborating on the development of the Department of Homeland Security's *Strategy to Enhance International Supply Chain Security*, and by revising the CSI strategic plan as GAO recommended, CBP has contributed to the overall U.S. strategic planning efforts related to enhancing the security for the overseas supply chain. Also, CBP reached its targets of operating CSI in 58 foreign seaports, and thereby having 86 percent of all U.S.-bound cargo containers pass through CSI seaports in fiscal year 2007—representing a steady increase in these measures of CSI performance.

To strengthen CSI operations, CBP has sought to address human capital challenges and previous GAO recommendations by increasing CSI staffing levels closer to those called for in its staffing model and revising its human capital plan. However, challenges remain because CBP continues to rely, in part, on a temporary workforce; has not determined how to optimize its staffing resources; and reports difficulties in identifying sufficient numbers of qualified staff. In addition, CBP has enhanced relationships with host governments participating in CSI. However, hurdles to cooperation remain at some seaports, such as restrictions on CSI teams witnessing examinations.

CBP improved its evaluation of CSI team performance at seaports, but limitations remain in the evaluation process that affect the accuracy and completeness of data collected. CBP has not set minimum technical criteria for equipment or systematically collected information on the equipment, people, and processes involved in CSI host government examinations of high-risk, U.S.-bound container cargo. Also, CBP has not developed general guidelines to use in assessing the reliability of these examinations. Thus, CBP potentially lacks information to ensure that host government examinations can detect and identify weapons of mass destruction, which is important because containers are typically not reexamined in the United States if already examined at a CSI seaport. CBP refined overall CSI performance measures, but has not fully developed performance measures and annual targets for core CSI functions, such as the examination of high-risk containers before they are placed on vessels bound for the United States. These weaknesses in CBP's data collection and performance measures potentially limit the information available on overall CSI effectiveness.

Containers Stacked on a Vessel at a CSI Port



Source: GAO.