

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-19-96](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Enacted in December 2014, TSARA introduced legislative reforms to promote greater transparency and accountability in TSA's SRT acquisitions.

TSARA contains a provision that GAO submit two reports to Congress on TSA's progress in implementing TSARA. In February 2016, GAO issued the first report that found TSA had taken actions to address TSARA.

This second report examines TSA's (1) progress in addressing TSARA requirements since 2016, (2) reporting to Congress on SRT acquisitions, and (3) internal communication of its implementation decisions. GAO examined TSARA and TSA documents and guidance; analyzed TSA contract data and reports from TSARA's enactment in December 2014 through July 2018 and September 2018, respectively; and interviewed DHS and TSA officials on actions taken to implement TSARA. GAO also conducted interviews with TSA officials on parameters for reporting on SRT acquisitions.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that TSA revise its policies for the report and certification provision of TSARA to include reporting on task and delivery orders and services associated with SRT, and clarify in policy what constitutes an SRT under TSARA. DHS generally concurred with the recommendations and described steps it plans to take to implement them.

View [GAO-19-96](#). For more information, contact William Russell at (202) 512-8777 or russellw@gao.gov.

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TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ACQUISITION REFORM ACT

TSA Generally Addressed Requirements, but Could Improve Reporting on Security-Related Technology

What GAO Found

Since 2016, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) generally addressed Transportation Security Acquisition Reform Act (TSARA) requirements through its policies and procedures for acquisition justifications, baseline requirements, and management of inventory. TSA also, among other actions, submitted a technology investment plan and annual small-business contracting goals reports to Congress as required.

Since December 2014, TSA reported limited security-related technology (SRT) acquisitions to Congress under TSARA, submitting its first report in August 2018. TSARA contains a report and certification provision pursuant to which TSA is to submit information to Congress 30 days prior to the award of a contract for an SRT acquisition exceeding \$30 million. Through July 2018, TSA obligated about \$1.4 billion on SRT and associated services. TSA officials explained that none of these obligations—including 7 SRT orders, each in excess of \$30 million—invoked the report and certification provision because the obligations did not align with TSA's implementation policy, which provides that the \$30 million threshold relates to the contract ceiling of the initial SRT contract and not to individual task and delivery orders. Revising TSA's policy to include contracts for services that enhance the capabilities of SRT, including any orders for SRT and associated services in excess of \$30 million, would better ensure that Congress has the information it needs to effectively oversee TSA's SRT acquisitions.

TSA has not effectively communicated internally its implementation decisions for what constitutes an SRT under TSARA. TSA officials described to GAO that SRT must be equipment that is public facing, but TSA's policy does not clearly state the parameters of what is considered an SRT. Without clear guidance, TSA staff may be unaware of these parameters and how they apply to future acquisitions under TSARA. For example, TSA acquisition program staff were initially unable to confirm for GAO whether the technologies TSA had acquired were SRTs and thus subject to TSARA. Updating TSA policy to include detailed parameters for what constitutes an SRT would better ensure consistency in applying the act.

Examples of Security-Related Technology

Passenger screening technologies



Walk-through metal detector



Advanced Imaging Technology

Baggage screening technology



Explosives Detection System

Source: GAO analysis of Transportation Security Administration information and photos; GAO (photo). | GAO-19-96