SURFACE TRANSPORTATION

TSA Should Improve Coordination Procedures for Its Security Training Program

What GAO Found

Transportation Security Administration (TSA) reported allocating most of its surface transportation program account, which was $123 million in fiscal year 2017 and $129 million in fiscal year 2018--to three offices (see figure). The surface program account represented about 1.6 percent of the agency’s appropriation in both fiscal years, according to Department of Homeland Security data.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that TSA clarify roles and responsibilities for all offices involved in the coordination of surface transportation exercises, including when these offices are to coordinate. DHS concurred with the recommendation.

Why GAO Did This Study

The global terrorist threat to surface transportation—freight and passenger rail, mass transit, highway, maritime and pipeline systems—has increased in recent years, as demonstrated by a 2016 thwarted attack on mass transit in New Jersey and the 2017 London vehicle attacks. TSA is the primary federal agency responsible for securing surface transportation in the United States.

The FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018 includes a provision that GAO review resources provided to TSA surface transportation programs and the coordination between relevant entities related to surface transportation security. This report addresses TSA’s: (1) allocation of resources to surface transportation programs for fiscal years 2017 and 2018; and (2) coordination within TSA to implement the Intermodal Security Training and Exercise Program.

GAO analyzed TSA data on surface program resources for fiscal years 2017 and 2018, reviewed TSA program guidance, and interviewed TSA officials responsible for implementing the Intermodal Security Training and Exercise Program. This program is intended to assist transportation operators and others in enhancing security through exercises and training.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that TSA clarify roles and responsibilities for all offices involved in the coordination of surface transportation exercises, including when these offices are to coordinate. DHS concurred with the recommendation.

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security data | GAO-20-185

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