



Highlights of [GAO-06-591T](#), a statement for the record to the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, United States Senate

## Why GAO Did This Study

U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) Automated Targeting System (ATS)—a computerized model that CBP officers use as a decision support tool to help them target oceangoing cargo containers for inspection—is part of CBP's layered approach to securing oceangoing cargo. GAO reported in February 2004 on challenges CBP faced in targeting oceangoing cargo containers for inspection and testified before this subcommittee in March 2004 about the findings in that report. The report and testimony outlined recommendations aimed at (1) better incorporating recognized modeling practices into CBP's targeting strategy, (2) periodically adjusting the targeting strategy to respond to findings that occur during the course of its operation, and (3) improving implementation of the targeting strategy. This statement for the record discusses preliminary observations from GAO's ongoing work related to ATS and GAO's 2004 recommendations addressing the following questions:

- What controls does CBP have in place to provide reasonable assurance that ATS is effective at targeting oceangoing cargo containers with the highest risk of smuggled weapons of mass destruction?
- How does CBP systematically analyze security inspection results and incorporate them into ATS?
- What steps has CBP taken to better implement the rest of its targeting strategy at the seaports?

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-591T](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-591T).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Richard Stana at (202) 512-8777 or stanar@gao.gov.

## CARGO CONTAINER INSPECTIONS

### Preliminary Observations on the Status of Efforts to Improve the Automated Targeting System

#### What GAO Found

CBP has not yet put key controls in place to provide reasonable assurance that ATS is effective at targeting oceangoing cargo containers with the highest risk of containing smuggled weapons of mass destruction. To provide assurance that ATS targets the highest-risk cargo containers as intended, CBP is (1) working to develop and implement performance measures related to the targeting of cargo containers, (2) planning to compare the results of its random inspections with its ATS inspection results, (3) working to develop and implement a testing and simulation environment, and (4) addressing recommendations contained in a 2005 peer review of ATS. CBP expects to begin using performance measures in June 2006 and enter the final phase of software development for its testing and simulation environment at the same time. However, to date, none of these four initiatives has been fully implemented. Thus, CBP does not yet have key internal controls in place to be reasonably confident that ATS is providing the best information to allocate resources for targeting and inspecting containers that are the highest risk and not overlook inspecting containers that pose a threat to the nation.

CBP does not yet have a comprehensive, integrated system in place to analyze security inspection results and incorporate them into ATS. CBP currently adjusts ATS based on intelligence information it receives and has initiated a process to track suggestions submitted by CBP targeting officers at the seaports for modifying ATS. However, CBP has not yet implemented plans to refine ATS based on findings from routine security inspections. Without a more comprehensive feedback system, CBP is limited in refining ATS, a fact that could hinder the overall effectiveness of the targeting strategy.

CBP has taken steps to improve implementation of the targeting strategy at the seaports. It has implemented a testing and certification process for its officers who complete the Sea Cargo Targeting Course that should provide better assurance of effective targeting practices. CBP has also made a good faith effort to address longshoremen's safety concerns regarding radiation emitted by nonintrusive inspection equipment by taking actions such as working with longshoremen's unions and other maritime organization to develop public radiation tests on the nonintrusive inspection equipment. Nevertheless, CBP has not been able to persuade one longshoremen's union to permit changes in the procedure for staging containers to increase inspection efficiency at some West Coast seaports where the union's members work.