

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-13-694](#), a report to the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

FPS relies on a privately contracted guard force (about 13,500 guards) to provide security to federal facilities under the custody and control of the General Services Administration. In 2010 and 2012, GAO reported that FPS faced challenges overseeing its contract guard program, specifically in ensuring guards' qualifications.

GAO was asked to update the status of FPS's contract guard oversight. This report examines (1) how FPS's requirements for contract guards compare to those of selected federal agencies and challenges, if any, that FPS faces in ensuring its requirements are met; (2) the extent to which guard companies have documented compliance with FPS's guard requirements; and (3) the management controls FPS uses to ensure compliance with its guard requirements. GAO reviewed 31 FPS guard contracts, and analyzed guard files from 11 contracts, selected based on geographic diversity; interviewed officials from guard companies, FPS headquarters, and 4 of 11 FPS regions; and reviewed the contract guard requirements and processes at six federal agencies, selected for their comparability to FPS.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of DHS direct FPS to take immediate steps to determine which guards have not had screener or active-shooter scenario training and provide it to them; require that guard instructors be certified to teach basic and refresher training; and develop and implement guidance for selecting guard files and verifying the results. DHS concurred with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-13-694](#). For more information, contact Mark L. Goldstein at (202) 512-2834 or GoldsteinM@gao.gov.

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FEDERAL PROTECTIVE SERVICE

Challenges with Oversight of Contract Guard Program Still Exist, and Additional Management Controls Are Needed

What GAO Found

Several of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Protective Service's (FPS) guard requirements are generally comparable to those of the six selected agencies GAO reviewed, but FPS faces challenges in some aspects of guards' training. FPS and the six selected agencies GAO reviewed require basic, firearms, and screener (x-ray and magnetometer equipment) training for their armed guards. However, GAO found that providing screener training remains a challenge for FPS. For example, officials from one of FPS's contract guard companies stated that 133 (about 38 percent) of its approximately 350 guards have never received this training. Similarly, according to officials at five guard companies, some of their contract guards have not received training on how to respond during incidents involving an active shooter. Additionally, while contract guard industry guidance states that all training should be done with a certified instructor, GAO found that FPS does not require guard instructors to be certified to provide basic and refresher training, which represents the majority of guards' training. According to six guard companies, the lack of a requirement has led to having to retrain some guards, potentially increasing costs to FPS.

Twenty-three percent of contract guard files GAO reviewed did not have required training and certification documentation. GAO reviewed 276 randomly selected (non-generalizable) guard files maintained by 11 of the 31 guard companies GAO interviewed and found that 212 files (77 percent) contained the required training and certification documentation, but 64 files (23 percent) were missing one or more required documents. For example, the 64 files were missing items such as documentation of initial weapons and screener training and firearms qualifications. Although FPS has taken steps to address its challenges in this area, GAO's previous recommendations concerning monitoring guard companies' performance are a guide to furthering FPS's efforts. According to FPS officials, it plans to address GAO's recommendations in the near future.

FPS continues to lack effective management controls to ensure its guards have met its training and certification requirements. For instance, although FPS agreed with GAO's 2010 and 2012 recommendations that it develop a comprehensive and reliable system for managing information on guards' training, certifications, and qualifications, it still does not have such a system. According to FPS officials, it plans to address this recommendation in the near future. FPS also lacks sufficient management controls to ensure consistency in its monthly guard file review process (its primary management control for ensuring that guards are trained and certified), raising questions about the utility of this process. In the absence of specific guidance regarding how files are to be selected, FPS's 11 regions varied in how they conducted the monthly file reviews. For example, FPS officials from three regions stated that they randomly select their files for review, while officials from one guard company in another region stated that FPS asks the guard company to select the files for review. Allowing contract guard company officials to select files for review by FPS could result in selection bias and affect the results of FPS's review. FPS also lacks guidance on reviewing and verifying the results of its guard-file reviews. Without such guidance, FPS may not be able to determine the accuracy of its monthly file review results or if its contract guard companies are complying with the guard training and certification requirements.