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# TERRORISM AND DRUG TRAFFICKING

## Responsibilities for Developing Explosives and Narcotics Detection Technologies



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National Security and  
International Affairs Division

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The Honorable Benjamin A. Gilman  
Chairman  
The Honorable Lee H. Hamilton  
Ranking Minority Member  
Committee on International Relations  
House of Representatives

The ability to detect hidden explosives and narcotics is important to U.S. national security. The problems of finding a small quantity of explosives concealed aboard an airplane or a shipment of narcotics smuggled through U.S. ports of entry are tremendous challenges to the technology community. While various technologies can be used to detect both explosives and narcotics, relatively little equipment has been deployed at airports and U.S. ports of entry. Recent events, such as recommendations of a presidential commission on aviation security, raise questions as to how well U.S. government agencies responsible for developing technologies to detect explosives and narcotics are working together.

As you requested, we have examined how the U.S. government is organized to develop technologies for detecting explosives and narcotics. This report discusses (1) the roles, responsibilities, and authority of agencies that establish policy, provide funds or oversee funding requests, and develop explosives and narcotics detection technologies; (2) mechanisms used to coordinate the joint development of technologies; and (3) efforts to strengthen detection technology development.

This report is one of a series you requested dealing with explosives and narcotics detection. The first report discussed the threats of terrorist attacks on civil aviation and of narcotics trafficking into the United States, strategies developed to meet those threats, and planned deployments of detection technologies to combat terrorism and interrupt the shipment of narcotics.<sup>1</sup> Another report in the series discussed explosives and narcotics detection technologies that are available or under development.<sup>2</sup> This report completes our work dealing with explosives and narcotics detection technologies. We also testified before various congressional

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<sup>1</sup>Terrorism and Drug Trafficking: Threats and Roles of Explosives and Narcotics Detection Technology (GAO/NSIAD/RCED-96-76BR, Mar. 27, 1996).

<sup>2</sup>Terrorism and Drug Trafficking: Technologies for Detecting Explosives and Narcotics (GAO/NSIAD/RCED-96-252, Sept. 4, 1996).

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committees on technology's role in addressing vulnerabilities in aviation security and issued two classified reports on the threat of terrorism.

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## Background

Terrorism and drug trafficking exact a tremendous cost from society. According to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the estimated cost of one bombed aircraft is about \$1 billion, including the price of litigation for the loss of human lives and property loss. This estimate does not include the cost to national security in terms of U.S. military and law enforcement response or terrorism's psychological effect on society—neither of which has been measured. FAA is expected to spend an estimated \$281 million on aviation security during fiscal year 1997 for research and development, the purchase of detection technology equipment, regulatory enforcement, and policy- and rule-making.

The annual social cost<sup>3</sup> of narcotics, according to the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), is estimated to be about \$67 billion, mostly from the consequences of drug-related crime. This cost does not include what Americans spend to purchase illegal drugs, estimated at \$49 billion for 1993, the last year for which data is available. Federal agencies are expected to spend about \$15 billion during fiscal year 1997 on drug control activities, including research and development, law enforcement, demand reduction, interdiction, and international programs.

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## Results in Brief

Numerous federal organizations—supported by a variety of working groups, panels, and committees—are involved in developing technologies for detecting explosives and narcotics. The Federal Aviation Administration is the key agency responsible for developing explosives detection technologies for civil aviation security. In response to the explosion of TWA flight 800, the President established the White House Commission on Aviation Security and Safety to recommend ways of improving security against terrorism. The Commission's recommendations included assigning a new role to the U.S. Customs Service in screening outbound, international cargo for explosives. In September 1996, Congress gave the Secretary of the Treasury authority to develop governmentwide standards for canine teams.

Regarding narcotics detection, the Office of National Drug Control Policy is responsible for coordinating federal counterdrug technology efforts and

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<sup>3</sup>These social costs include the expense of health care for addicts, extra law enforcement, crime, and lost productivity resulting from substance abuse.

assessing and recommending detection technologies. In addition, Customs, with technology development support and funding from the Department of Defense, ultimately decides which technologies will be developed and deployed at U.S. ports of entry. Customs has not deployed some technologies, developed at a cost of about \$30 million, because it did not believe that they were affordable, safe, or operationally suitable for its needs. In addition, Customs and the Office of National Drug Control Policy have differing views regarding the types of detection technologies needed along the southwest border.

Joint technology development is important because the types of technologies used to detect explosives and narcotics are similar. The developers of narcotics detection technologies have not always participated in committees that oversee the development of explosives detection technologies. In the future, Customs plans to participate in these committees. At the direction of Congress, an interagency working group on counterterrorism plans to spend \$19 million to develop a system for detecting explosives that Customs may possibly use in a seaport environment to detect drugs.

The following efforts are underway to strengthen development of explosives and narcotics technologies, including the use of canines:

- The Federal Aviation Administration and Customs are preparing a memorandum of understanding setting out how they will share information and possibly conduct joint research and development projects regarding detection technologies of mutual interest.
- The Federal Aviation Administration and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms are cochairing a group reviewing certification standards for explosives detection canines.
- Customs and the Office of National Drug Control Policy are working on a 5-year plan to develop new detection technologies, and Customs intends to develop a deployment plan acceptable to the Office of National Drug Control Policy.
- Customs will participate in the interagency development of a relocatable explosives detection system that may have counterdrug application, thus possibly benefiting both the counterterrorism and counterdrug communities.

Despite these efforts, we found that the cognizant agencies have not yet agreed to formal understandings on how to establish standards for explosives detection systems, profiling and targeting systems, and

deploying canine teams at airports. In addition, they have not agreed on how to resolve issues related to a joint-use strategy and liability. Furthermore, key decisionmakers are not receiving periodic comprehensive reports on the aggregated efforts of the various government entities to develop and field explosives and narcotics detection technologies. To address these issues, we have included a recommendation to the involved agencies and a matter for congressional consideration.

## Organizations Involved With Developing Explosives Detection Technologies

Four organizations—FAA, the National Security Council (NSC), the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and the Department of Transportation—are responsible for overseeing or developing explosives detection technologies. FAA has the primary responsibility for the development of explosives detection technologies used to protect commercial aircraft. From fiscal year 1992 to 1996, FAA provided about \$131 million, or an average of \$26.2 million per year, for detection technology development.

NSC established the Technical Support Working Group (TSWG) in 1986 to oversee and coordinate counterterrorism research and development, including explosives detection technology.<sup>4</sup> TSWG funding for explosives detection efforts totaled about \$14.3 million during fiscal years 1992-96.

OMB and the Department of Transportation play more limited roles in overseeing the FAA budget dealing with explosives detection technologies. OMB officials explained that OMB's role is limited because of the small size of FAA's explosives detection technology development program. The Department of Transportation has played a somewhat more active role in FAA and interagency working groups that assess the capabilities of the technologies to detect explosives.

In the aftermath of the TWA 800 explosion in July 1996, the President established the White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security. The Commission recommended, among other things, that Customs assume an enhanced role in screening outbound international air cargo for explosives. In September 1996, Congress provided the Secretary of the Treasury the authority to establish scientific certification standards for explosives detection canines and to provide for the certification of canines used for such purposes at U.S. airports. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco,

<sup>4</sup>The Department of State provides overall policy guidance to and oversees the operations of the TSWG. The Departments of Defense (DOD) and Energy cochair the TSWG. All three agencies fund the TSWG program, with DOD providing most of the funding.

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and Firearms (ATF) has assumed responsibility for this effort. In February 1997, the Commission recommended that ATF continue to work to develop governmentwide standards for canine teams.

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## History of FAA Technology Planning and Development

Senior FAA officials have stressed that delays in deploying advanced explosives detection technology are, in part, a function of the history of their technology planning and development efforts. FAA was criticized in 1990 when it announced plans to mandate the deployment of a specific technology<sup>5</sup> for screening checked baggage on international flights following the December 1988 crash of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. At the time, the technology could not detect the amount of explosives that blew up Pan Am 103 without an unacceptably high rate of false alarms. The airline industry objected to the technology's high cost, large size, slow speed in processing baggage, and high rate of false alarms.

The Aviation Security Improvement Act (P.L. 101-604 of Nov. 1990) provided a framework for FAA's technology planning. The act prohibited FAA from mandating a particular technology until it was certified as capable of detecting various types and quantities of explosives, using certification procedures developed in conjunction with the scientific community.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the act required that FAA establish a scientific advisory panel<sup>7</sup> to review its counterterrorism research and development program and recommend future program areas, including the need for long-range research to prevent catastrophic damage to commercial aircraft by the next generation of terrorist weapons.

FAA's scientific advisory panel recently recommended, among other things, a reallocation of 1997 research and development funds to provide an immediate increase in resources for long-term research to identify and counter emerging terrorist threats. In response, FAA increased its request for fiscal year 1997 funding for aircraft hardening and chemical weapons detection.

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<sup>5</sup>The technology, known as Thermal Neutron Analysis (TNA), uses low-energy neutrons to probe targets for the presence of nitrogen in explosives.

<sup>6</sup>FAA Reauthorization Act of 1996 allows FAA to deploy commercially available equipment on an interim basis until the certified equipment is operationally tested, if the Administrator determines the deployment will significantly enhance aviation security.

<sup>7</sup>The panel is referred to as the Security Research and Development Subcommittee of the Research, Engineering, and Development Advisory Committee.

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In its final report dated February 12, 1997, the White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security addressed the question of whether FAA is the appropriate government agency to regulate aviation security. The Commission concluded that because of its extensive interactions with airlines and airports, FAA is the appropriate agency. However, the Commission also stressed that the intelligence and law enforcement agencies' roles in supporting FAA must be clearly defined and coordinated.

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## NSC Provides Coordinating Forums

NSC provides a number of forums for coordinating explosives detection technology issues. As the primary agency responsible for aviation security, FAA sought interagency support within one of NSC's forums in early 1996 for a proposal to improve aviation security. Another forum, TSWG, has been involved in developing detection technology for countering the threat from terrorist use of explosives for several years.

In January 1996, FAA briefed the NSC's Coordinating Sub-Group on Terrorism<sup>8</sup> on threats to civil aviation and the need for a high-level national policy review on ways of increasing domestic aviation security. FAA used this forum because it believed that the threat of terrorism in the United States was not limited to aviation and responsibilities for countering terrorism crossed federal agency lines. Although FAA discussed the possible use of a presidential commission to obtain consensus and a legislative mandate on increasing aviation security domestically, it was agreed instead to establish a working group within FAA to review the threat against aviation and recommend options for increasing security in the United States.

On July 17, 1996, FAA's Aviation Security Advisory Committee<sup>9</sup> formed a Baseline Working Group to examine everyday security measures at U.S. airports and recommend specific initiatives to strengthen those measures. On December 12, 1996, the group recommended several immediate and long-term improvements, including expansion of FAA's research and development efforts for explosives detection.

TSWG has an Explosives Detection Technology Subgroup, chaired by an FAA representative, to ensure compatibility between TSWG and FAA research and

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<sup>8</sup>The Special Assistant to the President (NSC) chairs the Coordinating Sub-Group on Terrorism, which is comprised of officials at the level of assistant secretary or the equivalent and convenes regularly to review ongoing counterterrorism issues in policy, program, and operational areas.

<sup>9</sup>Following the explosion of Pan Am 103, the Secretary of Transportation established the Aviation Security Advisory Committee in April 1989 to advise FAA on the operational impacts of aviation security initiatives.

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development programs in the explosives detection technology arena. TSWG funds explosives detection technology projects near the \$2.9 million level annually.

NSC uses TSWG to develop coordinated views regarding the development of explosives detection technologies. For example, in August 1996, the NSC Coordinating Sub-Group on Terrorism requested the State Department's Coordinator for Counterterrorism<sup>10</sup> to review research in explosives detection equipment and to determine whether additional funds should be invested in such research. The Coordinator directed TSWG to undertake this task. In October 1996, TSWG recommended (1) accelerating the development of methods that reduce or eliminate the human element from the initial threat detection process, (2) increasing the emphasis on and funding for explosive detection research and development, and (3) improving the interagency exchange of information. According to an NSC official, the first two recommendations have been implemented through increased funding. Regarding the third, he pointed out that improved information exchange is the constant goal of all agencies.

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### Customs Given an Enhanced Role in Screening Air Cargo for Explosives

The White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security recommended new roles for Customs in screening outbound international air cargo for explosives, including updating and acquiring technologies to do that screening. Customs had previously not been involved in developing explosives detection technologies, although it had developed technologies to screen cargo for various types of contraband. Consequently, it had not worked closely with FAA, the airlines, or TSWG on specifically developing explosives detection technologies.

In response to the Commission's recommendations, Customs is using \$16 million to develop a system to identify high-risk cargo for closer inspection and \$34 million to purchase detection technologies. Customs is now determining how to develop an automated targeting system to process outbound cargo information. In addition, Customs may develop a new X-ray technology for examining pallets or improve other technologies before acquisition.

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<sup>10</sup>The Department of State's Coordinator for Counterterrorism is the Vice Chairman of NSC's Coordinating Sub-Group on Terrorism. Through the Interagency Working Group on Counterterrorism, which the Coordinator chairs, and through various functional interagency sub-working groups, which report to the Coordinator (including the Technical Support Working Group), the Coordinator ensures that U.S. government counterterrorism programs, strategies, and activities are developed, coordinated, and executed.

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Customs' new role presents challenges in coordinating its efforts with FAA and the aviation industry. For example, the Customs' targeting system may be adapted to enable FAA to screen domestic cargo shipments transported within the United States. In addition, Customs may be required to ensure that its narcotics detection technologies can meet FAA standards for screening cargo for explosives. To date, Customs and FAA have held informal discussions on technical issues but have not prepared a memorandum of understanding setting out their respective roles to help meet these challenges.

As a part of its new role, Customs must also enter into agreements with the airline industry for the joint use of the detection technologies.<sup>11</sup> In a letter to the Commission dated January 13, 1997, Customs stated that a memorandum of understanding is being established with FAA to coordinate the identification and deployment of the "joint use" screening equipment. Customs has decided that such an agreement will be limited to sharing information and to possibly developing joint research and development projects. FAA strongly believes that such a memorandum of understanding should include standards for the use of explosives detection systems, development of a joint-use strategy, the resolution of liability concerns, and the development of profiling and targeting systems to identify potentially threatening passengers and cargo.

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### ATF's New Role in Developing Standards for Explosives Detection Canines

Although FAA has used canines for explosives detection at airports since the 1970s, in September 1996 Congress authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to develop governmentwide explosives detection certification standards for canines and to certify such canines for use at airports. ATF has assumed responsibility for this effort, and an interagency working group has been established to develop uniform standards. FAA believes that a memorandum of understanding is needed with ATF to address the deployment of canine teams at airports.

Both FAA and ATF have canine programs. As of February 25, 1997, FAA's program had 81 certified explosives detection canine teams deployed to 31 airports. FAA requires intensive training in aviation environments on aircraft, in terminals, and around baggage, airport vehicles, and cargo. In fiscal year 1997, FAA received \$8.9 million for certifying an additional 114 canines.

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<sup>11</sup>The Omnibus Appropriations Act for 1997 provides funds for the purchase and installation of advanced cargo inspection equipment technology for the joint use of air carriers, airports, or other cargo authorities and Customs.

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ATF has certified 115 explosives and firearms detection canine teams for use by 7 foreign countries in support of the Department of State's Antiterrorism Assistance Program. According to an ATF official, these ATF-certified canines are trained to perform preblast detection duties in various overseas environments, including airports. In fiscal year 1997, ATF received \$7.5 million, of which \$3.5 million was specifically earmarked for construction and expansion of a canine training facility. Congress also authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to establish scientific certification standards for canines and to certify, on a reimbursable basis, canines employed by federal agencies at airports in the United States.

In 1996, the House Appropriations Committee expressed concern about multiple and possibly duplicative or wasteful programs for training dogs to detect explosives. The Committee directed that ATF establish a pilot canine explosives detection program with FAA to foster cooperation, coordination, and consistency between their two programs. The two agencies are working out the details for the pilot program.

In August 1996, the Coordinating Sub-Group on Terrorism requested a study on the use of canines for counterterrorism purposes. As a result, a joint effort was begun by FAA and ATF, which agreed to rely principally on a group comprised of various agencies' chemists and canine trainers to make recommendations to them. Since 1992, TSWG has used its own funds, as well as funds provided by DOD, FAA, and ONDCP, for canine research projects.

The White House Commission of Aviation Safety and Security recommended that FAA establish federally mandated standards for security enhancements, including the deployment of explosive detection canine teams. FAA believes that a memorandum of understanding is needed with ATF to address standards for deploying canine teams at airports because ATF has assumed responsibility for establishing governmentwide certification standards for explosives detecting canines.

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## OMB Oversees Explosives Detection Technology Funding Requests

OMB officials said that they play a limited role in overseeing FAA's explosives detection technology development program because of the small amount of funding for that program relative to funding for all of FAA. They also told us that the extent of their oversight has traditionally been to ensure that the FAA budget meets presidential priorities and is adequately justified.

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However, OMB became more active and participated in FAA's Baseline Working Group because of the increased threat of terrorism. Several FAA officials stated that OMB participation was important because the cost of improving security was being estimated at billions of dollars and consideration was being given to shifting the responsibility of funding from the airlines to the government. An OMB official expressed the view that the government might need to be more concerned about research and development efforts if it has to pay for equipment resulting from such efforts.

In addition, OMB prepared the President's fiscal year 1997 antiterrorism proposal, including incorporating the recommendations of the White House Commission. As such, OMB worked with FAA on such issues as pricing explosives detection technologies that FAA would purchase with the additional funding.

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## Agencies Involved With Developing Narcotics Detection Technologies

Four agencies—ONDCP, Customs, DOD, and OMB—are primarily responsible for coordinating or developing narcotics detection technologies. The congressionally established Counterdrug Technology Assessment Center (CTAC) within ONDCP is responsible, among other things, for coordinating federal counterdrug technology efforts and assessing and recommending narcotics detection technologies. Customs, because of its mission to interdict drugs at U.S. ports of entry, is ultimately responsible for deciding on the types of technologies to be developed and used. As congressionally directed, DOD has been primarily responsible for funding and developing most of the innovative narcotics detection technologies for Customs. Recently, OMB became involved in overseeing Customs' plans for developing and deploying narcotics detection technologies.

Agencies have not always agreed on the most appropriate technologies to detect narcotics at U.S. ports of entry. Two technologies funded at about \$30 million have been developed but not deployed. More recently, differing views between ONDCP and Customs regarding the type of systems needed along the southwest border led to varying directions from congressional committees. These differing views between ONDCP and Customs stem, in part, from recommendations presented in a congressionally mandated study on costs and benefits of specific technologies. These differences may be resolved as Customs, in coordination with ONDCP, develops a methodology and a 5-year plan for transitioning technologies from development to deployment.

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### CTAC Coordinates Development of Narcotics Detection Technologies

CTAC coordinates the counterdrug technology research and development efforts of 21 federal agencies. In addition, CTAC funds its own development projects to address gaps in technologies that provide the greatest support to the various counterdrug activities of federal, state, and local agencies. During fiscal years 1992-96, CTAC funding for detection technologies amounted to about \$8.4 million, or an average of about \$1.7 million per year.

In coordinating the counterdrug research and development program, CTAC attempts to prevent duplication of effort and to ensure that, whenever possible, those efforts provide capabilities that transcend the needs of any single agency. CTAC relies on its interagency Science and Technology Committee to help prioritize projects supported with CTAC funds. The projects are generally managed by a member agency. In addition, a Contraband Detection Working Group was established under this Committee to provide an interagency forum to focus other agencies' research activities on technology areas that support the contraband detection requirements of law enforcement agencies.

In August 1996, the Director, ONDCP, committed to revitalizing the Science and Technology Committee and its working groups. Among other things, the Director proposed that the Committee act as a steering body with membership at a level senior enough to make commitments to research and development policy decisions. An ONDCP official informed us that the Committee is currently focusing on developing a 5-year technology plan.

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### Customs Relies on DOD to Develop Most Narcotics Detection Technologies

While Customs has the operational need for detection technologies, Congress tasked DOD to develop most of these technologies because DOD was already developing technologies that could be adapted for narcotics detection. During fiscal years 1992-96, DOD funded detection technologies for about \$73 million, or an average of about \$14.6 million per year. Over the same period, Customs funded detection technologies amounting to about \$3.1 million, or an average of about \$620,000 per year.

In 1990, the House Appropriations Committee tasked DOD, in coordination with Customs, to develop a comprehensive plan for developing drug detection technology for use in inspecting cargo containers. The Committee cited cargo containers as a major threat for the import of illegal drugs into the United States and identified specific technologies that should be pursued.

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In April 1994, DOD began testing a high-energy X-ray system<sup>12</sup> capable of penetrating fully loaded containers, at a specially constructed port in Tacoma, Washington. DOD and CTAC viewed the system as a key step toward the development of effective, nonintrusive cargo inspection technologies.<sup>13</sup> The tests showed that high-energy X-ray technology could be an effective tool in detecting drugs in a broad range of vehicles and in containers carrying varying types of cargo. DOD spent about \$15 million for facility construction and system testing. However, ONDCP, Customs, and DOD agreed in December 1994 to dismantle the site because Customs did not believe that the system was affordable, safe, or operationally suitable for its needs.

Based on experiences with the Tacoma high-energy system, Customs and DOD entered into a restructured development program to ensure that DOD would develop only those technologies that would be transitioned by Customs into an operational environment. Based on this understanding, DOD also discontinued work on a Pulsed Fast Neutron Analysis project<sup>14</sup> after spending about \$15 million because Customs was likewise concerned about its affordability, safety, and operational suitability.

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## OMB Oversees Narcotics Detection Technology Funding Requests

For fiscal years 1996 and 1997, OMB questioned Customs' funding requests for truck X-ray systems to be placed at U.S. ports of entry along the southwest border. These systems use a low-energy X-ray source<sup>15</sup> capable of penetrating empty trucks and other conveyances. OMB limited Customs' use of the funds until certain conditions were met, citing its concern that a low-energy system had limited capabilities for inspecting fully loaded containers. OMB requested a comprehensive border technology plan that would focus effective inspection technologies in the areas of greatest need.

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<sup>12</sup>The system scans a target with X-ray at an energy level of 8 million electron volts, or about 50 to 70 times the energy of a typical airport passenger X-ray.

<sup>13</sup>Nonintrusive inspection technology refers to a variety of advanced systems that will permit Customs officials to inspect cargo and conveyances for the presence of narcotics without physically opening or entering the shipment.

<sup>14</sup>Like the TNA mentioned on page 5, the Pulsed Fast Neutron Analysis probes targets, using neutrons, for the presence of explosives or narcotics. However, unlike TNA, it uses high-energy neutrons as opposed to low-energy neutrons, allowing reliable detection of carbon and oxygen found in narcotics as well as nitrogen found in explosives.

<sup>15</sup>Rated at 450 thousand electron volts, about three or four times the energy of a typical passenger X-ray system at an airport.

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In response, Customs prepared a plan favoring the use of fixed-site truck X-ray systems as well as mobile or relocatable systems. Customs stated that the large number of empty trucks crossing the southwest border presents a very high threat because they sometimes carry drugs. As a result, Customs wanted a system to inspect for drugs concealed within the structure of the truck. Customs stated that the low-energy X-ray system has been effective in detecting drugs concealed in these empty trucks, is safe, and fits into available space. In addition, acquisition costs are estimated at \$3 million, operating expenses are low, and training requirements are minimal compared to the high-energy X-ray system built at Tacoma and the Pulsed Fast Neutron Analysis system.

OMB continues to believe that Customs needs a range of technologies for the southwest border. Thus, OMB plans to stay informed on issues dealing with the development of those technologies and has started attending ONDCP meetings on developing narcotics detection technologies so that it can become aware of emerging issues.

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### Effect of Differences Between ONDCP and Customs on Congressional Direction

Congressional committees have provided differing direction regarding the development and acquisition of narcotics detection technologies. One committee, supporting Customs needs, recommended funding for a certain technology, while another committee, responding to ONDCP concerns, directed a moratorium on the purchase of such technology. The differences stem, in part, from recommendations presented in a congressionally mandated study on costs and benefits of specific technologies.

In September 1994, Congress mandated a study on the cost and benefit tradeoffs in different nonintrusive inspection systems. The study, released in September 1996, concluded that Customs should accelerate the development and implementation of an automated system for screening documents to target cargo for further inspection. For land ports, the study recommended that only the automated targeting system be deployed.

Conferees on the National Defense Appropriations Act for 1997 provided DOD with \$6 million for DOD's purchase of low-energy truck X-ray systems to be used by Customs. Conferees to the 1997 Treasury, Postal Service, and General Appropriations Act stated that they were aware of the tradeoff study's conclusion that deployment of advanced technology at land sites and seaports can make a significant improvement to drug interdiction efforts. The conferees directed a moratorium on the purchase

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of the low-energy systems until Customs reevaluated its plans regarding the automated targeting system and to both low- and high-energy systems. They further directed that Customs present Congress with an integrated plan responding to the recommendations in the tradeoff study.

Customs issued a response February 6, 1997, which stated that empty trucks crossing the southwest border are a very high threat. As a result, Customs wanted a system to examine trucks returning empty to the United States. Customs also stated that it would work with DOD and ONDCP to identify and evaluate new inspection technologies that would complement the capabilities of the low-energy system. According to ONDCP, a promising technology currently under development may be as effective. This system, which will be mobile, is expected to cost about one fifth the estimated \$3 million cost of the low-energy system. Over the next few months, Customs and DOD will evaluate this new technology to inspect empty trucks.

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**Customs Supports a Methodology for Deployment and a Plan for Development**

Development of the current generation of narcotics detection technologies is nearing completion, but Customs does not have a detailed methodology for determining which technologies should be acquired. Nonetheless, Custom's future development efforts are expected to be a part of the Director of ONDCP's recent proposal for a 5-year technology plan for developing narcotics supply and demand reduction technologies.<sup>16</sup>

The congressionally mandated tradeoff study recommended that Customs adopt a methodology similar to the one it used for assessing procurement options. The study also pointed out that the variation among the ports require a port-by-port analysis to assess the need for specific technologies at each port. Customs has acknowledged that a methodology was needed but noted that the methodology presented in the study was only one of several possible approaches and did not realistically consider personnel and funding constraints.

ONDCP and other federal agencies are creating a 5-year technology plan. As part of this plan, the agencies will prepare a road map for developing nonintrusive inspection technologies and upgrading existing systems. For example, Customs and DOD are expected to set out their plans for

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<sup>16</sup>Supply technologies are used for interdiction, including detection, while demand reduction technologies focus on education, training, prevention, and rehabilitation.

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developing mobile or relocatable high-energy systems<sup>17</sup> for drug interdiction. Both Customs and DOD plan to evaluate the capabilities of the high-energy X-ray system for its ability to detect narcotics concealed in cargo containers. ONDCP plans to review the results of this evaluation.

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## Coordination of Detection Technology Development Efforts

We reported earlier that various technologies, with modifications, can be used to detect both explosives and narcotics.<sup>18</sup> During work on this report, we found that formal coordination between developers of explosives and narcotics detection technologies was not a two-way street. We did find, however, that results of research and testing are shared among the technology developers and overseers through personal contacts or through symposiums. In addition, Customs and FAA have done joint work on systems such as TNA and trace detectors. Canines provide a special opportunity for coordination because they can be trained to respond in specific ways to smells of explosives and narcotics.

The developers of explosives detection technologies are active participants on committees that oversee the development of narcotics detection technologies. FAA has participated in ONDCP's Science and Technology Committee and its Contraband Detection Working Group since their inception to provide a linkage between explosives and narcotics detection technology development. However, the developers of narcotics detection technologies have generally not been included in committees that oversee the development of explosives detection technologies. Customs has not been a member of the scientific advisory panel that reviews FAA's research and development program and recommends ways to improve the program. Based on our inquiries, an FAA official said that including Customs on the panel may add some additional insight from the developers of narcotics detection technologies. FAA included Customs as a member of the panel effective February 13, 1997.

Although Customs is a member of TSWG, it has not participated in the explosives detection subgroup. Officials agreed that Customs would benefit from participating in this subgroup because of its interagency coordination activities. Customs says that it plans to begin participating in the subgroup.

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<sup>17</sup>High energy systems are defined as having an energy level of at least 2 million electron volts, about 13 to 18 times the energy of a typical X-ray system found at an airport.

<sup>18</sup>Terrorism and Drug Trafficking: Technologies for Detecting Explosives and Narcotics (GAO/NSIAD/RCED-96-252, Sept. 4, 1996).

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The relocatable Pulsed Fast Neutron Analysis system is an example of a technology development that may benefit from closer coordination. In fiscal year 1996, Congress provided TSWG with \$6.2 million to evaluate the capabilities of a relocatable Pulsed Fast Neutron Analysis system to detect explosives hidden in cargo. This evaluation will cover a 30-month period and eventually cost about \$19 million. As noted earlier, this technology was developed to detect narcotics concealed in large containers but was not adopted for use by Customs because it did not believe that the system was affordable, safe, or operationally suitable for its needs.

Customs advised TSWG that it wants to participate in the development of the system. A Customs official said that should the system meet concerns about safety and other operational issues, they would support its installation at a seaport where fully load containers are of concern and its performance could be assessed for both counterdrug and counterterrorism applications.

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## Opportunities to Strengthen Detection Technology Development

Our work identified efforts underway that if successfully completed could significantly strengthen development of explosives and narcotics technologies. For example, in explosives detection technology development, FAA is working closely with Customs and ATF, both of which have new roles to play. In narcotics detection technology development, Customs is working with ONDCP on a 5-year technology plan and with TSWG on an explosives detection system that may have application to narcotics detection. However, these agencies have not yet established formal understandings on how to develop standards for aviation security enhancements and numerous related issues. Moreover, comprehensive reports on the U.S. government's efforts to develop explosives and narcotics detection technology are not periodically provided to key decisionmakers.

Regarding explosives detection technology development, we found that:

- FAA and Customs are preparing a memorandum of understanding setting out how they will share information and possibly conduct joint research and development projects regarding detection technologies of mutual interest.
- ATF has assumed a new role to develop governmentwide standards for explosives detection canines and has begun a joint effort with FAA by cochairing a policy group. They agreed to rely principally on a group

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comprised of various agencies' chemists and canine trainers, including a representative from TSWG, to make recommendations to the policy group.

FAA strongly believes that memorandums of understanding are needed with Customs and ATF for developing standards for aviation security enhancements, including the use of explosives detection systems, development of a joint-use strategy, resolution of liability concerns, development of profiling and targeting systems to identify potentially threatening passengers and cargo, and deployment of canine teams at airports. However, to date, little or no progress has been made in achieving such understandings, and the involved agencies have not developed a coordinated approach for handling such issues.

Regarding narcotics detection technology development, we found the following:

- ONDCP and Customs disagree on the appropriate methodology for deciding which technologies to transition from development to deployment. According to ONDCP, the methodology should require a port-by-port analysis to assess the need for specific technologies at each port. On the other hand, Customs prefers a methodology that does not add to its or industry's data-reporting requirements. Nevertheless, both agencies are working on a 5-year technology plan to develop new detection technologies, and Customs told us that it intends to develop a methodology that is acceptable to ONDCP.
- Customs advised the NSC's TSWG that it would participate in the development of a system that may have counterdrug application. In addition, a Customs official has been informally monitoring the system's development. However, as now being developed, the system will not include requirements unique to a narcotics detection application. ONDCP believes that Customs' involvement with the system will be a worthwhile effort.

Our review indicated that no one in the executive branch has aggregated into a single report information on the totality of what is being done on the development of explosives and narcotics detection technology, the nature and extent of resources that the various agencies are applying, the informal coordination and integration efforts, and the types of emerging issues that must be addressed. Currently, no reports are periodically provided to key decisionmakers in the executive branch or Congress.

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## Conclusion

We generally endorse the actions being undertaken by the agencies as the initial steps to strengthening the coordination of explosives and narcotics detection technology development. However, FAA, Customs, and ATF need to work closer as a team to solve complex technological issues. Establishing memorandums of understanding among the agencies could help define the agencies' roles and enhance cooperation in resolving the numerous issues associated with the development of standards for aviation security enhancements. Further, the resolution of differences in views between ONDCP and Customs on needed technology should help serve as a springboard to acting jointly on the broader problems. In addition, joint development of technology may prove beneficial for both explosives and narcotics detection. Periodic reports to oversight authorities can help keep focus on the efforts being taken to develop and deploy technologies at ports of entry, including airports.

---

## Recommendation

In line with the White House Commission of Aviation Safety and Security's call for more clearly defining and coordinating the roles of law enforcement agencies in supporting the FAA, we recommend that the Secretaries of Transportation and the Treasury establish a memorandum of understanding on how FAA, Customs, ATF, and other agencies are to work together in establishing standards, including the use of explosives detection systems, development of a joint-use strategy, resolution of liability concerns, development of profiling and targeting systems to identify potentially threatening passengers and cargo, and deployment of canine teams at airports.

---

## Matter for Congressional Consideration

Because no single agency in the executive branch has aggregated into a single report information on what is being done on the development of explosives and narcotics detection technology, Congress may wish to direct the Secretaries of Transportation and the Treasury and the Director, ONDCP, to jointly provide to appropriate congressional oversight committees an annual report on all of the government's efforts to develop and field explosives and narcotics detection technology.

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## Agency Comments

NSC, the Departments of State and Transportation, FAA, ATF, ONDCP, Customs, DOD, and OMB reviewed a draft of this report and provided oral or written comments. They generally agreed with the facts presented, and their suggested technical corrections have been incorporated where

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appropriate. The written comments of State, FAA, Customs, ATF, and DOD are presented in appendixes I, II, III, IV, and V, respectively.

In responding to a draft of this report, FAA, Customs, and ATF have taken varying positions on how to develop standards for aviation security enhancements and address numerous related issues. We have therefore modified the report to recommend that the department secretaries establish a memorandum of understanding for FAA, Customs, ATF, and other agencies to work together on these issues.

---

## Scope and Methodology

Based on previous work,<sup>19</sup> we initially focused on five agencies that play the largest roles in developing detection technologies. During the course of our work, we identified other agencies that are beginning to play larger roles in technology development.

For our work on agencies involved with developing explosives detection technologies or coordinating their development, we contacted officials of the Departments of Transportation, Defense, and State; FAA; NSC; OMB; Customs; and ATF. We interviewed officials to identify processes and mechanisms to resolve conflicts when establishing policy, setting priorities, selecting projects, and requesting funding. We also obtained and reviewed key documents, such as FAA's research and development plan, and identified circumstances surrounding cases in which agencies disagreed on technology development.

For our work on agencies involved with developing narcotics detection technologies or coordinating their development, we contacted officials of ONDCP, Customs, DOD, and OMB. We again interviewed officials to identify processes and mechanisms to resolve conflicts when establishing policy, setting priorities, selecting projects, and requesting funding. We also obtained and reviewed key documents, such as the ONDCP's counterdrug research and development plan, and identified circumstances surrounding cases in which agencies disagreed on technology development.

To identify mechanisms for coordinating joint development, we interviewed officials and gathered information from the NSC's TSWG and FAA on the committees that oversee explosives detection technology development efforts. In addition, we interviewed officials and gathered information from ONDCP on similar committees that oversee ONDCP's

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<sup>19</sup>Terrorism and Drug Trafficking: Technologies for Detecting Explosives and Narcotics (GAO/NSIAD/RCED-96-252, Sept. 4, 1996).

---

narcotics detection technology development efforts. We analyzed the membership of these committees to see if there is representation from both the explosives and narcotics detection technology development communities. We also examined the minutes of the committees' meetings to verify that member agencies from both communities participated in these meetings. In addition, we gathered information on a particular technology to show the benefits of coordination between the two communities. Finally, we asked about attendance at various symposiums or other professional forums.

Based on our objectives, we identified efforts being initiated to strengthen coordination of detection technology development and opportunities to enhance that development.

OMB did not provide us with all the information we requested. OMB officials met with us but did not provide documentation on its interactions with other federal agencies responsible for developing explosives and narcotics detection technologies. As a result, we relied on other agencies' records to document OMB's role. In addition, NSC officials declined to meet with us to clarify its interaction with the other agencies.

We performed this phase of work between October 1996 and February 1997 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

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We are sending copies of this report to the Chairmen and Ranking Minority Members of other appropriate congressional committees; the Secretaries of the Treasury, State, Defense, and Transportation; the Directors, OMB, ONDCP, and ATF; the Administrator, FAA; and the Commissioner, U.S. Customs Service.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please call me on (202) 512-4841. Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix VI.



Louis J. Rodrigues  
Director  
Defense Acquisitions Issues  
Page 20

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**Abbreviations**

ATF	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms
CTAC	Counterdrug Technology Assessment Center
DOD	Department of Defense
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
MOU	memorandum of understanding
NSC	National Security Council
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
ONDCP	Office of National Drug Control Policy
TNA	Thermal Neutron Analysis
TSWG	Technical Support Working Group

# Comments From the Department of State

Note: GAO comments supplementing those in the report text appear at the end of this appendix.



**United States Department of State**

**Chief Financial Officer**

**Washington, D.C. 20520-7427**

March 20, 1997

Dear Mr. Hinton:

We appreciate the opportunity to provide Department of State comments on your draft report, "TERRORISM AND DRUG TRAFFICKING: Responsibilities for Explosives and Narcotics Detection Technology Development," GAO/NSIAD-97-95, GAO Job Code 707220.

If you have any questions concerning this response, please call Mr. Michael Jakub, S/CT, at (202) 647-6717.

Sincerely,

  
Richard L. Greene

Enclosure:  
As stated.

cc:  
GAO/NSIAD/Defense Acquisitions Issues - Mr. Harper  
STATE/S/CT - Mr. Jakub

Mr. Henry L. Hinton, Jr,  
Assistant Comptroller General,  
National Security and International Affairs,  
U.S. General Accounting Office.

**Appendix I**  
**Comments From the Department of State**

**Department of State Comments on the GAO Draft Report  
"TERRORISM AND DRUG TRAFFICKING: Responsibilities  
for Explosives and Narcotics Detection Technology  
Development," report number GAO/NSIAD-97-95,  
GAO Job Code 707220.**

Comments on the Draft GAO Report are keyed to pages and paragraphs identified below:

Now on page 4.

**- P. 5, Last paragraph**

See comment 1.

-- For reasons of accuracy, revise the first sentence of this paragraph to read as follows:

"Five Departments or agencies -- the Department of Defense, the Department of State, the Department of Energy, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms -- are responsible for overseeing or developing explosives detection technologies."

Now on page 4.

**- P. 6, First paragraph**

See comment 1.

-- For reasons of accuracy, revise the first sentence of this paragraph to read as follows:

"The Department of State established the Technical Support Working Group (TSWG) in 1986 to oversee and coordinate counterterrorism research and development, including explosives detection technology."

Now on page 4.

**- P. 6, Endnote 4**

See comment 2.

-- For purposes of accuracy and clarity, revise the endnote as follows:

"The Department of State provides overall policy guidance to and oversees the operations of the TSWG. The Departments of Defense and Energy co-chair the TSWG. All three agencies fund the TSWG program with DOD providing most of the funding."

Now on page 6.

**- P. 8, Second paragraph**

See comment 2.

-- Revise the first sentence of this paragraph as reflected below for purposes of accuracy and clarity. Delete the current second sentence of this paragraph as it is partially inaccurate and also is not germane to the issue discussed therein:

"As the primary agency responsible for aviation security, the FAA sought interagency support within a National Security Council forum in early 1996 for a proposal to improve aviation security."

-2-

Now on page 6.

See comment 2.

**- P. 8, Third paragraph**

-- Revise this paragraph as reflected below for purposes of accuracy and clarity:

"In January 1996, FAA briefed the NSC Coordinating Sub-group on Terrorism on threats to civil aviation and the need for a high-level national policy review on ways of increasing domestic aviation security. The FAA utilized this forum because it believed that the threat of terrorism in the United States was not limited to aviation and responsibilities for countering terrorism crossed federal agency lines. Although FAA discussed the possible use of a presidential commission to obtain consensus and a legislative mandate on increasing aviation security domestically, it was agreed instead to initially establish a working group within FAA to review the threat against aviation and recommend options for increasing security in the United States."

Now on page 7.

See comment 2.

**- P. 8, Endnote 7**

-- Add the following two sentences to the Endnote for accuracy and clarity and to ensure the reader understands the current interagency organization and structure for counterterrorism policy formulation and execution within the U.S. Government:

"...operational areas. The Department of State's Coordinator for Counterterrorism is the Vice Chairman of the NSC/CSG. Through the Interagency Working Group on Counterterrorism (IWG/CT) which the Coordinator chairs, and through various functional interagency sub-working groups which report to the Coordinator (including the Technical Support Working Group), the Coordinator ensures that U.S. government counterterrorism programs, strategies, and activities are developed, coordinated and executed."

Now on page 7.

See comment 2.

**- P. 9, Second paragraph**

-- Revise this paragraph as follows for purposes of accuracy and clarity:

"The NSC/CSG has also sought the views of the TSWG regarding the development of explosives detection technologies. The TSWG's Explosive Detection Technology Subgroup -- one of seven functionally oriented interagency subgroups of the TSWG -- is chaired by an FAA representative to ensure compatibility between the TSWG and FAA R&D programs in the explosives detection technology arena. The TSWG funds explosives detection technology projects near the \$2.4 million level annually."

-3-

Now on page 7.

See comment 2.

**- P. 9, Third paragraph**

-- Revise this paragraph as follows for purposes of accuracy and clarity:

"In August 1996, the NSC Coordinating Sub-group on Terrorism requested the State Department's Coordinator for Counterterrorism to review research in explosives detection equipment and to determine whether additional funds should be invested in such research. The Coordinator directed the TSWG to undertake this task. In October 1996, the TSWG recommended inter alia .....information."

Now on page 19.

See comment 2.

**- P. 26, Second paragraph**

-- Delete "TSWG" from this paragraph and add "Departments of State and Defense" in place of "TSWG" for purposes of accuracy.

"For our work on agencies involved with developing explosives detection technologies or coordinating their development, we met with officials of the Departments of Transportation, Defense, State, FAA, NSC, OMB, Customs, and ATF."

---

The following are GAO's comments on the Department of State's letter dated March 20, 1997.

---

## GAO Comments

1. We have not shown the Departments of Defense (DOD), State, and Energy as agencies responsible for overseeing or developing explosives detection technologies. Instead of showing these agencies separately, we have grouped them under the National Security Council's Technical Support Working Group (TSWG). Specifically, we state on page 4 that the Department of State provides overall policy guidance to and oversees the operations of TSWG and that DOD and the Department of Energy cochair TSWG. We also state that all three agencies fund the TSWG program, with DOD providing most of the funding.

We also have not shown the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) as an agency responsible for overseeing or developing explosives detection technologies. In the introduction to the explosives section, we say that ATF and Customs have assumed new roles. We believe that the reference to ATF at this point is sufficient.

2. We have modified the report to reflect this comment.

# Comments From the Federal Aviation Administration

Note: GAO comments supplementing those in the report text appear at the end of this appendix.



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Aviation  
Administration**

Associate Administrator  
for Civil Aviation Security

800 Independence Ave., SW.  
Washington, DC 20591

MAR 28 1997

Mr. David E. Cooper  
Associate Director, Defense Acquisition Issues  
National Security and International Affairs Division  
General Accounting Office  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Cooper:

FAA's Civil Aviation Security Organization has reviewed your draft report entitled "Terrorism and Drug Trafficking" (GAO/NSIAD 97-95, dated March 1997), and we concur with the facts as they are presented. We have also enclosed FAA's suggested changes as discussed with you and your staff in the exit briefing of March 26, 1997.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the report. We wish to express our appreciation for your auditors' diligence in analyzing the complex issues involved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cathal L. Flynn".

Cathal L. Flynn  
Associate Administrator for Civil  
Aviation Security

Enclosure

See comment 1.

**GAO Report-Terrorism and Drug Trafficking  
Responsibilities for Explosives and Narcotics Detection Technology  
Development**

In general, FAA reviewed the information in the draft report and concurs with the facts presented. However, FAA would like to make the following comments:

See comment 2.

GAO has stated that FAA and ATF are co-chairing a group reviewing certification standards. Further, GAO states that the White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security has supported ATF's authority to develop governmentwide standards for canine teams. FAA would like to point out that the Commission has recommended that FAA establish federally mandated standards for security enhancements. These enhancements include standards for use of explosive detection systems, training programs for security personnel, use of automated bag match technology, development of profiling systems (manual and automated), and deployment of explosive detection canine teams. FAA believes that a memorandum of understanding (MOU) is also needed with ATF to address the deployment of canine teams at airports.

See comment 2.

GAO has stated in the draft report that an MOU is being developed with Customs to cover a number of issues, including a strategy for jointly using technology with the airline industry. FAA believes that there is a need to create such an MOU and discussions are being held at this time. FAA strongly believes that the MOU should include standards for use of explosive detection systems, development of a joint use strategy, profiling, the possible use of the automated targeting system for international and, possibly domestic flights, and the consideration of liability. FAA has hired a consultant to examine methods for cargo profiling for adaptability. Contacts are being made at this time for further meetings.

See comment 2.

In closing, following the suggestion by the White House Commission in its February 12, 1997 report, Chapter 3, paragraph six, states that "the roles of intelligence and law enforcement agencies in supporting the FAA must be more clearly defined and coordinated." It appears to the FAA that establishment of an MOU between Customs and FAA on all matters of joint interest in the field of counterterrorism would be a positive response. FAA stands ready to cooperate with Customs in this area in any productive way that is mutually agreeable, including, but not limited to, establishing MOU's.

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**Appendix II  
Comments From the Federal Aviation  
Administration**

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The following are GAO's comments on the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) letter dated March 28, 1997.

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**GAO Comments**

1. We have incorporated FAA's technical comments in the text where appropriate.
2. We have modified the report to reflect these comments.

# Comments From the U.S. Customs Service

Note: GAO comments supplementing those in the report text appear at the end of this appendix.



DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY  
U.S. CUSTOMS SERVICE

MAR 20 1997

AUD-1-OP JTD

Mr. Norman J. Rabkin  
Director, Administration of  
Justices Issues  
General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Rabkin:

Thank you for the opportunity to review your draft report entitled, "Terrorism and Drug Interdiction Trafficking" (GAO/NSIAD 97-95, dated March, 1997).

Enclosed are our comments regarding your draft report.

Please extend our appreciation to your staff for the professional way in which they conducted the entire review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William F. Riley".

William F. Riley  
Director, Office of Planning

Enclosure

**Appendix III**  
**Comments From the U.S. Customs Service**

Comments on GAO Draft Report  
**Terrorism and Drug Trafficking**  
March 1997

Now on pages 3  
and 16.

**Pages 4-5 and pages 23-24...**

References are made to an MOU between FAA and Customs that will address several issues. These issues include cooperation to develop detection technologies and procedures for screening out-bound cargo, a strategy for jointly using technology with the airline industry, ensuring that Customs detection technologies meet FAA explosives standards, resolution of liability issues, and development of a profiling system to identify potentially threatening passengers. Customs is not aware of efforts to develop an MOU with FAA covering this scope of issues.

See comment 1.

See comment 2.

The only MOU effort at present pertains to the sharing of information and possibly conducting joint R&D projects regarding detection technologies of mutual interest, whether for screening cargo, baggage, or other applications.

See comment 1.

Customs will develop an equipment joint use strategy with the parties named in the Omnibus Appropriations Act (air carriers, airports, or other cargo authorities) but it has not been determined that an MOU is necessary to effect this. If an MOU is required, it probably would not be limited to the FAA and Customs.

See comment 1.

Customs has been developing a concept that will use advanced passenger information along with the profiling system that FAA and Northwest Airlines are developing, but we have not yet determined if this concept is realistic or feasible, and we are not aware of plans to include this in an MOU with the FAA.

See comment 1.

Similarly, Customs is not aware of discussions with the FAA to include meeting of FAA explosive standards and resolution of liability issues in an FAA-Customs MOU.

Now on page 7.

**Page 10...**

See comment 3.

States that Customs received "...\$34 million to purchase detection technologies and develop an X-ray technology for inspecting outbound cargo on pallets." The language in the Act refers to advanced cargo inspection equipment; there is no specific reference to the development or use of X-ray technology for outbound cargo on pallets.

---

**Appendix III**  
**Comments From the U.S. Customs Service**

- 2 -

Now on page 8.

See comment 4.

**Page 10...**

Customs did receive funding for the development of an automated targeting system for cargo and is in the process of developing a plan to accomplish this. However, there has been no discussion of the FAA using this targeting system for domestic cargo shipments transported within the United States.

It should also be noted that the effectiveness of the automated targeting system is contingent on the carriers, exporters, consolidators and freight forwarders providing Customs transportation and commodity data electronically. This will provide a data base that the targeting system can run against. Customs is working with the airline industry to obtain this data.

Now on page 13.

See comment 3.

**Page 18...**

The Customs plan prepared in response to the OMB request favored the use of fixed site truck X-ray systems as well as mobile or relocatable systems.

---

The following are GAO's comments on the U.S. Customs Service letter dated March 20, 1997.

---

## GAO Comments

1. In a letter dated January 13, 1997, to the White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security, Customs stated a memorandum of understanding (MOU) is being established with the FAA to coordinate the identification and deployment of "joint use" screening equipment. The letter further stated that a strategy for the joint-use resources is being developed, with a target date of January 30, 1997, for completion. Based on Customs' response to a draft of this report, we have concluded that Customs has changed its position on establishing an MOU on joint-use.

In its response to our draft report, FAA supports the establishment of such an MOU covering a number of issues. As a result, there appears to be disagreement between Customs and FAA as to how they should address these important issues. We have therefore modified the report to recommend that the department secretaries establish a MOU for FAA, Customs, ATF, and other agencies to work together on these issues and have also suggested that Congress may wish to require the involved agencies to periodically report on these efforts.

2. We have modified the report to state that Customs and FAA are developing an MOU for sharing information and possibly conducting joint-use research and development projects.

3. We have modified the report to reflect this comment.

4. FAA has informed us that it may adapt the Customs' targeting system for screening domestic cargo shipments transported within the United States. FAA pointed out that the White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security's report, dated February 12, 1997, states that Customs and FAA are working with an FAA contractor to study technical issues associated with converting Customs' targeting system, which was originally designed for sea cargo analysis, to air cargo analysis.

# Comments From the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms

Note: GAO comments supplementing those in the report text appear at the end of this appendix.



ASSOCIATE  
DIRECTOR

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY  
BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND FIREARMS  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20226

MAR 25 1997

Mr. Norman J. Rabkin  
Director, Administration of Justice Issues  
United States General Accounting Office  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Rabkin:

We have reviewed the enclosed draft report on terrorism and drug trafficking regarding responsibilities for explosives and narcotics detection technology development, dated March 1997. Additionally, Special Agent in Charge (SAC) Michael Bouchard of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms' (ATF) Arson Enforcement Branch spoke with Mr. Ernest Doring of the General Accounting Office, National Security and International Affairs Division. Mr. Doring has asked that we note our comments directly on the draft report. Accordingly, our remarks can be found on pages 2, 11, 12, 22, and 24.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this document. If you have questions about our comments or if we can be of further assistance, please call SAC Bouchard at 202-927-8159.

Sincerely yours,

  
Andrew L. Vita  
Associate Director  
(Enforcement)

Enclosure

See comment 1.

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**Appendix IV  
Comments From the Bureau of Alcohol,  
Tobacco, and Firearms**

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The following is GAO's comment on the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearm's letter dated March 25, 1997.

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**GAO Comment**

1. We have incorporated ATF's technical comments in the text where appropriate.

# Comments From the Department of Defense

Note: GAO comments supplementing those in the report text appear at the end of this appendix.



OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-2500

MAR 24 1997

Mr. Louis J. Rodrigues  
Director, Defense Acquisitions Issues  
National Security and International  
Affairs Division  
U.S. General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Rodrigues:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the General Accounting Office (GAO) draft report, "TERRORISM AND DRUG TRAFFICKING: Responsibilities for Explosives and Narcotics Detection Technology Development", dated March 13, 1997 (GAO Code 707220), OSD Case 1311.

The Department of Defense has reviewed the report and has no objection. Technical corrections were separately provided. The Department appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft report.

Sincerely,

  
Raymond Dominguez  
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense  
(Forces and Resources)

See comment 1.

---

The following is GAO's comment on DOD's letter dated March 24, 1997.

---

**GAO Comment**

1. We have incorporated DOD's technical comments in the text where appropriate.

# Major Contributors to This Report

---

**National Security and  
International Affairs  
Division, Washington,  
D.C.**

David E. Cooper  
Ernest A. Döring  
Charles D. Groves  
John K. Harper  
John P.K. Ting

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