



One Hundred Eleventh Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

November 2, 2010

Mr. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General Designee
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Comptroller Dodaro:

Recent events involving explosive material concealed in U.S.-bound shipments of printer toner cartridges brings into focus the threat of a cargo-based attack to the aviation sector.

As you know, the *Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007* (P.L. 110-53) directed the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to establish a system for the screening of all cargo transported on passenger aircraft by August 3, 2010. In June, a TSA representative testified before the Committee's Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection that while TSA was on schedule to meet the mandate for all point-to-point domestic cargo, the screening of U.S.-bound air cargo could not be achieved within the statutory timetable.

The incidents involving explosive materials on aviation cargo bound for the United States, as reported on October 29th, are a grave reminder of the ongoing threat to our Nation's critical infrastructure, including aviation, postal, and shipping sectors. It has been reported that some of the suspect cargo was transported on both passenger and all-cargo planes.

Accordingly, I am requesting that GAO conduct an assessment of the progress and challenges associated with screening and securing U.S.-bound cargo. Specifically, please address the following questions:

1. To what extent do Department of Homeland Security policies and procedures, most notably within TSA and Customs and Border Protection (CBP); foster the screening of all U.S.-bound cargo on passenger aircraft? What are the major challenges to ensuring that cargo on U.S.-bound passenger planes is screened?

2. To the extent that overseas programs exist to foster screening, please assess the effectiveness of such policies and procedures to identify and screen U.S.-bound high-risk cargo. To what extent do existing procedures allow for shrink-wrapped or palletized cargos to be screened?

3. To what extent are overseas DHS personnel integrated to address the terrorist threat generally and the cargo security challenge specifically? How does DHS use its TSA and CBP overseas workforce to foster greater security of U.S.-bound flights?

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Cherri Branson, Chief Oversight Counsel for the Committee on Homeland Security, at 202-226-2616.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security



Sheila Jackson Lee
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Transportation Security
and Infrastructure Protection
Committee on Homeland Security