

Office of Law Enforcement Federal Air Marshal Service

FAMS Risk-Based Concept of
Operations and DHS Centers of
Excellence

March 17, 2009



Transportation
Security
Administration

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Need for An Independent Review

- In 2003, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), under the Program Assessment Rating Tool, set a requirement for the Federal Air Marshal Service (FAMS) to have an independent assessment of the way Federal Air Marshals (FAMs) are deployed
- FAMS engaged the Homeland Security Institute (HSI) through S&T to conduct this review
 - Allowed HSI access to all aspects of mission planning, scheduling and daily operations
 - Report highly favorable, but with recommendations for improvement
- The Government Accountability Office (GAO) used the HSI assessment as a baseline and published a favorable, unclassified assessment of FAMS ConOps implementation in 2009



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FAMS ConOps

“Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, FAMS developed a risk-based concept of operations for deploying air marshals on U.S. commercial passenger air carriers. Because there are many more U.S. air carrier flights each day than can be covered by air marshals, FAMS relies on the methodology outlined in its concept of operations to assign air marshals to flights with the highest security risks. Under this approach, FAMS considers the following risk-related factors to categorize each of the approximately 29,000 domestic and international flights operated daily by U.S. commercial passenger air carriers into risk categories--high risk or lower risk”

-- compiled from the GAO Report



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FAMS ConOps (Continued)

- Threat (intelligence): Available strategic or tactical information affecting aviation security is considered
- Vulnerabilities: Although the FAMS specific definition of vulnerability is deemed to be sensitive security information, DHS defines “vulnerability” as a physical feature or operational attribute that renders an entity open to exploitation or susceptible to a given hazard
- Consequences: FAMS recognizes that flight routes over certain geographic locations involve more potential consequences than other routes

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HSI Findings

- FAMS applies a structured, rigorous approach to analyzing risk and allocating resources
- The approach is reasonable and valid
- No other organizations facing comparable risk-management challenges apply notably better methodologies or tools
- OMB and GAO agreed with the HSI study findings

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One HSI Recommendation

- Recommendation: To compensate for a lack of resources and to deny predictability, FAMS should integrate randomness (unpredictability) in its scheduling process
- This recommendation is in-line with the overall TSA strategy of employing unpredictable operations to raise criminal/terrorist uncertainty in what security and law enforcement countermeasures might be encountered in an attack

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Potential Application of ARMOR

- Press reports of the USC CREATE ARMOR application for the LAWAPD created interest
- Inquiries to USC and S&T resulted in a feasibility study and prototype jointly funded by FAMS, S&T and USC CREATE

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Discussion