

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-15-465T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Transportation Security, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

In 2011, TSA began providing expedited screening to selected passengers and has expanded the availability of such screening to increasing numbers of passengers as part of its overall emphasis on risk-based security. Passengers who qualify for expedited screening enjoy varying levels of benefits, including not having to remove their shoes, light outerwear, jackets, belts, liquids, gels and laptops for X-ray screening at airport security checkpoints. By determining passenger risk prior to travel, TSA intended to focus its screening resources on higher-risk passengers while expediting screening for lower-risk passengers. Further, TSA developed the Managed Inclusion process, designed to provide expedited screening to passengers not deemed low risk prior to arriving at the airport.

This testimony addresses (1) how TSA assesses the risk of passengers to determine their eligibility to receive expedited screening and (2) the extent to which TSA determined the effectiveness of its Managed Inclusion process. This statement is based on a report GAO issued in December 2014 and selected updates from March 2015. Among other things, GAO analyzed TSA policies and procedures and interviewed TSA security officials.

## What GAO Recommends

In its December 2014 report, GAO recommended that TSA take steps to ensure and document that its planned testing of the Managed Inclusion process adheres to established evaluation design practices. DHS concurred with GAO's recommendation and is taking action to address it.

View [GAO-15-465T](#). For more information, contact Jennifer A. Grover at 202-512-7141 or [groverj@gao.gov](mailto:groverj@gao.gov)

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## AVIATION SECURITY

### TSA's Managed Inclusion Process Expands Passenger Expedited Screening, But TSA Has Not Tested Its Security Effectiveness

#### What GAO Found

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) implemented its expedited screening program—known as TSA Pre✓™—in 2011. TSA uses the following methods to assess whether a passenger is low risk and therefore eligible for expedited screening.

**(1) Approved TSA Pre✓™ lists of known travelers**—These lists are comprised of individuals whom TSA has determined to be low risk by virtue of their membership in a specific group, such as active duty military members, or based on group vetting requirements.

**(2) Automated TSA Pre✓™ risk assessments of all passengers**—Using these assessments, TSA assigns passengers scores based upon information available to TSA to identify low risk passengers eligible for expedited screening for a specific flight prior to the passengers' arrival at the airport.

**(3) Real-time threat assessments through Managed Inclusion**—These assessments use several layers of security, including procedures that randomly select passengers for expedited screening, behavior detection officers who observe passengers to identify high-risk behaviors, and either passenger screening canine teams or explosives trace detection devices to help ensure that passengers selected for expedited screening have not handled explosive material. TSA developed Managed Inclusion as a tool to improve the efficiency of dedicated TSA Pre✓™ screening lanes as well as to help TSA reach its internal goal of providing expedited screening to at least 25 percent of passengers by the end of calendar year 2013.

TSA has tested the effectiveness of individual Managed Inclusion security layers and determined that each layer provides effective security. However, GAO has previously identified challenges in several of the layers used in the Managed Inclusion process, raising concerns regarding their effectiveness. For example, in November 2013, GAO found that TSA had not demonstrated that behavioral indicators can be used to reliably and effectively identify passengers who may pose a threat to aviation security. TSA is taking steps to revise and test the behavior detection program, but the issue remains open. In December 2014, GAO reported that TSA planned to begin testing Managed Inclusion as an overall system in October 2014 and TSA estimated that testing could take 12 to 18 months to complete. GAO has previously reported on challenges TSA has faced in designing studies to test the security effectiveness of other programs in accordance with established methodological practices such as ensuring an adequate sample size or randomly selecting items in a study to ensure the results can be generalizable—key features of established evaluation design practices. In March 2015, TSA officials noted that a pilot for testing behavior detection officers was scheduled to run from October 2014 through May 2015, and testing of canines was scheduled to begin in June 2015 and be completed in March 2016. Ensuring its planned testing of the Managed Inclusion process adheres to established evaluation design practices will help TSA provide reasonable assurance that the testing will yield reliable results.