

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-24-106497](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

In recent years, letter carriers have been robbed, including at gunpoint, threatening their safety and the security of the mail they carry.

GAO was asked to review issues related to postal crime and law enforcement. This report addresses: (1) recent trends in cases of serious crime against USPS employees and property, (2) the responsibilities of postal inspectors and postal police in responding to serious crime, and (3) the extent to which the Inspection Service has processes for determining the size and location of its postal inspector and postal police workforce.

GAO analyzed data from the Inspection Service on serious crime cases from fiscal years 2017 through 2023, the most recent data. GAO determined the data were reliable for the purposes of this report. GAO also reviewed federal laws, workforce policies and procedures, and interviewed Inspection Service officials. GAO assessed the Inspection Service's workforce processes against internal control principles related to decision-making.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making three recommendations to USPS: (1) document processes for determining the size and location of the postal inspector workforce, (2) fully document processes for determining the size and location of the postal police workforce, and (3) set a time frame for completing a security force assessment for the postal police workforce. The Inspection Service agreed with all three recommendations and plans to take action to implement them.

View [GAO-24-106497](#). For more information, contact David Marroni at (202) 512-2834 or marronid@gao.gov or Derrick Collins at (202) 512-8777 or collinsd@gao.gov.

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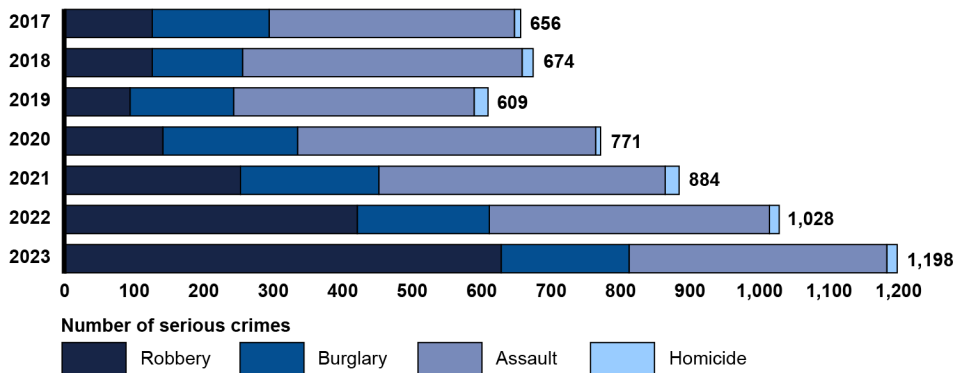
U.S. POSTAL SERVICE

Inspection Service Should Document Its Law Enforcement Workforce Decision-Making Processes

What GAO Found

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service (Inspection Service) is the law enforcement arm of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). The Inspection Service is charged with, among other things, protecting USPS employees and property against serious crime—which include robbery, burglary, assault, and homicide. According to GAO's review of Inspection Service data, cases of serious crime have increased almost every year from fiscal years 2017 through 2023. This is largely due to an increase in robbery cases, which increased nearly sevenfold from fiscal years 2019 through 2023 (see figure). GAO's review found that these robberies have generally targeted letter carriers, increasingly involved firearms, and targeted the universal keys which USPS employees use to access mailboxes.

U.S. Postal Inspection Service Serious Crime Cases, Fiscal Years 2017 - 2023
Fiscal year



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Postal Inspection Service data. | GAO-24-106497

Postal inspectors and postal police are responsible for responding to serious crime. Specifically, in fiscal year 2023, more than 1,200 postal inspectors were responsible for investigating these crimes, among other responsibilities. About 370 postal police provided facility and perimeter security at 33 USPS properties—generally mail processing and distribution centers.

GAO found that the Inspection Service has not fully documented its processes for determining the size and location of its postal inspector and postal police workforce. For postal inspectors, Inspection Service officials described processes including regular reviews by division officials, but the processes were not documented. GAO also found that the Inspection Service partially documented such processes for its postal police workforce. Documenting workforce decision-making processes could help the Inspection Service ensure it allocates law enforcement resources according to mission needs. Further, the Inspection Service has not assessed the size and location of its postal police workforce since 2011. Officials said they are planning to conduct a new security force assessment, but they could not provide GAO the time frames for doing so. As such, it is unclear how long the Inspection Service will rely on outdated information to determine how to align its postal police workforce with current security needs.