

**TSA Needs to Improve
Efforts to Retain, Hire, and
Train Its Transportation
Security Officers**





DHS OIG HIGHLIGHTS

TSA Needs to Improve Efforts to Retain, Hire, and Train Its Transportation Security Officers

March 28, 2019

Why We Did This Audit

TSOs are integral to improving aviation security at our Nation's airports by identifying prohibited objects in bags, in cargo, and on passengers. Therefore, TSA must retain, hire, and train its TSOs with the requisite skills and abilities to help protect the Nation from aviation security risks. We conducted this audit to determine the extent to which TSA retains, hires, and trains TSOs to accomplish its screening mission.

What We Recommend

We made nine recommendations that, when implemented, should help TSA improve TSO retention, hiring, and training.

For Further Information:

Contact our Office of Public Affairs at (202) 981-6000, or email us at DHS-OIG.OfficePublicAffairs@oig.dhs.gov

What We Found

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) needs to continue to improve its retention, hiring, and training of Transportation Security Officers (TSO). Specifically, TSA needs to better address its retention challenges because it currently does not share and leverage results of TSO exit surveys and does not always convey job expectations to new-hires. Prior to August 2018, TSA did not always focus on TSO career growth. Thus, the agency may be missing opportunities to prevent early attrition. By improving its retention efforts, TSA could save funds otherwise spent to hire and train new TSOs.

Furthermore, TSA does not fully evaluate applicants for capability as well as compatibility when hiring new TSOs. Thus, the agency may be making uninformed hiring decisions due to inadequate applicant information and a lack of formally documented guidance on ranking potential new-hires. Without complete information, TSA may not be selecting the most highly qualified individuals as TSOs.

Prior to July 2018, TSA had not standardized the approach for training new TSOs before they attend basic training and did not consistently send TSOs to basic training immediately following onboarding. TSA also does not give all airports complete visibility into its basic training curriculum as a basis for training new-hires locally. Without an experienced workforce or a consistent, robust training program, TSA is missing opportunities to strengthen its workforce. Given the importance of TSOs fulfilling the aviation security mission, TSA must address its retention, hiring, and training challenges, which could save millions in taxpayers' dollars.

TSA Response

TSA concurred with all nine recommendations and initiated corrective actions to address the findings.



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Department of Homeland Security

Washington, DC 20528 / www.oig.dhs.gov

March 28, 2019

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable David Pekoske
Administrator
Transportation Security Administration

FROM: John V. Kelly 
Acting Inspector General

SUBJECT: *TSA Needs to Improve Efforts to Retain, Hire,
and Train Its Transportation Security Officers*

Attached for your action is our final report, *TSA Needs to Improve Efforts to Retain, Hire, and Train Its Transportation Security Officers*. We incorporated the formal comments provided by your office.

The report contains nine recommendations aimed at improving TSA's retention, hiring, and training efforts for its Transportation Security Officers. Your office concurred with all nine recommendations. Based on information provided in your response to the draft report, recommendations 4, 6, and 8 are closed while recommendations 1, 2, 5, 7, and 9 are resolved and open. Once your office has fully implemented the recommendations, please submit a formal closeout letter to us within 30 days so that we may close the recommendations. The memorandum should be accompanied by evidence of completion of agreed-upon corrective actions and of the disposition of any monetary amounts. Recommendation 3 remains unresolved and open because we did not agree with TSA's proposed corrective action plan. As prescribed by the Department of Homeland Security Directive 077-01, *Follow-Up and Resolutions for the Office of Inspector General Report Recommendations*, within 90 days of the date of this memorandum, please provide our office with a written response that includes your (1) agreement or disagreement, (2) corrective action plan, and (3) target completion date. Also, please include responsible parties and any other supporting documentation necessary to inform us about the current status of the recommendations. Until your response is received and evaluated, recommendation #3 will be considered open and unresolved. Please send your response or closure request to OIGAuditsFollowup@oig.dhs.gov.



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Consistent with our responsibility under the *Inspector General Act*, we will provide copies of our report to congressional committees with oversight and appropriation responsibility over the Department of Homeland Security. We will post the report on our website for public dissemination.

Please call me with any questions, or your staff may contact Sondra McCauley, Assistant Inspector General for Audits, at (202) 981-6000.

Attachment



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Abbreviations

BTP	Basic Training Program
CBT	Computer Based Test
GAO	Government Accountability Office
HC	Human Capital
LE/FAMS	Law Enforcement/Federal Air Marshal Service
OJT	on-the-job training
TSA	Transportation Security Administration
TSO	Transportation Security Officer



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Background

The Transportation Security Administration’s (TSA) mission is to protect our Nation’s transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce. A vital element to the agency’s success is a professional, motivated, and dedicated workforce. At the end of fiscal year 2017, TSA comprised approximately 61,400 employees. More than 34,200 (56 percent) were entry-level Transportation Security Officers (TSO).

TSOs are integral to carrying out aviation security at our Nation’s airports.¹ TSOs secure and protect air travelers and baggage at airports by identifying prohibited objects in bags, in cargo, and on passengers to prevent those objects from getting onto aircraft. TSO responsibilities include operating various screening equipment and technology, performing pat-downs of passengers, conducting bag searches, controlling airport terminal entry and exit points, interacting with the public, and understanding and implementing TSA standard operating procedures (figure 1 shows TSOs screening passengers and baggage at an airport security checkpoint). In carrying out these screening responsibilities, TSOs must think critically about current threats and risks, and the responses necessary to mitigate those threats.



Figure 1. TSA Airport Security Checkpoint
Source: TSA

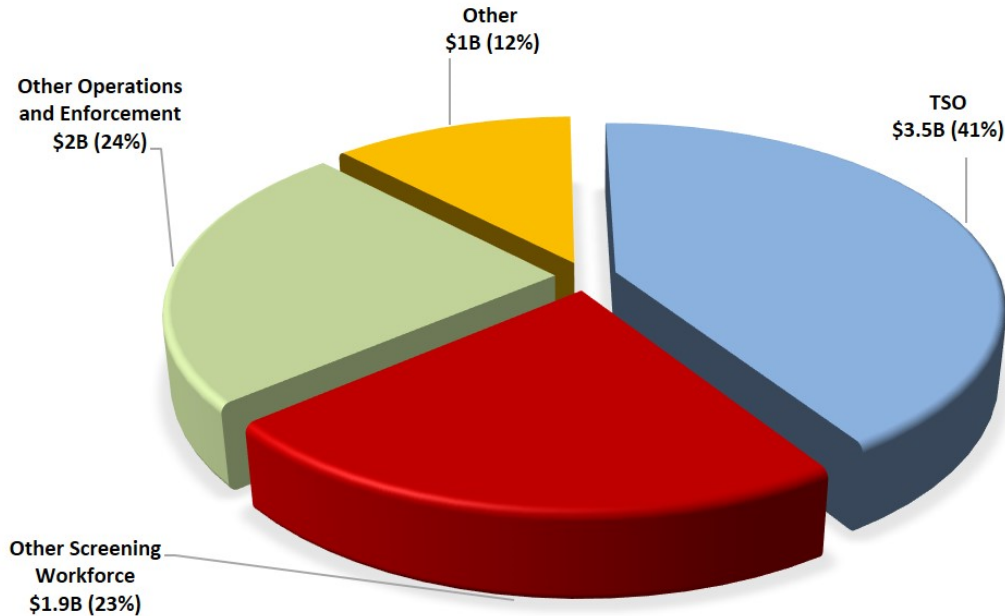
¹ During the partial Government shutdown from December 2018 – January 2019, TSOs were required to work to carry out their critical mission to secure the airports.



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The FY 2017 obligational authority of approximately \$3.5 billion for TSO screening operations encompasses about 41 percent of TSA's funding,² which includes costs for screening personnel, compensation, benefits, and training (figure 2 outlines TSA's FY 2017 total obligations).

Figure 2. Total FY 2017 Obligational Authority for TSA



Source: Office of Inspector General (OIG) analysis of TSA data

TSA primarily relies on the following offices to retain, hire, and train TSOs:

- Human Capital (HC) oversees the recruitment and hiring process. It administers and reviews the employee engagement and exit surveys. HC also hires contractors to provide recruiting, hiring, and other services.
- Law Enforcement/Federal Air Marshal Service (LE/FAMS) oversees background investigations for applicants.
- Training and Development oversees the development and delivery of training programs.
- Security Operations secures the transportation system. This office consists of headquarters and airport personnel.

TSA has an inherently challenging mission that involves addressing evolving threats, adapting to new technologies, and dealing with consistent personnel

² FY 2017 TSA obligational authority was \$8.4 billion, which does not include \$2.8 billion for aviation security and credentialing fees collected. According to a TSA official, obligational authority is the authority provided by law to incur financial obligations that will result in outlays.



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turnover. History shows terrorists are capable of attacking in many different ways. As threats change, TSA pursues advanced technology for detection. This requires that TSOs learn and operate new equipment with revised procedures to safeguard the traveling public. We have previously reported many findings and recommendations in prior Department of Homeland Security OIG covert testing and other audit reports specific to TSO performance and training. TSA continues to work on improving its workforce's capability to address security risks and vulnerabilities. We believe TSO retention and training challenges are contributing factors to airport security weaknesses. Human performance and sound judgment are critical factors in protecting the Nation against terrorist attacks, thus highlighting the importance of retaining experienced TSOs, hiring qualified TSOs, and training the workforce appropriately to secure our airports.

Congressional and media attention has focused on TSA's retention and employee turnover issues, which include:

- workforce morale;
- staffing and scheduling challenges;
- management;
- employee attrition; and
- TSA pay scale.

TSOs are excepted service positions and are not subject to the same appointment, pay, and classification rules as competitive service positions codified under Title 5 of the United States Code. The Aviation and Transportation Security Act authorizes TSA to set the compensation, terms, and conditions of employment for security screening personnel. TSA uses the legacy Federal Aviation Administration Core Compensation System to compensate its employees. The core compensation system establishes pay bands that set a range for the minimum and maximum rate of basic pay for an occupation based on position category, duties, competencies, and level of responsibility. Employees may receive in-band increases and promotions based on individual accomplishments.

During FYs 2016–17, TSA hired more than 19,300 TSOs, yet lost more than 15,500 during this same period. TSA spends millions annually to hire and train new TSOs to replace those who leave the agency.



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In FY 2017, TSA reported that, on average, it spent approximately \$6,300 to hire and \$2,300 to train TSOs through its Basic Training Program (BTP) and the new-hire training at airports. In that same fiscal year, TSA hired more than 9,600 TSOs, costing the agency approximately \$75 million³ in hiring and training costs.

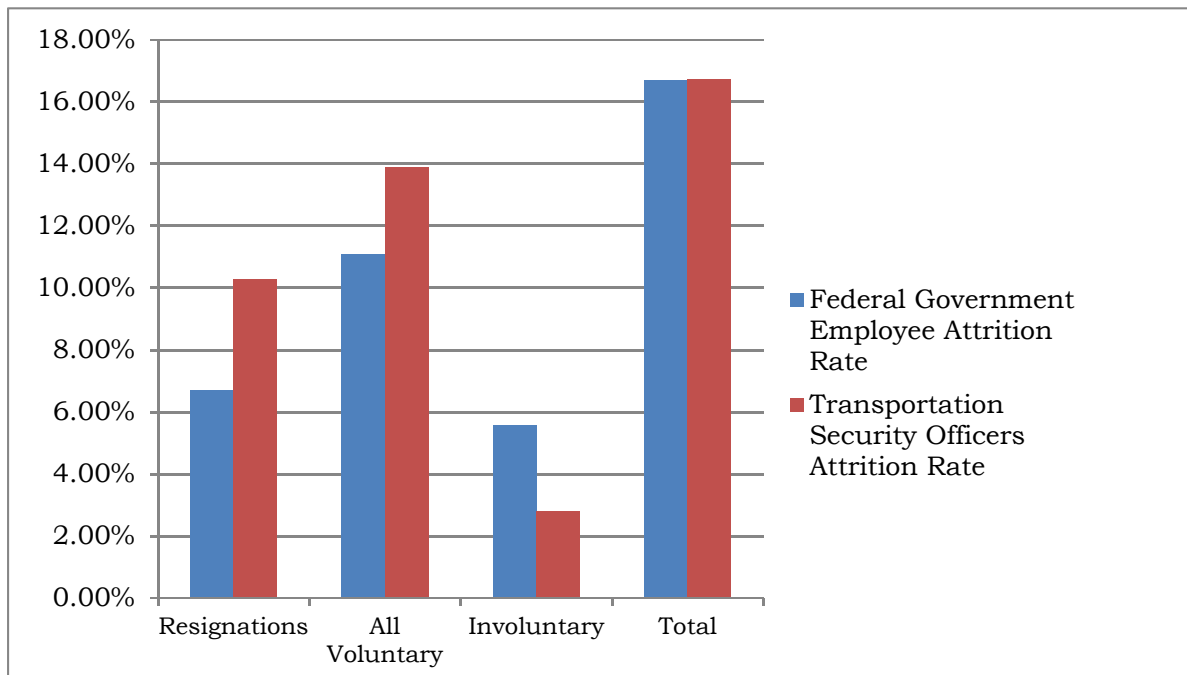
According to TSA, the TSO attrition rate matches that for overall Federal government employees — approximately 17 percent in FY 2017, as shown in figure 3.

FY 2017 Average New-Hire TSO Costs	
<i>Hiring</i>	
Recruitment & Hiring Costs	\$5,545
<u>Post-Hire Background Investigation*</u>	
	\$745
	\$6,290
<i>Training</i>	
Basic Training Program & New-Hire Training	\$2,283
Total: \$8,573	

Source: TSA data as of June 2018

*Note: TSA estimated post-hire background investigation costs because it does not track investigations conducted by position.

Figure 3. Comparison of FY 2017 Federal Employee and TSO Attrition Rates



Source: TSA data as of April 2018

According to the *Aviation and Transportation Security Act*, TSA is charged with developing standards for the hiring, retention, training, and testing of security screening personnel at all U.S. airports. Hiring is a multifaceted process

³TSA officials explained they did not train all 9,600 TSOs hired in FY 2017 through the BTP due to storm closures at the training facility and resource restrictions. Airport personnel locally trained TSOs who did not attend the BTP.



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involving at least eight distinct steps from TSO application to job offer acceptance. As shown in figure 4, these steps include applicants passing a Computer-Based Test (CBT), which comprises both a Screener English Test and a Screener Object Recognition Test. Applicants also complete an Airport Assessment, which involves a structured interview, fingerprinting, and verification of U.S. citizenship. Additional steps consist of a medical evaluation, including a drug test and a background investigation. The Ready Pool is the set of applicants eligible for job offers. For placement in the Ready Pool, the Personnel Security Section, within LE/FAMS, performs a preliminary background check. Appendix C contains details on the TSO hiring process.

Figure 4 shows the average hiring process took 252 days from application to job offer acceptance.⁴ The average of 252 days includes the number of days it may take an applicant to schedule the CBT and resolve issues arising from a medical examination,⁵ which are the applicant’s responsibility and out of TSA’s control. Excluding the average number of days related to the applicant’s actions, the hiring process takes an average of 183 days from application to job offer acceptance.

Figure 4. TSO Hiring Process and Average Completion Timeframes for FYs 2016–17



-----Average 252-day Completion Timeframe-----
 Source: DHS OIG analysis of the TSO hiring process and completion timeframes

Prior to July 2018, new-hire TSOs were required to complete onboarding tasks, such as online training and shadowing an experienced officer for “A Day in the Life” exercise. All new-hire TSOs attended a 2-week BTP at the TSA Academy, which is located at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers in Glynco, GA. Using approved TSA standard operating procedures, Academy instructors provided new TSOs the requisite knowledge and skills to screen individuals and their property. In addition to attending the TSO BTP, all new TSOs had to complete on-the-job-training (OJT) tasks before being certified on various elements of the job, such as pat-downs, explosives detection, and x-ray machines. Training and Development could grant exceptions to allow airports to conduct new-hire TSO training locally in certain circumstances, such as TSA Academy closure or a hiring surge.

⁴ In FYs 2016-17, the average time for a TSO to enter on duty after certification was approximately 36 days.

⁵ TSA has changed its policy and now removes applicants from the process when they do not receive a satisfactory medical evaluation. When TSA removes an applicant from the hiring process, the applicant is no longer eligible for the TSO position.



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Results of Audit

TSA needs to continue to improve its retention, hiring, and training of TSOs. Specifically, TSA needs to better address its retention challenges because it does not share and leverage results of TSO exit surveys and does not always convey job expectations to new-hires. Prior to August 2018, TSA did not always focus on career growth for TSOs, including pay increases based on skill level. Thus, the agency may be missing opportunities to prevent early attrition. By improving its retention efforts, TSA could save on funds otherwise spent to hire and train new TSOs.

Furthermore, TSA does not fully evaluate applicants for capability as well as compatibility when hiring new TSOs. Thus, the agency may be making uninformed hiring decisions due to inadequate applicant information and a lack of formally documented guidance on ranking potential new-hires. Without complete information, TSA may not be selecting the most highly qualified individuals as TSOs.

Prior to July 2018, TSA had not standardized the approach for training new TSOs before they attend basic training and did not consistently send TSOs to basic training immediately following onboarding. It also does not give all airports complete visibility into its basic training curriculum as a basis for training new-hires locally. Without an experienced workforce or a consistent, robust training program, TSA is missing opportunities to strengthen its workforce. Given the importance of TSOs fulfilling the aviation security mission, TSA must address its retention, hiring, and training challenges, which could save millions in taxpayers' dollars.

TSA Needs to Continue to Improve TSO Retention

TSA has not addressed all of the challenges associated with retaining TSOs. TSA does not fully leverage the results of TSO exit surveys because HC does not proactively share the survey results with airport management teams. According to TSA officials at 2 of the 12 airports visited, lack of clearly understanding job expectations, such as pat-down procedures and shift schedules, has led to early attrition of new-hires. Further, TSA did not always focus on career growth for TSOs, including pay increases based on skill level. In August 2018, TSA implemented the first phase of TSO Career Progression, which provides newly hired entry-level officers a career path with pay increases tied to enhanced skills and training. Under the TSO Career Progression, new-hire TSOs must successfully complete standardized training locally and then attend training at the TSA Academy within a certain period (e.g., 6 months for



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Category X, I, and II airports) of onboarding if they meet certain readiness criteria.

TSA has also identified and addressed some retention challenges. For example, the agency has approved retention incentive packages for some cities. By improving its retention efforts, TSA could save millions of taxpayer dollars spent hiring and training new TSOs. Attrition costs include the costs of replacing those who leave by hiring and training new staff to replace them, as well as losses associated with productivity, institutional knowledge, decreased employee morale, and potential performance gaps as new staff take time to fully perform in their job. According to a 2010 report from a consulting firm and non-profit organization,⁶ losing experienced employees can be a serious disruption to an agency's operational capacity and performance.

TSA Does Not Fully Leverage Results of TSO Exit Surveys to Improve Retention

Although TSA requests that employees leaving the agency complete a voluntary exit survey,⁷ it does not fully analyze departing TSOs' responses on these surveys, especially the responses of high turnover employees such as part-time personnel and those with less than 6 months of experience.

We reviewed a summary of TSA's exit survey results from 10,128 respondents from FYs 2012–17. The exit surveys identified common themes, most of which were corroborated by TSA airport officials during our interviews. These included dissatisfaction with career advancement opportunities and issues with management's competence and communication. Table 1 identifies the most common responses for the part-time and full-time TSA employees.

⁶ Booz Allen Hamilton and Partnership for Public Service, *Beneath the Surface: Understanding Attrition at Your Agency and Why It Matters*, November 2010.

⁷ TSA's cumulative response rate to employee exit surveys is 25 percent.



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Table 1. Summary of Most Common TSA Exit Survey Responses for Full-Time and Part-Time TSOs, FYs 2012–17

Theme	FT	PT	Survey Details
Career Advancement	X	X	The most commonly selected reason for leaving TSA was dissatisfaction with career advancement opportunities and processes. Specific reasons included few opportunities for advancement, unfair promotion process, unsupported career development, and few professional/career development-training opportunities.
Management	X	X	Reasons respondents cited for dissatisfaction with their supervisors included management’s competence, communication, promotion of negative work environment, disrespect, lack of trust, lack of appreciation or recognition, and unfair practices in appraisal, discipline, and advancement.
Personal Reasons	X	X	Respondents complained about the impact of the job on their personal life, having to care for family, desire to change to a different type of work, family concerns, personal health problems, commute, moving out of the area, and family dissatisfaction with job. In addition, the category contained respondents who were retiring or needed to move for full-time work.
Scheduling		X	Reasons respondents were dissatisfied with scheduling include the lack of flexibility in scheduling, the scheduling process, difficulty in obtaining time off, nontraditional scheduling, and the inability to obtain shift preferences.
Pay	X	X	Respondents complained about base pay, pay raises, bonuses, and the fairness of pay compared with the work performed. Almost three-quarters of those who completed the voluntary exit surveys said the new job would pay more.
Senior Leadership	X		Respondents had issues with senior leadership’s competence, lack of communication, respect issues, trust issues, lack of appreciation, work environment, unfair practices in appraisals, and the changes in leadership and the organization.

Source: DHS OIG analysis of TSA’s exit survey results

TSA does not fully leverage the results of voluntary exit surveys to help airports mitigate the reasons TSOs leave the agency. HC’s Workforce Assessment Branch administers employee exit surveys, analyzes the results for common themes, and presents the results to TSA senior officials annually. However, HC does not proactively share specific results for each airport with each airport’s management team. Proactively sharing data from exit surveys for a more comprehensive analysis would help maximize retention efforts.

Additionally, airports do not consistently conduct exit interviews when a TSO leaves. TSA airport officials may collect information as TSOs depart, but the data is limited and not always used to help improve weaknesses that may be contributing to turnover. Management at 7 of 12 airports we visited said they do not have a process to interview departing employees (appendix D contains a list of best practices observed during airport site visits, which includes conducting face-to-face interviews with departing personnel to understand the



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reasons for departure). Having a process to interview departing employees consistently could give TSA valuable information about why TSOs leave and help the agency develop beneficial retention strategies.

TSA Has Difficulty Retaining Small Airport, New-hire, and Part-time TSOs

TSA continues to struggle with attrition rates across all sizes of airports, as shown in table 2. For example, the three largest category airports, representing 92 percent of the TSO workforce, have an attrition rate of approximately 17 percent. The smallest categories of airports, representing 8 percent of the TSO workforce, have an attrition rate of approximately 19 percent.⁸ Smaller airports may only have four TSO positions; whereas, larger airports may have more than 1,000 TSO positions. According to TSA airport officials, TSOs at smaller airports may leave due to limited career growth opportunities and scheduling challenges.

Table 2. FY 2017 Average TSO Attrition Rate by Airport Category

Airport Category	Number of Airports	Number of TSOs	% of Total Airports	% of TSOs	Attrition Rate (%)
X	28	25,823	7	55	16
I	57	12,674	14	27	18
II	80	4,584	19	10	18
III	112	2,255	27	5	18
IV	145	1,325	34	3	20

Source: TSA data through FY 2017

Note: TSA calculates attrition rates by dividing separations by average headcount.

New-hire and part-time TSOs leave TSA at a considerably higher rate than more experienced and full-time TSOs.⁹ TSA officials explained that new-hires often leave because they do not understand job expectations; part-time TSOs often leave for positions with more hours or other part-time work. To accommodate flight schedules and operational requirements, TSA hires more part-time than full-time TSOs, which could increase its overall attrition rate (table 3 shows the TSO voluntary attrition rates in FYs 2012–17). During FYs 2012–14, part-time TSOs separated at a rate three times greater than full-time TSOs. During FYs 2015–16, the part-time TSO voluntary attrition rate was more than two-and-a-half times the full-time TSO voluntary attrition rate.

⁸ Each airport has a category ranking with category X being the busiest airport followed by a category I, II, III, and IV. As noted in table 2, there is an inverse relationship between attrition rate and size of airport.

⁹ TSA employs more full-time TSOs than part-time TSOs. As full-time TSO employees depart TSA, agency policy allows currently employed part-time TSOs the opportunity to backfill the vacant full-time positions.



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Table 3. TSO Voluntary Attrition Rates, FYs 2012-17

	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
Overall	9.13%	10.83%	12.30%	12.02%	13.53%	13.91%
Full-Time	5.67%	6.79%	8.27%	8.88%	10.06%	10.70%
Part-Time	18.16%	22.04%	25.40%	23.26%	26.55%	26.58%

Source: TSA data through FY 2017

Note: TSA calculates attrition rates by dividing separations by average headcount.

Faced with TSO turnover, TSA must repeatedly hire and train new TSOs to replace those leaving the agency. In FY 2017, more than 9,600 TSOs joined the workforce, with TSA hiring about two part-time employees for every full-time employee. The new employees consisted of 6,611 part-time and 2,991 full-time TSOs. That same fiscal year, 8,095 TSOs left the agency, with approximately 24 percent (1,906) separating within the first 6 months of their start dates.

It cost taxpayers approximately \$16 million to hire and train the 1,906 TSOs who left.

TSA Does Not Always Use Available Options for Communicating Job Expectations to TSO Applicants

TSA airport officials asserted that some TSOs leave shortly after starting because they do not fully understand scheduling demands or the daily tasks of the job, such as the details of pat-down procedures. One reason this occurred is that TSA does not require that airports use available means of communicating job expectations to applicants.¹⁰ For example, in addition to job requirements included in vacancy announcements, applicants may view a Realistic Job Preview video, which gives an objective portrait of the TSO position and an overview of the application process. The Realistic Job Preview video is also available for applicants to view on the TSA Candidate Dashboard, which is the system that provides applicants the status of their employment application. At 4 of 12 airports we visited, we identified a best practice of showing the video to groups of applicants during Airport Assessments. Even though TSA provides applicants opportunities to watch the Realistic Job Preview video, it does not require that applicants view this video.

¹⁰ Other means that TSA uses to convey job expectations to applicants include participation in job fairs and career events, hosting information sessions, and providing airport-specific information in TSO job announcements.



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Another example of an available method of communicating job expectations to applicants is airports may choose to conduct an optional conversation prior to scheduling the Airport Assessment or prior to check-in on the day of the Airport Assessment. According to HC's *TSO Local Hiring Process Manual*, these conversations are not required. These optional conversations can provide a realistic overview of the TSO position and airport-specific facts, such as open positions at the airport, shifts available, parking fees, hiring process timeframes, required training, and working conditions.

TSA Did Not Focus on TSOs' Career Development

According to Government Accountability Office's (GAO) *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, operational success partly depends on providing the workforce with the right incentives and responsibilities. During fieldwork, we noted that TSA did not consistently focus on career development opportunities for TSOs to promote interest and long-term loyalty to the agency. At 6 of the 12 airports we visited, TSA airport officials agreed that lack of career advancement affects TSO attrition (see appendix D for a list of several best practices in this area, including temporary promotions and the opportunity to take roles outside of screening operations to enhance career development). TSA officials at one airport explained that they develop professional growth opportunities locally without help from headquarters.

To encourage commitment to and advancement in one's career, TSA submitted a TSO Career Progression Model to the Secretary's office for review in April 2018 and implemented it in August 2018. It shows the milestones associated with a TSO's career advancement, as well as the required training for each level. TSA officials stated that the model gives TSOs reasonable and achievable milestones for career advancement. The model links TSO pay and career progression within the agency.

Staff Shortages and Low Pay Exacerbate Retention Challenges

TSA officials reported staff shortages exist because not enough applicants are in the hiring pipeline and airport personnel have difficulty competing with local economic conditions. TSA officials from one airport we visited expressed concerns about staffing according to the airport's Resource Allocation Plan.¹¹ In the second quarter of FY 2018, the airport was staffed at 87 percent. An official at the same airport said that even though TSA offers overtime shifts to fill scheduling gaps resulting from staff shortages, it has difficulty filling those overtime shifts. According to an April 2018 congressional testimony by the

¹¹ Security Operations provides a Resource Allocation Plan to each airport based upon data, such as passenger volume and targeted wait times. This plan estimates the number of full-time equivalents necessary to meet these demands.



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National President for the American Federation of Government Employees,¹² TSA's failure to adequately staff checkpoint and baggage screening areas leads to overworked officers and less security for the flying public. In our opinion, excessive use of overtime, which could be mitigated by competitive salaries and adequate staffing levels, could also result in lower job satisfaction and morale, and therefore higher turnover.

As shown in table 1, exit surveys cite pay as one of the most common reasons employees leave TSA. According to a 2014 TSA memo, at that time, front-line TSOs were the lowest paid operational personnel in TSA's workforce. TSO pay is limited to the TSA pay bands allotted for the position. In addition, officials from two hard-to-hire airports said TSOs often leave to find job opportunities that offer the same or higher pay. When comparing the most recent Census Bureau data for cities in which these two hard-to-hire airports are located, TSA pays TSOs as much as 31 percent below the per capita income amount. For example, at one airport, officials indicated that a local retail store offered comparable salaries to TSOs. Additionally, one TSA official reported that a sandwich shop chain offered a higher salary than an entry-level TSO.

Without competitive pay rates, TSA officials asserted they cannot successfully compete in the job market. TSA addresses this issue by improving monetary recognition for TSOs under its compensation authority. For example, in February 2018, HC approved retention incentives for two hard-to-hire airports. Additionally, as stated previously, TSA implemented the TSO Career Progression in August 2018. As it develops, the TSO Career Progression initiative is intended to provide a clearly defined career path with pay increases tied to enhanced skills and training for TSOs.

TSA Needs to Enhance the TSO Applicant Evaluation Process

According to GAO's *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, management should recruit competent staff to achieve agency objectives. However, TSA has not pursued all options for fully evaluating applicants to ensure it hires qualified staff. For example, competency tests evaluate only English proficiency and object recognition, and do not consider compatibility factors such as personality, motivation, and attitude that are critical for job performance. Structured interview questions also do not assess applicants' ability to perform actual TSO duties. TSA may be making uninformed TSO hiring decisions given inadequate applicant documentation and a lack of formal

¹² Statement by J. David Cox, Sr., National President of the American Federation of Government Employees, American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, before the Subcommittee on Transportation and Protective Security of the Committee on Homeland Security, Examining the President's FY 2019 Budget Request for the Transportation Security Administration, April 12, 2018.



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guidance on the applicant ranking process. As a result, TSA airport officials may not be identifying and hiring the most highly qualified individuals for TSO positions.

Competency Tests and Structured Interview Questions Do Not Fully Assess TSO Applicants

To hire more qualified applicants, TSA could enhance the current competency tests. During the CBT and interview, TSA assesses competencies, such as oral communication, attention to detail, conflict management, critical thinking, flexibility, integrity, honesty, teamwork, and situational awareness. Examples of potential enhancements include personality tests and practice tests given at colleges to determine whether students are a fit for TSO positions.

In April 2018, TSA officials completed research on the potential effectiveness of assessing job compatibility during the hiring process. TSA officials said the job compatibility assessment is a pre-employment suitability screening that focuses on personality-related, motivational, and attitudinal competencies that are critical for job performance. TSA officials said their goal for this initiative was to develop and implement a valid assessment to strengthen the TSO applicant pool by identifying applicants least and most likely to be a good fit for the position. HC will complete this initiative and incorporate the assessment into the hiring process as part of the CBT.

Additionally, TSA could enhance structured interviews to better evaluate an applicant's ability to perform TSO tasks. As part of the Airport Assessment, TSA scores applicants on a structured interview consisting of seven competencies validated as critical for the position, including flexibility, teamwork, and oral communication. According to TSA personnel at one airport, the interview portion limits their ability to disqualify applicants. TSA personnel at another airport stated the interview questions do not assess the ability to perform actual TSO duties.

Inadequate Documentation May Lead to Uninformed Hiring Decisions

Without adequate documentation supporting newly hired TSOs and formal guidance on the process to rank applicants, TSA may be making uninformed TSO hiring decisions. Airports could not provide documentation showing applicants passed all steps in the hiring process. Additionally, TSA lacks formal criteria and clear guidance describing the Certification List¹³ ranking process.

¹³ The Certification List is a list of eligible applicants used to select individuals for employment. TSA selecting officials at the airports make job offers to applicants in the order in which they appear on the Certification Lists ranking from best qualified, highly qualified, and qualified.



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We tested whether 30 applicants from a universe of 4,665 Ready Pool applicants as of September 30, 2017, had passed each hiring step. Because the airports could not provide complete files, there was no conclusive evidence whether three of these applicants¹⁴ had passed each hiring step. One airport admittedly destroyed files for two applicants 1 year after the applicants completed the Airport Assessment, even though TSA's records retention policy requires TSA airport personnel to retain these documents for 2 years after the Airport Assessment. Another airport could not locate one applicant's complete file at the time of the audit. Without these documents, TSA cannot validate whether these applicants met the qualifications to be in the Ready Pool.

TSA has no formally documented criteria or clear guidance describing the process it uses to rank applicants. When there is a hiring need, airports use the TSO Cert Tool system to generate Certification Lists from applicants in the Ready Pool. This system uses a numeric score for each applicant derived from the Screener Object Recognition Test portion of the CBT and airport interview to rank applicants into qualified categories on a Certification List. In response to our request for documented criteria against which TSA programmed the categories in the system, TSA provided an email chain from 2011 showing score ranges for the qualified categories. TSA did not provide evidence explaining the reasoning behind the scoring ranges informally stated in the e-mail. Without this evidence, we could not verify whether TSA programmed its TSO Cert Tool correctly. As a result, TSA airport personnel may not be contacting and extending job offers to the most qualified applicants.

TSO Training Lacked Standardization and Visibility

According to GAO's *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, training should develop employee knowledge, skills, and abilities to meet changing organizational needs. TSA had not standardized the training airports provide to new TSOs and did not require TSO BTP attendance immediately following TSO onboarding. Additionally, Training and Development does not give all airport training managers the waivers they need for complete visibility into the TSO BTP curriculum and authorization to train new-hires locally. Improving training efforts would better position the agency with a stronger workforce.

Lack of Standardization in Training Prior to TSO BTP Attendance

Until July 2018, TSA had not standardized the approach for training new TSOs prior to attending the TSO BTP. At 6 of the 12 airports we visited, TSA officials said that before new TSOs attend the TSO BTP, they train them in screening

¹⁴ These applicants completed Airport Assessments at two airports.



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positions, such as Travel Document Checker and Divestiture Officer. However, TSA officials at another airport said they do not train new TSOs in these positions before BTP attendance. This occurred because TSA had not standardized how airports should use the time from a TSO's start date to the date the TSO attends BTP. Security Operations allowed airports flexibility in the timeline for TSO BTP attendance, and some airports delayed sending new TSOs to BTP rather than immediately following onboarding. This flexibility allowed TSA airport personnel to observe new-hires and assess whether they could fulfill all TSO duties. As some TSOs may have waited an extended period of time to go to BTP, there was concern TSA may have underused these TSOs. Beginning in July 2018, new TSOs attend standardized training delivered at the airport. TSOs attend BTP at the TSA Academy after successfully completing this standardized training.

Incomplete Visibility into TSO BTP Curriculum

Training and Development personnel do not give all airport training personnel complete visibility into the current TSO BTP curriculum. At least 5 of the 12 airports visited were not able to access the TSO BTP curriculum and use it as a basis for training new-hires. Without complete knowledge of updated curriculum content, airport training managers cannot enhance TSO skills and performance levels with appropriate local training efforts.

Conclusion

TSOs are critical to airline passenger safety and the security of the aviation transportation system. The *Aviation and Transportation Security Act* charges TSA with developing standards for retaining, hiring, and training security screening personnel at all U.S. airports. Passengers rely on TSOs to screen other passengers and baggage properly at more than 400 airports nationwide. In FY 2017, TSA hired more than 9,600 TSOs and spent approximately \$75 million to recruit, hire, and train them. Improving retention, hiring, and training of TSOs would save costs and provide a more stable, mature, and qualified workforce to better secure the Nation's aviation transportation system.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: We recommend the Assistant Administrator, Human Capital, continue to coordinate efforts with Security Operations to implement actions that facilitate improvements in the hiring process to ensure applicants are informed of the Transportation Security Officer duties and that TSA continues to hire qualified applicants. At a minimum, TSA should:



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- a. require an applicant affirm whether he/she has reviewed the Transportation Security Officer Realistic Job Preview video and understands duties include interacting with passengers, passenger pat-downs, shift work, weekend work, and holidays. If the applicant has not, ensure the applicant reviews the video as part of the application process; and
- b. finalize the implementation of the agency's job compatibility assessment tool for use during the hiring process.

Recommendation 2: We recommend the Assistant Administrator, Human Capital, revise the exit survey process to:

- a. ensure airports offer local exit interviews;
- b. record results in a centralized system;
- c. provide relevant stakeholders access to the results for analysis and process improvements; and
- d. address areas identified in the exit survey results that would help retain a skilled and knowledgeable Transportation Security Officer workforce.

Recommendation 3: We recommend the Assistant Administrator, Human Capital, continue to review and develop recruitment and retention strategies for reducing attrition:

- a. at smaller airports; and
- b. among part-time Transportation Security Officers.

Recommendation 4: We recommend the Assistant Administrator, Human Capital, meet established timelines to implement the first phase of Career Progression for newly appointed entry-level Transportation Security Officers.

Recommendation 5: We recommend the Assistant Administrator, Human Capital, examine increases in pay based upon skill level for Transportation Security Officers that could help attract and retain a strong workforce.

Recommendation 6: We recommend the Assistant Administrator, Human Capital, compile a local hiring update message to remind airports to follow TSA records retention policies for Airport Assessment documentation.

Recommendation 7: We recommend the Assistant Administrator, Human Capital, formally document system functional requirements, such as the rating process criteria, for quality assurance purposes to ensure proper system logic in how applicants are ranked on the Certification Lists.



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Recommendation 8: We recommend the Assistant Administrator, Training and Development, coordinate with Security Operations to enforce the pre-Basic Training Program requirements.

Recommendation 9: We recommend the Assistant Administrator, Training and Development, provide all airports access to the Basic Training Program curriculum in its entirety.

Management Comments and OIG Analysis

TSA concurred with all of our recommendations and is taking steps or has implemented actions to address them. Appendix B contains TSA's management comments in their entirety. We also received technical comments to the draft report and revised the report as appropriate. We consider recommendations 1, 2, 5, 7, and 9 resolved and open. Recommendations 4, 6, and 8 are closed. Recommendation 3 remains unresolved and open because we did not agree with TSA's proposed corrective action plan. A summary of TSA's responses and our analysis follows.

TSA Comments to Recommendation 1: TSA concurred with the recommendation. TSA explained its efforts to make every TSO applicant aware of the realities of the TSO position and ensure the agency conveys job expectations to TSO applicants. These efforts include participating in job fairs and career events, hosting in-person and virtual information sessions, attaching an airport-specific fact sheet to every TSO Job Opportunity Announcement posted on the Federal Government's official employment site, USAJobs, and creating and sharing the TSO Realistic Job Preview video that is communicated throughout the hiring process and accessible through various avenues. TSA will mandate that personnel scheduling the Airport Assessment review an airport's hours of operations, typical shifts and days off, and typical duties of the position. Additionally, TSA will modify the Airport Assessment scheduling script to advise that each applicant is required to watch the TSO Realistic Job Preview video prior to attending the assessment. TSA expects these actions to begin by March 31, 2019. Additionally, TSA plans to include a compatibility assessment tool in the TSO hiring process, which the Office of Personnel Management will validate. The estimated completion date to pilot and fully deploy the compatibility assessment tool is September 30, 2019.

OIG Analysis of TSA Comments: TSA has taken steps to satisfy the intent of this recommendation. We consider this recommendation resolved, but it will remain open until TSA provides documentation to support that all planned corrective actions are completed.



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TSA Comments to Recommendation 2: TSA concurred with the recommendation. In fall 2018, the Workforce Assessments Branch released a new Workforce Surveys iShare site, which includes a page dedicated to the National Exit Survey. All TSA employees have access to this page and are able to view information about the survey, TSA-wide results for FY 2018, and instructions for running custom reports within the HCAccess Tool. Employees seeking to address survey results can also use the iShare site to access action planning tools and best practices. As needed, the Workforce Assessments Branch will engage with airports to facilitate local action planning focus groups. Additionally, the Human Capital Risk Management and Accountability Branch will include this item in random evaluations. The estimated completion date is September 30, 2019.

TSA indicated that ahead of releasing the new website, survey results point of contacts were solicited from all airports and offices. These contacts have access to a controlled access folder containing results for engagement surveys (e.g., Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, Employee Engagement Survey) for their specific worksite, along with their worksite's FY 2017–18 exit survey reports. Human Capital (HC) posted exit survey reports for all Category X and I airports, as well as Headquarters and Law Enforcement/Federal Air Marshal Service. The survey tool does not produce reports when fewer than five responses are registered, which limits the reports' availability for smaller offices and airports. This is done to preserve the anonymity of exiting employees. To ensure airports offer local exit interviews, Human Capital will partner with Security Operations to disseminate a broadcast message to airport leadership reminding them of this requirement. The estimated completion date is April 30, 2019.

OIG Analysis of TSA Comments: TSA has taken steps to satisfy the intent of this recommendation. We consider this recommendation resolved, but it will remain open until TSA provides documentation to support that all planned corrective actions are completed.

TSA Comments to Recommendation 3: TSA concurred with the recommendation. TSA anticipates that implementation of TSO Career Progression, announced in August 2018, will assist with retention of officers, including those who are part-time or stationed at smaller airport duty locations. Additionally, TSA uses retention incentives to augment TSO pay at duty stations with retention and recruitment challenges, particularly for markets in which there are competitive employment opportunities, low unemployment, and high cost-of-living. During the recruitment process, TSA also markets the benefits of Federal employment to prospective applicants and promotes TSO positions as an entry point to a Federal career. To maximize distribution of this message and in an effort to attract and hire qualified



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candidates for agency positions, HC has implemented additional recruitment strategies and approaches, such as sponsored social media and programmatic digital advertising. Through the assistance of Public Affairs, TSA has also enhanced its social media presence for recruitment on sites such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. TSA outlined these actions in support of its request to close this recommendation.

OIG Analysis of TSA Comments: We recognize that TSO Career Progression, implemented in August 2018, and retention incentives may assist with retention of officers, including those who are part-time or located at smaller airports. However, actions described during the recruitment process do not specifically address the intent of the recommendation. This recommendation will remain unresolved and open until TSA provides additional details and documentation outlining strategies to retain TSOs at smaller airports and among part-time TSOs.

TSA Comments to Recommendation 4: TSA concurred with the recommendation. TSA implemented the first phase of TSO Career Progression on August 5, 2018 for TSOs hired on or after that date. Through a phased approach, TSA improved training for new officers to learn basic skills at home airports and the TSA Academy. The first phase of TSO Career Progression also included, subject to funding, a quarterly on-the-job coaching incentive for certain TSOs selected as coaches. TSA outlined these actions in support of its request to close this recommendation. TSA also provided its career progression policy for entry-level TSOs hired on or after August 5, 2018.

OIG Analysis of TSA Comments: TSA provided evidence that the agency implemented corrective actions to satisfy the intent of this recommendation. We consider the recommendation closed.

TSA Comments to Recommendation 5: TSA concurred with the recommendation. TSA explained that TSO Career Progression, implemented in August 2018, is a strategic and comprehensive approach establishing a clearly defined and transparent career path for employees, with pay increases tied to enhanced skills and training for the TSA front line workforce. Furthermore, TSA recently completed an officer compensation analysis, the results of which TSA will use to consider changes to the existing TSO pay structure. The estimated completion date is June 30, 2019.

OIG Analysis of TSA Comments: TSA has taken steps to satisfy the intent of this recommendation. We consider this recommendation resolved, but it will remain open until TSA provides documentation to support that all planned corrective actions are completed.



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TSA Comments to Recommendation 6: TSA concurred with the recommendation and implemented corrective actions. On October 2, 2018, HC sent out a local hiring update message to airport hiring points of contact reminding them of the TSA records retention policy regarding Airport Assessment documentation. TSA provided a copy of this field message in support of its request to close this recommendation.

OIG Analysis of TSA Comments: TSA demonstrated how the agency has implemented corrective actions to satisfy the intent of the recommendation, and we consider the recommendation closed.

TSA Comments to Recommendation 7: TSA concurred with the recommendation. Moving forward, HC will ensure TSA creates a comprehensive Systems Functional Requirements Document for any new systems. These documents will capture all requirements and log the history regarding system changes. TSA will update the document to include rating process criteria in the TSO Cert Tool. The estimated completion date is September 30, 2019.

OIG Analysis of TSA Comments: TSA has taken steps to satisfy the intent of this recommendation. We consider this recommendation resolved, but it will remain open until TSA provides documentation to support that all planned corrective actions are completed.

TSA Comments to Recommendation 8: TSA concurred with the recommendation and implemented corrective actions. As of August 2018, Training and Development had standardized the training TSOs receive locally prior to attending a second phase of training at the TSA Academy. Prior to attending the TSA Academy, airports complete an Academy-ready checklist, which the airport maintains. This checklist consists of one element of the new hire file that justifies the five percent pay increase. The checklists are also a Management Control Objective Program technique to ensure training completion. All TSOs hired on or after August 5, 2018 receive the same standardized local training. Additionally, Training and Development provides Security Operations field Training Managers, Training Specialists, and Security Training Instructors access to all elements of the TSO standardized local training curriculum. TSA provided documentation to the OIG in support of its request to close this recommendation.

OIG Analysis of TSA Comments: TSA provided sufficient evidence to support how the agency implemented corrective actions responsive to this recommendation, and we consider the recommendation closed.

TSA Comments to Recommendation 9: TSA concurred with the recommendation and implemented corrective actions. As of September 2018,



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TSA reported that staff at airports have full access to the TSO training curriculum in its entirety.

OIG Analysis of TSA Comments: TSA has taken steps to satisfy the intent of this recommendation. We consider this recommendation resolved, but it will remain open until TSA provides sufficient evidence and documentation to support that all planned corrective actions are completed.



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Appendix A

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

The Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General was established by the *Homeland Security Act of 2002* (Public Law 107-296) by amendment to the *Inspector General Act of 1978*.

We conducted this audit to determine the extent to which TSA retains, hires, and trains its TSOs to accomplish its screening mission. The scope of our audit focused on FYs 2016–17. To achieve our objective, we reviewed:

- legislation, strategic plans, policies, procedures, and guidance related to retaining, hiring, and training TSOs;
- HC contracts for recruiting and hiring;
- results of the 2016 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, TSA's 2015 and 2017 Employee Engagement Survey, as well as FYs 2012–17 exit surveys, and HC briefing documents on the survey results;
- retention studies;
- budget information;
- prior OIG and GAO audit reports;
- Congressional testimony;
- media articles; and
- TSO workforce and attrition data, which include hires and separations, length of service of active and separated TSOs, and attrition rates.

We interviewed TSA Headquarters officials in Human Capital (multiple divisions and branches within the HC, including Recruitment and Hiring, the HR Solutions Center, Human Capital and Policy Management, and Workforce Assessment), Training and Development, Security Operations, LE/FAMS, Finance and Administration, and Requirements and Capabilities Analysis. To determine the hiring, training, and retention procedures handled in the field, we also interviewed TSA officials at 12 airports — Ronald Reagan Washington National, George Bush Intercontinental, Philadelphia International, William P. Hobby, Logan International, Louis Armstrong International, Manchester-Boston Regional, Austin-Bergstrom International, O'Hare International, General Mitchell International, Indianapolis International, and Seattle-Tacoma International.

We selected a statistical sample of 355 applicants from a universe of 4,665 Ready Pool applicants for all airports as of September 30, 2017. We selected the first 30 applicants from the statistical sample to ensure each applicant passed all required steps in the hiring process. Specifically, we verified the following:

- Each applicant met the minimum qualification requirements for the CBT



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based on application responses (Graduated high school, U.S. Citizen, Selective Service Registration, and No Prior Criminal Convictions).

- CBT scores were accurately transferred to the Integrated Hiring System and determine whether they were accurately scored and each applicant passed the test.
- Citizenship verification worksheets were properly completed for each applicant.
- Each applicant received the required rating for the core competencies during the structured interview portion of the Airport Assessment.
- Medical contractors performed the applicant medical review, and the Airport Assessor system records matched the supporting medical review.
- Personnel Security Section completed the applicant's pre-hire background investigation prior to being placed in the Ready Pool. We did not validate data provided to source documents. We considered this step in the hiring process low risk as we did not find issues with the background data reviewed.

To ensure the contractor is placing applicants in their correct ranking based on the applicant's Screener Object Recognition Test and Structured Interview results, we tested 30 Certification Lists. Specifically, we selected a statistical sample of 372 from a universe of 11,816 Certification Lists issued during FYs2016–17. We tested the first 30 Certification Lists from the statistical sample, which included 355 applicants. We verified each applicant was included in the appropriate rating category — Priority Employment Program, best qualified veterans, best qualified, highly qualified veterans, highly qualified, qualified veterans, and qualified. We selected an additional 39 Certification Lists and verified applicants included on the lists were pulled from the Ready Pool.

To confirm new-hire TSOs are completing the required training, we selected a statistical sample of 375 new-hires with an enter-on-duty date of January 1, 2016, through September 30, 2017, from a universe of 16,577. We selected the first 30 applicants from the statistical sample. We verified whether the new-hires completed their required basic and OJT training. Additionally, we determined whether TSA has a process to update training courses based on TSO performance during internal and external covert testing. We did not audit the curriculum content for each of TSA's training courses; instead, we focused on the training process for new TSOs and the delivery schedule.

We verified the reliability of the data systems used during the audit, including the Integrated Data Warehouse, the Airport Assessor system, the TSO Cert Tool, and the Online Learning Center. Specifically, we observed walkthroughs of the systems and determined the controls in place by reviewing system guides and manuals and interviewing database administrators. Additionally, we traced



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records provided by TSA from the Airport Assessor, TSO Cert Tool, and the Online Learning Center to report queries and source documents. We believe the data from the Airport Assessor, TSO Cert Tool, and Online Learning Center to be sufficiently reliable to support our audit conclusions. We were not able to validate the data provided for TSO hires and separations, number of full-time or part-time TSOs, and the entry-on-duty and separation dates from the Integrated Data Warehouse. We did not validate the costs related to hiring and training new-hire TSOs in FY 2017.

We conducted this performance audit between September 2017 and November 2018 pursuant to the *Inspector General Act of 1978*, as amended, and according to generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based upon our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based upon our audit objectives.



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Appendix B
TSA Comments to the Draft Report

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
601 South 12th Street
Arlington, VA 20598



**Transportation
Security
Administration**

MEMORANDUM FOR: John V. Kelly
Senior Official Performing Duties
of Inspector General
Department of Homeland Security

FROM: David P. Pekoske *David P Pekoske*
Administrator
Transportation Security Administration

SUBJECT: Management's Response to OIG Draft Report: "TSA Needs to Improve Efforts to Retain, Hire, and Train Its Transportation Security Officers" (Project No. OIG-17-100-AUD-TSA)

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) appreciates the work of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

Hiring and retaining qualified Officers to protect the Nation's transportation system remains a strategic priority. TSA has made significant strides to strengthen Transportation Security Officer (TSO) hiring and improve retention. For instance, TSA has incorporated the use of strategic retention incentives across the Nation and has conducted an Officer compensation analysis to identify options to improve the competitiveness of the position in light of increasingly robust economic conditions.

Recognizing that TSA is losing high volumes of Officers to private sector employers offering very competitive compensation packages and to other Federal agencies whose entry level positions are often at higher pay-bands offering more traditional work hours, we look forward to working with the OIG to analyze how TSO pay affects retention. It is important to note, TSA will not be able to significantly adjust TSO pay due to current budget restrictions.

Several of the statements and findings in the draft report have the potential to be misconstrued by a reader who is unfamiliar with the TSO hiring process, particularly the requirements of the Aviation and Transportation Security Act (ATSA) and TSA's use of a



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Ready Pool to accommodate just-in-time hiring. TSA hires 7,000-11,000 Officers every year, and many are hired into part-time positions. TSA's approach to filling TSO positions in a timely manner across 438 individual airport duty locations has often served as a benchmark for other Federal entities.

TSA is also pleased efforts were already well underway with regard to most of the OIG recommendations prior to the beginning of the audit. The draft report contained nine recommendations and TSA concurs with all nine. Please see the attached for our detailed response to each recommendation.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. Technical comments were previously provided under separate cover. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Attachment



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**Attachment: TSA Management Response to
Recommendations Contained in OIG-17-100-
AUD-TSA**

Recommendation 1: We recommend the Assistant Administrator, Human Capital, continue to coordinate efforts with Security Operations to implement actions that facilitate improvements in the hiring process to ensure that applicants are informed of the Transportation Security Officer duties and that TSA continues to hire qualified applicants. At a minimum, TSA should:

- a. require an applicant affirm whether he/she has reviewed the Transportation Security Officer Realistic Job Preview video and understands duties include interacting with passengers, passenger pat-downs, shift work, weekend work, and holidays. If the applicant has not, ensure the applicant reviews the video as part of the application process; and
- b. finalize the implementation of the agency's job compatibility assessment tool for use during the hiring process.

Response: Concur. Regarding Recommendation 1(a), extensive efforts have been made to make every TSO applicant aware of the realities of the TSO position. These efforts include participating in job fairs and career events, hosting Information Sessions (both in-person and virtual), attaching an airport-specific 'Local Airport Fact Sheet' to every TSO Job Opportunity Announcement posted on USAJobs, and by creating and sharing a TSO Realistic Job Preview (RJP) Video that is communicated repeatedly throughout the hiring process and accessible through a multitude of venues. TSA has taken strong steps to ensure the agency conveys job expectations to our TSO applicants/new hires.

To ensure that this emphasis on properly conveying expectations is maintained, TSA will mandate that airport's hours of operations, typical shifts and days off, and typical duties of the position are discussed with applicants as part of the Airport Assessment scheduling process. TSA will also modify the Airport Assessment scheduling script to advise each candidate that he/she is required to watch the TSO RJP Video prior to attending assessment.

Estimated Completion Date (ECD): March 31, 2019.

For Recommendation 1(b), actions are on-going to deploy a compatibility assessment tool into the TSO hiring process that is validated by the Office of Personnel Management. The target timeframe to pilot and fully deploy the compatibility assessment tool is by the end of fiscal year (FY) 2019.

ECD: September 30, 2019.



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Recommendation 2: We recommend the Assistant Administrator, Human Capital, revise the exit survey process to:

- a. ensure airports offer local exit interviews;
- b. record results in a centralized system;
- c. provide relevant stakeholders access to the results for analysis and process improvements; and
- d. address areas identified in the exit survey results that would help retain a skilled and knowledgeable Transportation Security Officer workforce.

Response: Concur. Actions have already been taken. In fall 2018, the Workforce Assessments Branch (WAB) released a new Workforce Surveys iShare site, which includes a page dedicated to the National Exit Survey. All TSA employees have access to this page and are able to view information about the survey, TSA-wide results for FY18, and instructions for running custom reports within the HCAccess Tool. Employees seeking to address survey results can also use the iShare site to access action planning tools and best practices. As needed, WAB engages with airports to facilitate local action planning focus groups. In addition, the Human Capital Risk Management and Accountability Branch will include this item in random HC evaluations.

ECD: September 30, 2019.

Ahead of the release of the new site, survey results point of contacts (POCs) were solicited from all airports and offices. These POCs have access to a controlled access folder containing results for engagement surveys (e.g., Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, Employee Engagement Survey) for their specific worksite, along with their worksite's FY17 and FY18 Exit Survey reports. Human Capital (HC) proactively posted Exit Survey reports for all CAT X and CAT I airports, as well as HQ and Law Enforcement/Federal Air Marshal Service. The survey tool does not produce reports when fewer than 5 responses are registered, which limits the reports availability for smaller offices and airports. This is done to preserve anonymity of the exiting employees.

Finally, to ensure airports offer local exit interviews, HC will partner with Security Operations (SO) to disseminate a broadcast message to airport leadership reminding them of this requirement.

ECD: April 30, 2019.

Recommendation 3: We recommend the Assistant Administrator, Human Capital, continue to review and develop strategies for reducing attrition:

- a. at smaller airports; and
- b. among part-time Transportation Security Officers.

Response: Concur. TSA expects that the implementation of TSO Career Progression, announced in August 2018, which established a clearly defined and transparent career path with pay increases tied to enhanced skills and training, will



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assist with Officer retention including those who are part-time or stationed at smaller airport duty locations. In addition, TSA utilizes retention incentives to augment TSO pay at duty stations with retention and recruitment challenges for markets where there are competitive employment opportunities, low unemployment, and high cost-of-living. Further, during the recruitment process, TSA markets the benefits of Federal employment to prospective applicants and promotes the TSO positions as an entry point into a Federal career. To maximize distribution of this message and in an effort to attract and hire qualified candidates for agency positions, HC has made great strides in implementing additional recruitment strategies and tactics that includes sponsored social media, programmatic digital advertising, geofencing advertising, and Google AdWords. As well, with Public Affairs assistance, we've enhanced TSA's social media presence for recruitment on sites such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

ECD: Implemented; TSA is requesting closure.

Recommendation 4: We recommend the Assistant Administrator, Human Capital, meet established timelines to implement the first phase of Career Progression for newly appointed entry-level Transportation Security Officers.

Response: Concur. TSA fully implemented the first phase of TSO Career Progression on August 5, 2018 for TSOs hired on or after that date. Training for new Officers has been strengthened through a phased approach to learning basic skills at the home airport and TSA Academy. The first phase of TSO Career Progression also included an On-the-Job Training (OJT) Coaching Incentive, which provides current E-Band TSOs with the opportunity to be selected as an OJT Coach and receive a quarterly payment, subject to available funding.

ECD: Implemented; TSA is requesting closure.

Recommendation 5: We recommend the Assistant Administrator, Human Capital, examine increases in pay based upon skill level for Transportation Security Officers that could help attract and retain a strong workforce.

Response: Concur. TSO Career Progression, which was implemented in August 2018, is a strategic and comprehensive approach which establishes a clearly defined and transparent career path for employees with pay increases tied to enhanced skills and training for the TSA frontline workforce. Further, an Officer Compensation Analysis was recently completed. The results of the Officer Compensation Analysis will be used to consider changes to the existing TSO pay structure.

ECD: June 30, 2019.

Recommendation 6: We recommend the Assistant Administrator, Human Capital, compile a local hiring update message to remind airports to follow TSA records retention policies for Airport Assessment documentation.



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Response: Concur. Action already taken. On October 2, 2018, HC sent out a Local Hiring Update message to the airport Hiring POCs reminding them of the TSA records retention policy regarding Airport Assessment documentation. A copy of this field message was provided to the OIG Audit team.

ECD: Implemented; TSA is requesting closure.

Recommendation 7: We recommend the Assistant Administrator, Human Capital, formally document system functional requirements, such as the rating process criteria, for quality assurance purposes to ensure proper system logic in how applicants are ranked on the Certification Lists.

Response: Concur. Moving forward, TSA Human Capital will ensure a comprehensive Systems Functional Requirements Document (FRD) is created for any new systems. These FRD documents will capture all requirements and log the history regarding system changes. Regarding the TSO Cert on Demand Tool, TSA will update its FRD to include the rating process criteria.

ECD: September 30, 2019.

Recommendation 8: We recommend the Assistant Administrator, Training and Development, coordinate with Security Operations to enforce the pre-Basic Training Program requirements.

Response: Concur. Actions already taken. Training and Development (T&D) standardized the TSO Basic Training Program (BTP) Phase 1 training as of August 2018. BTP Phase 1 training is provided to all new hires locally, and BTP Phase 2 training is provided at the TSA Academy within 6 months of onboarding. Prior to Phase 2 attendance, airports complete an Academy-ready checklist. This checklist is maintained by the airport and consists of one element of the new hire file that justifies the 5 percent pay increase. Academy-ready checklists are also a Management Control Objective Program technique which ensures completion.

All TSOs hired on or after August 5, 2018 receive the same TSO BTP Phase 1 training. In addition, T&D provides SO field Training Managers, Training Specialists, and Security Training Instructors access to all elements of the Phase 1 curriculum.

ECD: Implemented; TSA is requesting closure.

Recommendation 9: We recommend the Assistant Administrator, Training and Development, provide all airports access to the Basic Training Program curriculum in its entirety.

Response: Concur. Actions already taken. As of September 2018, TSA staff at airports have full access to the Phase 1 and Phase 2 training curriculum in its entirety.

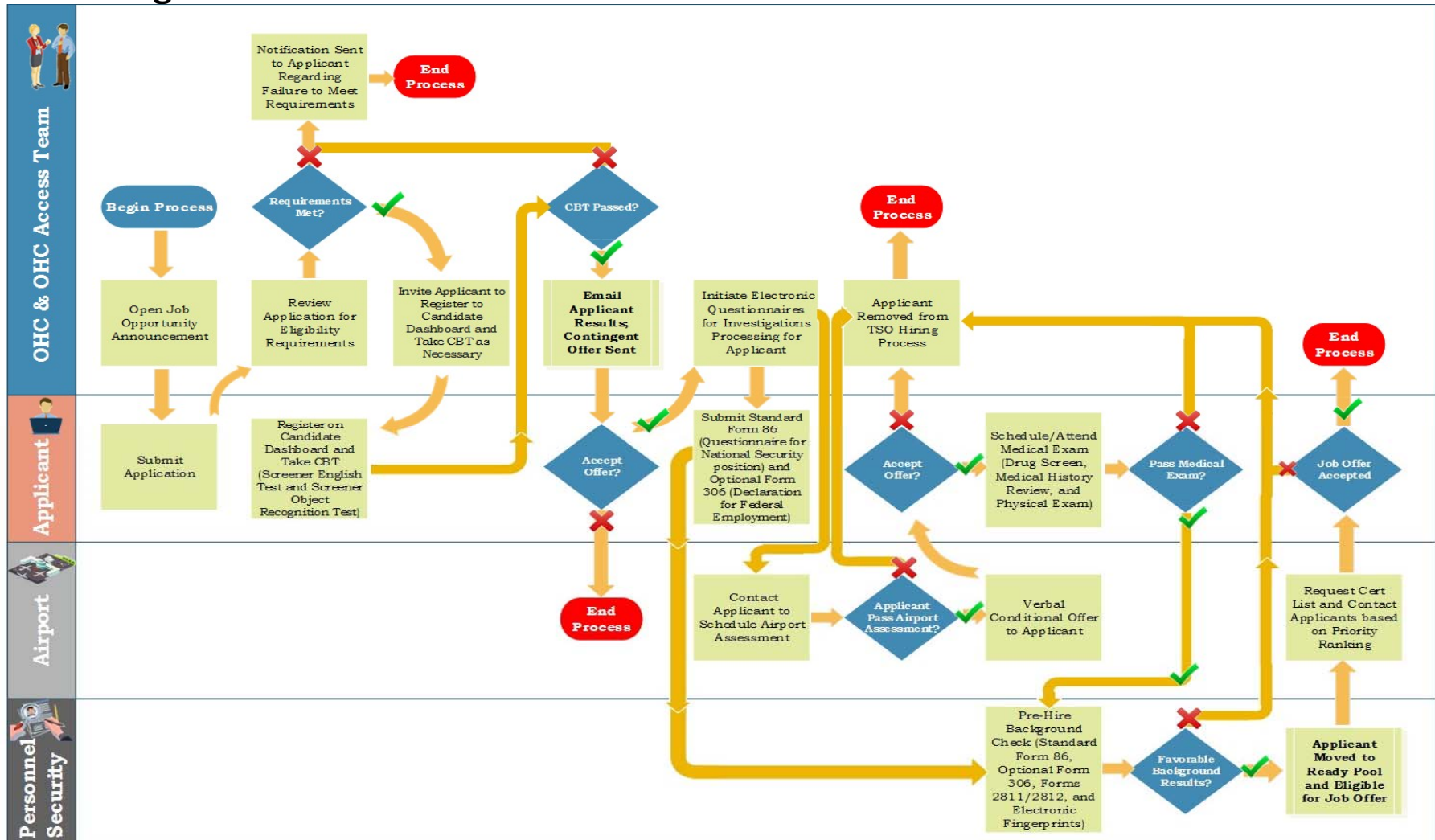
ECD: Implemented; TSA is requesting closure.



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Appendix C TSO Hiring Process



Source: OIG analysis of HC hiring policies, procedures, and processes



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Appendix D
Airports' Best Practices, Based on Visits

Category			Best Practice
Hiring	Training	Retention	
		X	Allow TSOs to apply for collateral duties and temporary supervisory upgrades.
		X	Create a local action plan based on results of employee engagement surveys.
		X	Allow supervisors to take on roles outside of operations to empower employees and build trust and confidence with TSOs.
		X	Increase employee communication in various ways such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employee Newsletters - Town Hall Meetings - Lead and Supervisory TSO Meetings - Daily Morning Meetings - Providing a "Year in Review"
		X	Empower Supervisory TSOs to be people managers, allowing airport administration staff flexibility to perform other duties.
		X	Conduct face-to-face exit interviews to determine the root cause of employees' departures and maintain a database of responses.
		X	Provide a snapshot of data for senior management highlighting the level of performance for TSOs.
		X	Recognize accomplishments, such as high Threat Image Projection detection scores and covert detection.
		X	Host events and organizations for Employees, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bring Your Kid to Work Day - Employee Appreciation Day/Week - Veteran's Committee - Employee of the Month - Wellness Programs and "Challenges"
X		X	Show a Realistic Job Preview video during the Airport Assessment to make applicants fully aware of TSO duties and responsibilities.
X		X	Encourage airport management, such as the Assistant Federal Security Director for Mission Support, to meet with new-hires to discuss the importance of the TSA mission and remind them of active and current threats to the American public.



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Category			Best Practice
Hiring	Training	Retention	
X		X	Show National Geographic videos on 9/11 to new-hires to emphasize the importance of the job.
X		X	Discuss pay, schedules, hours, and other expectations during recruiting events to expose applicants to TSO duties and responsibilities.
X		X	Celebrate all steps within the onboarding process, such as photographs in front of a flag after swearing in and pinning.
X		X	Provide hard copies of airport fact sheets to TSO applicants during the Airport Assessment so they are fully aware of airport operations.
	X	X	Brief applicants about training requirements and screening operations.
	X	X	Maintain local guidance manuals on a shared site to explain local processes to employees.
	X	X	Keep new employees in the same Basic Training Program/New Hire Training Program class to promote camaraderie.
	X	X	Require new-hire TSOs to observe pat-downs prior to BTP/New Hire Training Program attendance.
X	X	X	Schedule monthly meetings for all offices in the airport to discuss any airport issues.
X			Host weekend hiring events to complete multiple aspects of the hiring process, including medical exam and Airport Assessments, in one day.
	X		Offer full-time work hours to part-time employees during OJT to complete training faster.
	X		Review training requirements weekly to ensure they are met and email reminders of outstanding training.
	X		Institute coaching programs allowing a more experienced TSO to mentor a new-hire TSO.
	X		Conduct monthly in-service training to meet requirements.
	X		Develop spreadsheets to track new-hire training dates and ensure completion prior to BTP/New Hire Training Program attendance.

Source: OIG interviews with 12 airports



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Appendix E
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