

TSA Releases Five-Year Air Cargo Security Roadmap

With record air cargo demand showing no signs of slowing, it is no surprise that the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is focused on reviewing and enhancing aviation security measures for this essential element of the global supply chain. TSA has released an Air Cargo Security Roadmap, which sets out TSA's "strategic direction toward modernizing, streamlining, and further securing the air cargo system throughout the next five years." TSA plans to accomplish four key goals and associated objectives.

Key Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: "Advance enhanced and risk-based screening capabilities."

Objective 1: "Assess the security value of cargo shipper vetting through the TSA Known Shipper Program." TSA will examine the Known Shipper Program (which allows "known shippers" to transport cargo on passenger aircraft) to assess "its maximum functionality, usefulness, and effectiveness in cargo shipper-vetting" and to "help inform TSA's future approach for risk-based vetting and pre-screening, including whether the [program] should be retained, modified, or replaced." TSA will factor into its review increases in e-commerce volume and the recently implemented requirement mandating the same security screening measures for cargo traveling on all-cargo aircraft as on passenger aircraft.

Objective 2: "Analyze pre-screening and advance targeting capabilities." TSA will review current pre-screening processes used for U.S. inbound international air cargo to determine whether such measures could be used to strengthen intra-U.S. and U.S. outbound international air cargo screening. As part of its review, "TSA will evaluate the policy, legal, and economic implications of applying pre-screening and targeting systems to international freight originating in the United States."

Objective 3: "Evaluate opportunities to provide all-cargo aircraft operators the capability to use risk data to assist screening in place of physical screening." Industry stakeholders will be invited to propose alternative air cargo security and screening procedures that are risk-based and data-driven. In addition to directing cargo to the most effective screening methods, TSA's review will examine how non-intrusive data analysis could be used to increase security efficiency while reducing costs for industry.

Goal 2: "Expand knowledge and information sharing between TSA and industry."

Objective 1: "Provide support for industry to enhance air cargo screening training." TSA seeks to "enhance its partnership with industry" to support standardized and consistent training for air cargo security personnel. While industry stakeholders are responsible for air cargo screener hiring, training, and testing, TSA will examine whether it can assist industry with addressing training consistency and uniformity challenges.

Objective 2: "Accelerate the speed, and improve the consistency and quality of information sharing between TSA and industry." Information sharing is key to aviation security effectiveness, and TSA recognizes that "strong communication options are essential to ensure industry complies with TSA regulations, meets threat management requirements, and remains up to date on all new and updated security program changes." TSA will examine current information sharing platforms, such as the Aviation Domain Intelligence integration & Analysis Cell (ADiAC) and the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN), to find ways to enhance timeliness of information sharing with industry.



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Goal 3: “Enhance the air cargo industry’s technology posture to support security enhancing innovation within the supply chain.”

Objective 1: “Continue to update TSA screening technology technical standards and functional requirements in line with evolving security threats and emerging technology.”

TSA will update and evolve detection requirements and standards to meet new threats. It recognizes that capabilities and requirements must “meet evolving and emergent threats and ... provid[e] industry with flexibility to explore new and emerging capabilities and technologies.”

Objective 2: “Collaborate with industry and other R&D establishments to promote the advancement of technology in the air cargo marketplace.”

Because “the air cargo marketplace lacks key incentives to encourage investment in security technologies,” TSA is committed to establishing partnerships with air cargo screening technology vendors and other providers to provide support for security technology R&D, to include potential funding of future technology pipelines.

Goal 4: “Modernize air cargo policy.”

Objective 1: “Modernize standard security programs and policy processes.” TSA will review its air cargo policies to “ensure they are outcome-focused and continuously mirror the changing environment.” To that end, TSA pledged to “create enhanced internal mechanisms that drive policy development by [TSA’s Policy, Plans, and Engagement Division] and provide one voice to industry on policy interpretation issues.”

Implications for the Air Cargo Industry

The air cargo industry should view TSA’s roadmap as a positive development. In particular, regulated entities that operate under a TSA-approved security program should welcome TSA’s commitment to modernizing its regulatory policy framework. Centralizing questions of policy interpretation within TSA’s Policy, Plans, and Engagement Division will provide industry with greater clarity regarding regulatory compliance. This, in turn, should help ensure that TSA applies its regulatory requirements to similarly situated stakeholders on a uniform basis, thereby eliminating inconsistencies. Above all, TSA’s roadmap provides welcome opportunities for industry to partner with TSA to facilitate compliance and enhance security in the air cargo supply chain.
