



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hearing Statement of Oversight, Management, & Accountability Subcommittee Chairman Lou Correa (D-CA)

Federal Building Security: Examining the Risk Assessment Process

September 22, 2022

The protection of Federal facilities, employees, and visitors is a critical part of the Department of Homeland Security's day-to-day work. Recently, the importance of this mission has come into stark focus. As tensions have risen in response to the FBI's raid on Mar-a-Lago and the passage of the historic Inflation Reduction Act, we have also seen a rise in the threats directed toward Federal employees and their office buildings.

Just last month an armed man attempted to violently gain entrance to an FBI office in Cincinnati. But perhaps less well known is the increasingly threatening language that has been directed at IRS employees and those working to preserve government documents at the National Archives and Records Administration. While not typically thought of as high security facilities, these government office buildings, and the men and women who work and visit them every day, are now facing new security risks.

With threats to Federal facilities on the rise, we look to the first line of defense, the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Protective Service, also known as FPS. FPS ensures that over 9,500 Federally owned and operated buildings across the country are safe and secure, from government agency headquarters here in Washington D.C. to rural courthouses and field offices in all 50 states. If you have ever visited a Federally owned building, you have undoubtedly passed one of the thousands of FPS officers and contract guards providing on-site security. But FPS's role extends far beyond the guards posted at entrances and exits.

FPS also helps government agencies prepare for and prevent any security risks that result from a changing threat environment or aging infrastructure. FPS regularly performs facility security assessments for all Federally owned and leased property and makes recommendations for improvements to ensure that buildings meet required security standards. These facility assessments and recommendations are incredibly important to ensure that security protocols keep up with the types of threats we're seeing today. The suggested recommendations can range from things like replacing security cameras and alarms to updating security guidance and policies. However, despite generally good coordination between FPS and the other government agencies it seeks to protect, all too often these recommendations go unimplemented, leaving gaps to be exploited.

According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), customer agencies have described FPS's facility security assessments as "comprehensive, timely, and useful," but they have rejected about 70 percent of FPS's recommendations. GAO found that a variety of factors result in the majority of FPS's recommendations not being implemented, including incomplete information and insufficient funding.

We can and should be better to mitigate the risks to facilities, Federal employees, and visitors. Today we will have the opportunity to hear more about the interagency cooperation that goes into developing building security standards as well as the challenges meeting those standards.

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