



Air cargo/Global logistics: Freight forwarders cite "serious issues" regarding security screening

Patrick Burnson -- Executive Editor -- Logistics Management, 3/19/2009

WASHINGTON—Despite significant progress being made in screening cargo on passenger planes, there are still major challenges ahead on the path to safeguarding air cargo in this country according to the [Airforwarders Association](#) (AfA). Testifying earlier this week before the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection, Brandon Fried, executive director of the AfA, acknowledged the progress made in reaching the 50 percent milestone, but warned that there are three primary challenges still facing the [TSA](#) in achieving the 100 percent screening mandate by the August 2010 deadline.

“The ease of attaining the first portion of the screening mandate should be both a sign of encouragement and caution,” said Brandon Fried. “It proves that our industry and its airline partners can collectively rise to any challenge. However, serious issues have yet to be resolved, including the lack of approved pallet screening technology, ongoing financial barriers to participation, and the future of air cargo security policy in general.” Noted experts, including the [Government Accountability Office](#) (GAO), have stated that abandoning a risk-based security program in favor of screening may actually make the nation less safe.

" Transportation Security Administration has limited resources, both financially and in terms of personnel, and it is an unwise use of those finite dollars and employees to treat each piece of cargo as if it has the same threat level," said Fried.

In an interview with *LM*, GAO spokesman, Stephen M. Lord said TSA does not expect to meet the mandated 100 percent screening deadline as it applies to inbound air cargo.

“In part that is due to existing inbound screening exemptions and challenges it faces in harmonizing security standards with other nations,” he said. “We are really focusing on compliance in 2010.”

Meanwhile, TSA has taken several key steps to meet the mandate, including establishing a new requirement for 100 percent screening of cargo transported on narrow-body

aircraft; revising or eliminating most screening exemptions for domestic cargo; creating the Certified Cargo Screening Program (CCSP) to allow screening to take place at various points in the air cargo supply chain; and establishing a screening technology pilot.