

**Written Statement of Elliot Doomes,
Commissioner of the Public Buildings Service
of the U.S. General Services Administration
before the
U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Subcommittee on
Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management
*“Examining the Effectiveness of the Federal Protective Service:
Are Federal Buildings Secure?”*
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Introduction

Good morning Chairman Perry, Ranking Member Titus, and members of the Subcommittee. My name is Elliot Doomes and I am the Commissioner of GSA’s Public Buildings Service (PBS). Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today to discuss safety and security in federal facilities. My testimony today will highlight some of GSA’s roles and responsibilities in keeping federal facilities secure.

GSA has custody and jurisdiction of more than 1,600 federally-owned and 6,500 leased facilities across the nation. Over one million federal workers, contractors and visitors access GSA-controlled facilities regularly to interact with the government. We take security at federal facilities seriously, and work closely with partners such as the Federal Protective Service (FPS), U.S. Marshals Service (USMS) and others to ensure the safety of tenant agency personnel, contractors and visitors.

Establishment of the ISC

Executive Order 12977 established the Interagency Security Committee (ISC) following the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995. The ISC was established to improve government-wide coordination of security initiatives, and to address the need for increased security and protection, particularly in buildings housing federal employees. The ISC also created standards for security measures at federal facilities.

On November 27, 2023 President Biden signed Executive Order 14111 (Interagency Security Committee) to enhance the quality and effectiveness of security and protection of buildings and facilities in the United States occupied by federal employees or federal contractor workers for nonmilitary activities. As a result, increased security standards continue to be developed to protect federal employees and contractors in all federally-occupied space. Regardless of whether GSA owns or leases a facility, a Facility Security Level (FSL), ranging from Levels 1-5, establishes the baseline level of protection and may warrant a specific countermeasure in the federal facility.

Recognizing that we must balance protections for our federal employees and contractors while keeping buildings accessible to the public, GSA has been an active participant in the development of these security standards working with the Interagency Security Committee and other federal partners. GSA's Office of Mission Assurance (OMA) was established to integrate security, continuity and readiness expertise within the agency and with critical stakeholders. OMA provides services for all GSA staff, and GSA's owned and leased public buildings. These services include: (1) managing the vetting process for GSA employees (2) determining employee suitability for covered positions and (3) fitness determination for GSA contractors. In addition to OMA working to ensure safety and security for GSA employees and contractors, the Public Buildings Service (PBS) is continuously working with customer agencies to identify the best space to meet their mission needs, including security. GSA's goal is to provide a safe building environment allowing agencies to focus on their mission needs to ensure their employees, contractors and the visiting public are able to conduct their business.

GSA's Role in Ensuring Building Security

GSA's physical security responsibilities include working with our security partners and tenant agencies to reduce the security risk in GSA facilities. In order to provide these services, GSA works with tenant agencies in the planning stage of projects, resulting in proposed security

requirements for new construction, renovation and leased space projects to ensure that its space has the proper security requirements to meet its mission needs. Because every facility has unique security and accessibility requirements, and tenant agencies have varying mission needs, the ISC risk management process requires individual agencies, or the Facility Security Committee (FSC) in multi-tenant facilities, to select the appropriate security countermeasures to achieve the highest level of protection, as determined by the Facility Security Assessment. Although tenant agencies can select optimal countermeasures for their facilities, FPS and GSA are responsible for ensuring security countermeasure equipment conforms with ISC standards, as well as repairing and replacing security countermeasures.

In addition to partnering with FPS, GSA also has a robust partnership with The U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS) to deliver security services for the federal court system. Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs) outline roles and responsibilities to provide law enforcement and related security services at federally-owned and leased facilities under the jurisdiction, custody or control of GSA.

A MOA between GSA and FPS expands on 6 U.S.C. §232, detailing roles and responsibilities of each agency in order to protect federal facilities and grounds. While FPS is largely responsible for providing security, law enforcement and criminal investigations at federal facilities, the FPS also coordinates with GSA on crime prevention and security awareness training for GSA's tenant agencies and employees. GSA also coordinates with FPS when FPS performs routine vulnerability assessments that are submitted to FSCs.

Role of the Facility Security Committee

FSCs are another way that GSA remains engaged in the decision making process with FPS and tenant agencies to review building security. FSCs, composed of and governed by the tenants in multi-tenant facilities, hold the responsibility of addressing facility-specific security issues, including approving the implementation of security countermeasures recommended by

FPS as noted in building security assessments. When FPS completes an assessment and recommends security countermeasures for implementation, those recommendations go to the FSC for funding approval. When the FSC approves funding for countermeasures, FPS or GSA, as applicable depending on the nature of the countermeasure, can move forward with implementation. However, if an FSC does not approve the funding, those countermeasures go unimplemented, and the agencies in that individual building accept the security risk. If an FSC makes the decision not to approve or provide funding for a countermeasure, the decision is documented.

GSA and FPS consider certain minimum security standards for every federal facility, and these can evolve over time. For instance, GSA recently collaborated with FPS, the ISC and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to implement an April 2024 GSA order, making security camera and alarm systems part of the baseline minimum security standards for GSA's federally-owned facilities. The GSA order also requires tenant agencies in GSA's federally-owned facilities to provide funding to maintain and update Video Surveillance Systems and Intrusion Detection Systems (IDS), and to correct deficiencies identified by FPS. GSA is confident that this order and the continued collaboration with FPS, OMB and tenant agencies will improve the security of GSA's federally-owned facilities.

Implementing Security Standards at Federal Facilities

At owned and leased facilities as appropriate, GSA provides space for control rooms, screening stations, guard booths and other similar space, serving the security and infrastructure needs of tenant agencies. When recommended in the FSA and funded by the FSC, GSA provides physical security infrastructure, like vehicular barriers, exterior security specified doors, exterior and building common area security specified locks, HVAC security items, security specific exterior lighting, physical access control systems, security specified garage doors, security fencing and gates, and blast-resistant countermeasures. In these cases GSA also

provides advanced notification of situations such as scheduled building maintenance that will affect the operation of building security equipment. For leased facilities, GSA follows ISC standards issuing leasing guidance and instructions for competitive lease procurements.

Security implementation can vary greatly depending on factors like the location of a property, size of the facility and the tenant agency's mission. A FSL, ranging from Levels 1-5, is determined from five factors, based on mission criticality, symbolism, facility population, facility size and threats to tenant agencies. The FSL establishes the baseline level of protection and as the FSL increases, additional security measures, such as increased setbacks, site planning, facade hardening, and structural measures to prevent progressive collapse may be necessary. Setback requirements can result in agencies seeking space outside of urban areas and additional land acquisition costs for new facilities. GSA refers to ISC standards to determine if security barriers are needed based on the FSL. Currently GSA's security barrier inventory consists of over 14,000 security barriers of various types, providing tenant agencies with appropriate options to meet their facility needs.

GSA also responds to feedback on ways to improve building security by participating in each facility's FSC or coordinating with a single occupant agency in its jurisdiction. For example, at a federal facility in California, there were concerns that illegal drug activity was taking place in the federal plaza after hours. In response to this and as a result of extensive community outreach efforts, a perimeter fence and locking gate were constructed at the perimeter of the plaza and operationally the site closes to the public during non-working hours.

GSA Child Care Centers

GSA child care centers are designed to keep children safe within the center, to safeguard them from outside intruders, and to protect them from hazards, consistent with the established risk management process. GSA works with FSCs and sponsoring agencies to maintain security standards for child care centers in GSA-controlled facilities. Child care center

entrances are secured at all times and parents, guardians and child care staff have immediate access through an electric strike release with a keypad or card reader. GSA provides electronic security systems for child care centers, including video surveillance systems (VSS) at all entrances and exits, including the playground area.

GSA partners with FPS during the assessment process to identify security risks in child care centers based on the ISC risk management process appendix C. GSA uses these assessments to develop security mitigation projects. Typical projects include the installation, repairing, or replacing cameras, fences, blast protection and security countermeasures to safeguard child care centers from intruders.

In FY 2022, GSA was appropriated \$15 million for the Child Care Special Emphasis Program. The program is addressing the most important projects, and sought to reduce risks in the maximum number of child care centers in our inventory. Twenty-six projects received funding across 10 regions. As part of GSA's FY 2025 budget request, GSA is seeking \$14.25 million to continue funding this Special Emphasis Program to expedite action to enhance security at all child care centers in GSA controlled buildings to the applicable security standards. GSA is committed to ensuring child care centers are maintained in safe locations that meet applicable security standards.

Security Enhancements

Courthouse Hardening

In light of recent incidents, and continuing threats to our U.S. Courthouses, GSA is working in concert with the Administrative Office of the Courts to modernize courthouse infrastructure, including building hardening. Building hardening projects include; replacing or adding break-resistant glass or glass coverings for pedestrian-accessible windows, hardening exterior doors with break-resistant glass or glass coverings, roll-down gates, and other capabilities, installing magnetic automatic door locks that can be engaged by security officers at

their guard stations and from the control room, and installing temporary or permanent barriers and fencing, where appropriate, to protect the perimeter of the facility.

GSA received \$15 million in Fiscal Year 2022 and \$12.5 million in FY 2023 from the Judiciary Capital Security Fund. There are currently 67 courthouses receiving funding through this program, with 36 projects in the design stage and ready for construction. Two projects are finalizing construction in Portland, OR and San Francisco, CA.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

GSA is also working to design exterior landscapes that serve as perimeter security measures to discourage potential crime on or around our federal facilities. Good site design considers security in the overall landscape visioning. Landscape architecture can provide natural barriers at federal sites that can prevent hiding places without obstructing security cameras. Good landscape architectural design can also restrict unwanted pedestrian access adjacent to building facades. This can be accomplished through the use of dense plantings, walls, fencing, topography, or other means. These features eliminate the need for separate standalone security elements like continuous rows of bollards or planters, potentially saving money and making the areas around facilities more aesthetically pleasing and inviting to visitors.

While security features such as bollards, planters, or jersey barriers can be important security measures, they can also be an eyesore in communities; they often clash with local streetscape standards and can impede pedestrian access and connectivity. GSA is working with designers to provide a better first impression at federal facilities while still enhancing security. An example of this was the modernization of the Columbus, New Mexico Land Port of Entry (LPOE), delivered in 2019, where a depressed stormwater management facility was used as an effective barrier between vehicular traffic and the main port building.

Conclusion

Ensuring the safety of building occupants is paramount at GSA, and we take such matters seriously at all times. With Congressional support of the FY 2025 budget request and legislative proposals, GSA will be one step closer to modernizing our federal footprint, which will advance key security priorities in our facilities, particularly those in our child care centers. Through continued partnership with agencies like FPS, GSA will continue providing support to ensure security at every facility across the country. Thank you for your time today and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.