



CRS Report for Congress

The Federal Protective Service and Contract Security Guards: A Statutory History and Current Status

Shawn Reese
Analyst in American National Government
Government and Finance Division

Summary

The Federal Protective Service (FPS) — within U.S. Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) — is responsible for protecting federal government property, personnel, visitors, and customers, including property leased by the General Services Administration (GSA). FPS currently employs over 15,000 contract security guards to protect federal property. DHS intends, according to its FY2009 budget justification, to continue the use of contract security guards to focus FPS activities on maintaining security policy and standards, conducting building security assessments, and monitoring federal agency compliance with security standards. P.L. 110-161 (FY2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act) included provisions on FPS maintaining a certain number of police officers. This report will be updated as developments warrant.

Federal Protective Service Statutory History. The responsibility to protect federal buildings was established in the Federal Works Agency in June 1948.¹ Specifically, Congress authorized the Federal Works Administrator to appoint uniformed guards as special policemen with the responsibility of “the policing of public buildings and other areas under the jurisdiction of the Federal Works Agency.”² The special policemen were given the same responsibility as sheriffs and constables on federal property to enforce the laws enacted for the protection of persons and property, and to prevent “breaches of peace, suppress affrays or unlawful assemblies.”³

On June 30, 1949, the Federal Works Agency was abolished, and all of its functions, including the protection of federal buildings, were transferred to the General Services

¹ 62 Stat. 281.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Administration (GSA).⁴ In September 1961, Congress authorized the GSA Administrator to appoint non-uniformed special policemen to: conduct investigations in order to protect property under the control of GSA; enforce federal law to protect persons and property; and make an arrest without a warrant for any offense committed upon federal property if a policeman had reason to believe the offense was a felony and the person to be arrested was guilty of the felony.⁵

The GSA Administrator formally established the Federal Protective Service (FPS) in January 1971 through GSA Administrative Order 5440.46. FPS, as an official GSA agency, continued to protect federal property and buildings with both uniformed and non-uniformed policemen.

FPS was transferred to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and placed within the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), with enactment of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-296). The act required the DHS Secretary to “protect the buildings, grounds, and property that are owned, occupied, or secured by the Federal Government (including any agency, instrumentality, or wholly owned or mixed ownership corporation thereof) and persons on the property.”⁶

Under current statutory provisions FPS officers are authorized to:

- enforce federal laws and regulations to protect persons and federal property;
- carry firearms;
- make arrests without a warrant for any offense against the United States committed in the presence of an officer or for any federal felony;
- serve warrants and subpoenas issued under the authority of the United States;
- conduct investigations, on and off federal property, of offenses that may have been committed against the federal property or persons on the property; and
- carry out other activities for the promotion of homeland security as the DHS Secretary may prescribe.⁷

⁴ 63 Stat. 380.

⁵ P.L. 87-275, Sec. 5, 40 U.S.C. §318.

⁶ 40 U.S.C. §1315(a). The DHS Secretary was authorized to designate DHS employees, including those transferred from FPS, as officers with responsibility for protecting federal property. Some federal buildings, however, are protected by guards who are not part of FPS, such as the buildings of the U.S. State Department, which has its own uniformed law enforcement officers.

⁷ 40 U.S.C. §1315(b)(2).

Federal Protective Service Contract Security Guards. According to the DHS Inspector General (DHS IG), contract guard services “represent the single largest item in the FPS operating budget, with an estimated FY2006 budget of \$487 million.”⁸ FPS currently uses approximately 15,000 contract security guards who, along with approximately 950 FPS law enforcement officers, provide security and law enforcement coverage to all GSA owned and operated federal property.⁹

FPS contract security guard responsibilities include federal building access control, employee and visitor identification checks, security equipment monitoring, and roving patrols of the interior and exterior of federal property.¹⁰ Within the National Capital Region (NCR), contracts with 54 private security guard companies provide approximately 5,700 guards to protect 125 federal facilities. FPS issues task orders to contract security guard services that detail terms and conditions under which the contract security guard services are to be provided. Some of these task orders include the identification of buildings requiring protection, specific guard post locations, the hours and days of the week each post is to be staffed, whether security guards are to be armed, and the number of guards at each post.

FPS requires that security guard contractors ensure that their guards are qualified by undergoing background checks. They must possess required licenses, certifications, and permits. Additionally, companies that employ contract security guards must comply with performance requirements that include items such as guard appearance, work hours, supervision, equipment, and record keeping.¹¹ Contract security guards are also required to undergo training and pass an FPS administered written examination. The required training, licenses, certification, and permits include but are not limited to the following tasks and skills:

- background investigation;
- contractor provided basic training;
- contractor provided refresher training;
- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) training and certification;
- domestic violence prevention certification;
- FPS provided orientation training;
- contractor provided firearms training;
- firearms qualification;
- annual firearms re-qualification;
- medical screening;
- first aid certification;
- drug screening;

⁸ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, *Federal Protective Service Needs to Improve its Oversight of the Contract Guard Program*, OIG-07-05, October 2006, p. 2.

⁹ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Federal Protective Service, “Fiscal Year 2009 Congressional Justification,” February 2008, p. 3.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, *Federal Protective Service Needs to Improve its Oversight of the Contract Guard Program*, OIG-07-05, October 2006, p. 2.

¹¹ Ibid.

- written exam;
- state weapons permit;
- expandable baton certification; and
- use of magnetometers and X-ray machine.¹²

Following an audit of the NCR's FPS security guard contracts, the DHS IG concluded that FPS has become increasingly reliant on its contract guard force, is not adequately monitoring its security guard contracts, and that contract violations in the NCR exist. Some of the contract violations included unarmed guards working at armed posts, a guard with felony convictions being employed by one contractor, and guards without the required security clearances. Additionally, the DHS IG reported that "these lapses in contractor oversight can result in the government paying for services it did not receive, loss of monies resulting from contract deductions due to nonperformance, and placing FPS-protected facilities, employees, and facility visitors at risk."¹³

The ICE Assistant Secretary, Julie L. Myers, received the DHS IG audit prior to its release in October 2006, and formally responded to the audit's findings and recommendations. She asserted, for example, that ICE and FPS will improve their monitoring of the contract security guard program by increasing the number of ICE and FPS employees trained to oversee the program, will provide them with better training, and will use the tracking mechanisms to ensure contract security guard quality assurance.¹⁴

Department of Homeland Security Intended Changes. In FY2009 FPS intends the physical security of federal property being maintained solely by contract security guards. DHS intends for FPS to continue maintaining security policy and standards, conduct building security assessments, and monitor federal agency compliance with security standards.¹⁵ Also, in FY2009, DHS plans for FPS to continue providing law enforcement and security services at National Security Special Events (NSSE)¹⁶ that may increase threats at or in the vicinity of federal facilities. Such events include the Democratic and Republican National Conventions, the presidential inauguration, demonstrations, and protests.¹⁷

In FY2007, according to the Administration, FPS made the following changes:

- realigned its workforce;
- improved the strategic methods used to identify and reduce real and perceived threats;
- continued its intelligence and information sharing, hazardous materials response, and protective services; and

¹² Ibid., p. 33.

¹³ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Federal Protective Service, "Fiscal Year 2009 Congressional Justification," p. 4.

¹⁶ For information on NSSEs, see [<http://www.ustreas.gov/usss/nsse.shtml>].

¹⁷ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Federal Protective Service, "Fiscal Year 2009 Congressional Justification," p. 5.

- strengthened security standards to reduce threat and vulnerability levels at federal facilities.¹⁸

In FY2008, the FPS is presently:

- improving methods used to identify and reduce real and perceived threats to federal facilities;
- continuing intelligence and information sharing;
- providing law enforcement and security services at National Special Security Events (NSSE); and
- strengthening federal facility security standards.¹⁹

Finally, in FY2009, the Administration intends for the FPS to:

- provide law enforcement and security services at National Special Security Events (NSSE);
- complete risk-based security standards aligned with intelligence;
- continue federal facility security assessments;
- continue to monitor federal agency compliance with security standards;
- improve contract security guard management; and
- continue to strengthen business processes and the Service.²⁰

The FY2009 justification does not mention a realignment or reduction of the FPS workforce.

A Government Accountability Office(GAO) report stated that the FY2007 changes resulted in the FPS not providing proactive patrols in and around many federal facilities.²¹ The report also stated that at the end of FY2007, FPS had approximately 215 police officers, 541 inspectors, and about 15,000 contract guards to protect federal employees and facilities.²² Because of the reduction in police officers, GAO stated that the FPS may have difficulty determining how to allocate its limited resources effectively.²³ Additionally, the report stated how some FPS officials are concerned about security guard contract oversight, and that it is unclear if local police have the authority to respond to an incident inside federal facilities.²⁴

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Federal Protective Service, "Fiscal Year 2008 Congressional Justification," p. 6.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Federal Protective Service, "Fiscal Year 2009 Congressional Justification," p. 5.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Homeland Security: Preliminary Observations on the Federal Protective Service's Efforts to Protect Federal Property* (Washington: February 2008), p. 2.

²² Ibid., p. 3.

²³ Ibid., p. 8.

²⁴ Ibid. pp. 13-14.

On January 3, 2007, the National Association of Security Companies (NASCO) established and hosted the first meeting of its Federal Protective Service Working Group. NASCO reportedly established this working group in response to the increased use of contract security guards by DHS for the physical security of federal property. This working group is to begin the task-analysis process for security guards and law enforcement officers for federal and commercial markets to provide basic “best practices” guidelines for security. NASCO states that the three primary goals of the working group are to establish the security guard definition, to identify security functions and tasks, and to validate these functions for contract and training requirements.²⁵

P.L. 110-161 (FY2008 Consolidated Appropriations) required FPS to maintain not fewer than 1,200 full-time equivalent staff and 900 full-time equivalent police officers “directly” engaged protecting and enforcing laws at federal buildings on a daily basis.²⁶

²⁵ National Association of Security Companies, “NASCO Creates Federal Protective Service Working Group,” press release, January 3, 2007.

²⁶ H.R. 2764 (the enrolled version of the FY2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act), Div. E, Title II.