IG Protests TSA's Edits of Audit Report

Inspector General John Roth of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has protested actions by Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officials requiring the deletion of material in a new Office of Inspector General (OIG) report. During their review of the OIG's *Audit of Security Controls for DHS Information Technology Systems at John F. Kennedy International Airport,* TSA officials classified sections of the report as Sensitive Security Information (SSI). By law, material labeled by TSA as SSI cannot be included in a public report.

Roth, who termed the TSA action an abuse of the SSI classification, reluctantly issued a redacted version to the public. But he has furnished a full, unedited report to congressional committees with oversight over TSA. The report contains findings and recommendations for improving the security of TSA systems at the airport.

"Over-classification is the enemy of good government. SSI markings should be used only to protect transportation security, rather than, as I fear occurred here, to allow government program officials to conceal negative information within a report," said Roth. "I believe – and the computer experts on my staff confirm – that this report should be released in its entirety in the public domain."

Roth dispatched a formal challenge memo to the TSA Administrator on November 19, 2014 and again on December 19, 2014. His memos also cited delays in TSA's review of the OIG report, which was issued to TSA officials in draft on July 22, 2014.

Roth noted that previous publicly released OIG reports had contained similar material and that the contents of the new report posed no threat to transportation security.

Citing multiple legal bases for full disclosure, Roth wrote that "our mission is to inform the public, Congress, and the DHS leadership about fraud, waste, and mismanagement in DHS programs and operations. Issuing full reports without redactions is key to accomplishing that mission."

###