

## **Audits of regulated air cargo agents being stepped up**

Audits of regulated agents for international air cargo are being stepped up.

Concerns were expressed to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit that the Department of Transport and Regional Services had applied insufficient resources to this potentially vulnerable area during the committee's inquiry into aviation security in Australia.

The Australian National Audit Office said it had pointed out to the department that only a small number of agents had been audited for compliance with the international air security program.

DoTaRs had replied it lacked sufficient staff.

It relied on an "identified set of risk factors" and relied on intelligence from within the industry to identify concerns about particular agents.

Although DoTaRs hired more staff, the number was still insufficient, the audit office said.

A witness cited an example where he was aware that a regulated agent was not following procedures.

"Companies continually complain about competitors who disregard the regulations and see no improvement in either the level of regular or the application of security procedures " Christopher Smith said in his submission.

"Regulated agents who support the security program need to be assured that their efforts are necessary or they will lose interest and redirect funding to other areas."

DoTaRs said it was planning an audit program of 70 regulated agents from March to June.

This would be fine-tuned as the basis of a continuous audit program.

The program will be expanded after July to include domestic airfreight.

Audits will be part of the focus of its new transport security division, which kicks off tomorrow (Thursday, July 1).

The committee said in its report it noted that a four-fold increase in DoTaRs resources to monitor industry compliance, including regulated agents, was being made this year.

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