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War on Organized Crime Faltering: Federal Strike Forces Not Getting the Job Done. October 4, 1978. 5 pp. / enclosure (1 pp.).

Testimony before the House Select Committee on Aging.

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Because conventional methods of law enforcement had proven ineffective against organized crime, in January 1967 the Federal Government began establishing a joint-agency strike force program consisting of 18 strike forces staffed with Department of Justice attorneys and representatives from all Federal law enforcement agencies. A review of the 13 strike forces existing in December 1976 showed that: the Government had not developed a strategy to fight organized crime; there was no agreement on what organized crime is and whom or what the Government was fighting; individual strike forces had no statements of objectives; strike forces were hampered because the attorneys in charge had no authority over participants from other agencies; no system existed for evaluating the effectiveness of the national effort or of individual strike forces; and a costly computerized crime intelligence system was of dubious value. Resulting recommendations involved identification of organized crime, development of a national strategy, centralization of Federal efforts, and establishment of an evaluation system. The Organized Crime and Racketeering Section (OCRS) of the Department of Justice is now operating with defined priorities, and specific objectives are selected for each strike force. The National Organized Crime Planning Council is formulating an intelligence base from which organized crime planning can proceed. New guidelines have been developed defining organized crime, and the Racketeer Profile System has been discontinued. The OCRS' Intelligence Unit will now collect and analyze information about organized crime activities to provide management with the information it needs to plan, implement, and evaluate effectively. (RRS)

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STATEMENT OF
THE GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
BEFORE THE
SELECT COMMITTEE ON AGING
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ON GAO'S REPORT
WAR ON ORGANIZED CRIME FALTERING--
FEDERAL STRIKE FORCES NOT GETTING
THE JOB DONE (GGD-77-17, MARCH 17, 1977)

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

As requested, our testimony will focus on our March 17, 1977, report on the adequacy of the Federal efforts to deal with the organized crime problem in this country. As mentioned to you earlier, our effort did not specifically address the organized crime problem and its relationship to the health area. Rather, the report commented on the management of the organized crime program by the Department of Justice and identified areas where substantial improvements could be made. I would now like to summarize the report's findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Federal efforts could have been better planned, organized, directed, and executed

Because conventional methods of law enforcement against organized crime had proven ineffective, the Federal Government, in January 1967, made a

special effort to combat it through a joint-agency strike force program. Between January 1967 and April 1971 the Attorney General established 18 strike forces which were staffed with Department of Justice attorneys and representatives from all Federal investigative and law enforcement agencies. The goal of the strike force program was to launch a coordinated attack against this problem. In 1970 the National Council on Organized Crime was also established to formulate a strategy for eliminating organized crime.

At the time of our review--December 1976--the strike force program only consisted of 13 strike forces and the activity of the National Council had been minimal. Our work at strike forces in Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, New Orleans, and New York (Brooklyn and Manhattan) showed that:

- The Government had not developed a strategy to fight organized crime.
- There was no agreement on what organized crime is and, consequently, on precisely whom or what the Government was fighting.
- The strike forces had no statements of objectives or plans for achieving those objectives.
- Individual strike forces were hampered because the Justice attorneys-in-charge had no authority over participants from other agencies.
- No system existed for evaluating the effectiveness of the national effort or of individual strike forces.
- A costly computerized organized crime intelligence system was of dubious value.

Also, although strike forces had obtained numerous convictions, sentences had been generally light. At the strike forces reviewed, 52 percent of the sentences during a 4-year period did not call for confinement, and only 20 percent of the sentences were for 2 years or more.

We presented detailed recommendations that pointed out the need to:

- Identify what and whom the strike forces are combating.
- Develop a national strategy for fighting organized crime.
- Centralize Federal efforts--give someone the responsibility and authority for developing plans and overseeing their implementation.
- Establish a system for evaluating the effectiveness of the national and individual strike force efforts.

The Department knew that the strike force program was in trouble. It also conducted a study which concluded that, although the program had been in operation for nearly a decade, no one could seriously suggest that organized crime had been eliminated or even controlled. The Department agreed that the Federal effort against organized crime could be better managed.

On July 14, 1977, the Department cited certain actions taken in response to the conclusions and criticism in our report. The Department said:

- The Organized Crime and Racketeering Section (OCRS) is now operating with defined priorities and specific objectives are now being selected for each strike force and for the program nationally. In that process, the program will employ the strategy of concentrating most of its limited resources on those specific areas where organized crime's activities are the most harmful to society.
- The Department has created a new body--the National Organized Crime Planning Council (NOCPC). NOCPC is composed of senior national office supervisors from each participating agency. It has many functions, one of the most important of which is the formulation of an intelligence base from which organized crime planning can proceed. NOCPC will also be used to identify and plan strike force efforts with respect to those organized crime problems that are national in scope and capable of being attacked with a centrally coordinated strategy across the country. Finally, NOCPC will be used to identify

targets of local importance in particular areas in accordance with national priorities and to focus strike force actions regarding those problems. As specific objectives are developed for each strike force, they will provide a measure for the evaluation of performance. To evaluate the effectiveness of specific strike forces, NOCPC will undertake annual visitations to strike forces and will review each strike force's program in detail. Those on-site reviews should uncover any failures to meet stated goals or poor in-court performance. In addition, NOCPC members will get a first-hand view of the activity of each strike force and an opportunity to compare it with that of other strike forces. The relative needs of the various competing areas can thereby be assessed in terms of available manpower and resources, and a more informed and effective allocation among the strike forces can be achieved.

--To lend focus and coherence to the program's planning and to the deployment and use of its resources, the Department has defined the term "organized crime" in new guidelines for strike forces which have been recently developed. For the purposes of strike force operations, those new guidelines define "organized crime" as:

"all illegal activities engaged in by members of the criminal syndicates operative within the United States."

At the request of the participating agencies, criminal syndicates were further defined as all "highly organized, disciplined associations engaged in supplying illegal goods and services."

--The Racketeer Profile System has been discontinued. The OCRS's Intelligence Unit will now collect and analyze information about the activities of organized crime for the purpose of providing management with the information it needs to plan, implement, and evaluate effectively.

In the execution of this new mission, the Intelligence Unit's role is to develop new computerized analytical reports that will provide information in areas that reflect priorities, to determine the extent of mob infiltration and control in specified areas of concern, to identify mobsters, their roles and points of vulnerability, to discover and reveal interconnections, patterns, and trends, and to show interrelationships between

one organization and another. The Intelligence Unit's role will reflect and support the strategy previously discussed above.

Further, OCRS requested and the Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division has approved the transfer of substantive supervisory responsibility for the field analysts from the several Strike Force Chiefs to the Attorney-in-Charge of the Intelligence Unit. That centralization of analytical responsibility will support a coordinated national approach and the utilization of uniform procedures so necessary to the acquisition and analysis of intelligence for strategic purposes.

We believe if the above management policies are implemented, the Government's efforts to fight organized crime would be better planned, organized, and coordinated. However, we have not as yet followed up on these actions.

Strike Force Locations

Boston

Brooklyn

Buffalo

Chicago

Cleveland

Detroit

Kansas City, MO

Los Angeles

Miami

Newark

New Orleans

Philadelphia

San Francisco

Washington, D.C.

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