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Statement of

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT INFORMATION
AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS OF THE
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

on the

IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE
ATTEMPT TO AUTOMATE
ITS OPERATIONS



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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

On July 23, 1979, we provided testimony to you regarding the efforts of INS to automate its district offices. We stated that INS needed to:

- (1) prepare an ADP plan that supports its long-range mission plan;
- (2) establish a high level steering committee chaired by the Commissioner or his Deputy;
- (3) comply with existing regulations and standards;
- (4) carefully analyze the Houston experiment and prepare a system design concept based on these results, together with considerations of alternatives;
- (5) defer any large scale procurement until the system design concept is firm; and
- (6) conduct an analysis of the various lease and purchase alternatives to determine the method most favorable to the Government. In addition, we felt

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that the approach by INS to automating its district offices did not contain any comprehensive analysis on which to plan further implementation and expansion. It was our opinion that, based on past experiences with numerous other Federal agencies, the INS' piecemeal approach to automation was doomed to unnecessary difficulties and problems.

As a result of that July 1979 hearing you requested that we monitor the progress of INS in its attempt to automate its operations and report at quarterly intervals. We checked INS progress in September and December 1979, and in March this year.

In our first subsequent meeting with INS officials in September 1979, we found that INS had no overall agency mission plan, nor was there a long-range ADP plan that would support such an agency plan. Because INS had not yet developed a systematic approach to automate its operations, we suggested to INS officials that, based on our experience and in order to satisfy your committee's desires toward automation, INS needed to develop an agency strategy plan, an ADP plan based on that strategy, and a system design concept.

We believe every agency should have a strategic plan identifying not only "who we are" but "where are we going" and "how are we going to get there." And, if automation is the answer to the question of "how," then a long-range ADP plan which supports the agency's requirements is also necessary.

A system design concept is an idea expressed in terms of general performance, capabilities, and architecture for hardware and software that is oriented to either operate individually or to be operated as an integrated entity in meeting mission needs. The failure to develop such a concept has frequently been a primary reason for ineffective acquisition and use of ADP resources by Federal organizations.

INS had recognized the need for proper planning some time ago. Back in January 1979, the Commissioner of INS recognized an urgent requirement for the development of a comprehensive mission and ADP plan to afford top management the capability of flexible decisionmaking based on a variety of issues, contingencies, and budget constraints. INS contracted for the services of a contractor, at a cost of \$56,560 for 10 months, to assist in the following tasks: (1) improving the INS mission planning function, (2) developing a mission plan, (3) improving automatic data processing information systems planning function, and (4) developing a detailed ADP and information systems plan.

This need for a mission and ADP plan was also recognized by Department of Justice. In March 1979, Department officials formally cautioned INS officials to discipline themselves and start to follow basic management and planning principles to insure the success of automated projects.

In December 1979, we checked INS progress, and, finding little or none, so reported to your staff. And again in March 1980, we found little more progress. On March 20, 1980, INS officials provided us with a copy of what they told us was their mission statement. This statement appears to be similar to that contained in the U.S. Government Manual. It restates the legislative mandates and does provide goals and objectives. INS officials stated that this mission statement was the formally adopted version of INS's mission, and that it constituted INS's agency plan.

In reviewing the mission statement, we noted that although INS identified its basic responsibilities, it does not provide elements for answering important questions such as: "Where are we going?" and "How are we going to get there?" Therefore, we do not consider that the mission statement is a plan.

INS ADP officials also informed us on March 20, 1980, that they had developed a working draft of a long-range ADP plan which would be used as framework to develop a formal ADP plan supporting the INS mission. The long-range ADP plan is expected to be completed by September 1980. In our view, such an effort will be extremely difficult without first developing a mission plan for guidance.

The ADP working draft was evaluated internally by the INS Planning, Evaluation and Budget Group. The group concluded that the working draft did not represent a comprehensive detailing of INS's automated requirements and lacked the necessary elements to satisfy mission needs. It contained material directed only toward the Integrated Case Control System (ICCS).

We believe, and so stated in our previous testimony, that the ICCS system concept contained some good features that included basic systems planning and software development to be accomplished centrally. We also stated that INS should carefully analyze the "Houston Project" and prepare a total system design concept based on its results, together with considerations of alternatives. We still see no reason why the ICCS concept, in concert with the "Houston Project," could not serve as a basis for a total system design concept once a mission and ADP plan is developed.

Although INS previously recognized the need for effective mission and long-range automatic data processing plans, they have, in our opinion, made little progress in developing such plans.

INS has also made little effort to establish a high level steering committee. The INS Acting Commissioner advised us that the Executive Group within INS constituted the high level steering committee. However, we found that

there are no minutes taken at the Executive Group meetings nor could any INS official tell us how much of their meeting time was addressed to ADP and planning.

Mr. Chairman, these points cover the matters we monitored regarding the progress of INS in its attempt to automate its operations. This concludes my statement. I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.