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Problems Persist In Justice's  
ADP Management and Organizations

Statement of  
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Before the Committee on the Judiciary  
House of Representatives



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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

We are pleased to be here today to discuss the results of our recent review, undertaken at your request, of the Department of Justice's ADP (automated data processing) management and operations. You asked if Justice has adequately responded to our previous recommendations on ADP management and case management. You also asked (1) whether the Justice information resources management (IRM) office is structured in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980; (2) whether the IRM office has sufficient authority and resources to fulfill its responsibilities under both the Brooks Act and the Paperwork Reduction Act; and (3) whether Justice has sufficient resources to properly conduct large-scale ADP and telecommunications acquisitions.

Our review disclosed that some longstanding problems still exist. It is difficult to understand the department's lack of progress in responding to our 1983 recommendation to develop accurate and complete information on its litigative cases; an effort that affects only the department's case management systems. However, of broader concern are the more fundamental problems with Justice's overall management of its information resources -- problems that can affect all of the department's systems.

In this regard, Justice has not yet implemented our 1986 recommendation to develop an information resources management plan. Organization problems also weaken management of information resources. Although its central IRM office is structured in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980, the senior IRM official does not have clear authority to direct the component agencies to accomplish Justice-wide ADP goals and objectives. In addition, Justice does not believe it has sufficient staff with adequate technical and managerial capabilities, at both the department and component levels, to conduct large-scale ADP acquisitions and required oversight.

These kinds of problems raise doubts as to Justice's ability to effectively manage its information technology resources, especially since Justice plans to spend over \$2.7 billion for information technology and services in fiscal years 1991 through 1995. In this regard, two of the biggest spenders of this money--the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service), and the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation)--account for over 55 percent of this amount, and seem to have the biggest problems. For example, our recent reports on the department's ADP security program<sup>1</sup> and INS' information management<sup>2</sup> showed that the department risks

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<sup>1</sup>Justice Automation: Tighter Computer Security Needed (GAO/IMTEC-90-69, Jul. 30, 1990).

<sup>2</sup>Information Management: Immigration and Naturalization Service Lacks Ready Access to Essential Data (GAO/IMTEC-90-75, Sept. 27, 1990).

disclosing sensitive computer data because of poor security while INS risks admitting illegal aliens and granting benefits to ineligible aliens, and has millions of dollars in uncollected debts because of unreliable ADP systems. Also, a recent report by the department's Office of the Inspector General<sup>3</sup> pointed out that the FBI had "major internal control weaknesses" involving almost all aspects of its ADP operations, including findings that the FBI's IRM program is fragmented and ineffective.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to briefly summarize the results of our work and have our full report placed in the record of this hearing.<sup>4</sup>

JUSTICE HAS NOT ADEQUATELY RESPONDED  
TO PAST GAO RECOMMENDATIONS

Since 1979 we have issued a number of reports addressing Justice's ADP management and operations. These reports made recommendations to improve the department's ability to provide complete and reliable litigative caseload information and to develop and implement an IRM plan. Justice has not fully responded to these recommendations.

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<sup>3</sup>Audit Report: The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Automatic Data Processing General Controls, September, 1990.

<sup>4</sup>Information Resources: Problems Persist in Justice's ADP Management and Operations (GAO/IMTEC-91-4, Nov. 6, 1990).

Litigative Caseload Information  
Still Unreliable and Incomplete

After a number of false starts and over a decade of effort, Justice still does not have a system that can accurately provide the total number of cases being litigated and the total number of staff in the litigating organizations working on them.<sup>5</sup> Efforts to develop such a system have been unsuccessful because each litigating organization was allowed to develop a separate system to satisfy its own management needs and because data submissions from the litigating organizations that fed the departmental system were incomplete and unreliable.

Over 11 years ago we reported that the Congress and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) found it difficult to evaluate Justice requests for additional resources because of a lack of information on its litigative caseloads.<sup>6</sup>

In 1983 we reported that the case management system with its incomplete and inaccurate information did not meet the needs of either Justice or the Congress.<sup>7</sup> At that time we recommended that

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<sup>5</sup>Justice's litigating organizations include six divisions-- Antitrust, Civil, Civil Rights, Criminal, Lands and Natural Resources, and Tax--and the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys.

<sup>6</sup>Department of Justice Making Efforts to Improve Litigative Management Information Systems (GAO/GGD-79-80, Sept. 4, 1979).

<sup>7</sup>Department of Justice Case Management Information System Does Not Meet Departmental or Congressional Needs (GAO/GGD-83-50, Mar. 25, 1983).

the Attorney General develop a rigorous data-management program to achieve uniform, accurate, complete case-management information.

Three years later, in 1986, we again reported that despite actions to improve data quality, Justice still needed to address fundamental data-integrity problems.<sup>8</sup>

At present, although Justice has rectified some of its data problems, significant problems remain. According to its senior IRM official, no one within Justice uses the departmentwide case-management system because of its continuing inaccuracy. The main problem with the current system is the lack of a uniform case-numbering system among the litigating divisions and U.S. Attorney offices resulting in multiple counting of cases that are shared or transferred among these litigating organizations. It is not clear why the department would find it extraordinarily difficult to correct this problem.

In August 1990 Justice entered into an agreement with the General Services Administration's Federal Systems Integration and Management Center to perform a consolidated requirements analysis, and is exploring the feasibility of a single case-management system.

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<sup>8</sup>Justice Department: Improved Management Processes Would Enhance Justice's Operations (GAO/GGD-86-12, Mar. 14, 1986).

## IRM Plan Still Lacking

In our 1986 report we also recommended that the Attorney General develop a plan for managing the department's information resources.<sup>9</sup> We reported that Justice needed a plan to assess whether its component ADP initiatives were supporting departmentwide mission goals and objectives. In response, Justice developed a strategic automated information systems plan. Although the plan identifies cross-cutting information technology issues, the plan is not clear on how Justice will use information resources to accomplish its mission. Justice expects to develop an overall IRM plan by July 1991.

### SENIOR IRM OFFICIAL DOES NOT HAVE CLEAR AUTHORITY

Under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980, federal agencies are assigned various information management responsibilities, such as implementing governmentwide and agency policies, principles, and standards. By departmental order, the information management requirements of the act have been assigned to the Justice Department's senior IRM official, the Assistant Attorney General for Administration.<sup>10</sup> Department regulations also give this official broad responsibilities that include IRM functions such as

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<sup>9</sup>GAO/GGD-86-12, Mar. 14, 1986.

<sup>10</sup>Department of Justice Order 2880.1, "Information Resources Management Program," June 26, 1987.

formulating department policies, standards, and procedures for information systems.<sup>11</sup> Although the senior IRM official has these broad responsibilities, Justice's departmental orders and regulations do not give the senior official clear authority to direct component organizations to implement departmental IRM decisions. This lack of clear authority may have impeded the senior IRM official from fully carrying out his assigned responsibilities. In our judgement clear authority is important because of the varying degrees of independence of Justice's component organizations. For example, while we are not certain that this lack of clear authority prevented the senior IRM official from developing and implementing a uniform case numbering system, we noted that the manager of this project expressed such concern and the senior official recently asked the Attorney General for help in gaining the cooperation of the litigating components in developing such a system.

JUSTICE BELIEVES ITS IRM RESOURCES  
AND TECHNICAL AND MANAGEMENT  
CAPABILITIES ARE LIMITED

Justice believes that it does not have sufficient technical and managerial capabilities to administer its large ADP budget including the monitoring of information technology contracts, conducting large-scale ADP acquisitions, and providing the necessary management oversight of its information resources. The

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<sup>11</sup>28 C.F.R. 0.75.



senior IRM officials at both Justice and the Immigration and Naturalization Service have expressed this concern. And the issue has been raised in department reports.

The department's central IRM office says that limited resources have prevented it from fulfilling its oversight responsibilities. For example, staff shortages have precluded independent oversight and evaluation of IRM functions such as computer security including proper training of staff.<sup>12</sup> The result has been the proliferation of many disturbing security weaknesses in the department's sensitive computer systems.

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In summary, Mr. Chairman, Justice must take decisive action to solve its longstanding information management problems. This need is made more urgent by department plans to acquire \$2.7 billion in hardware, software, and computer services in the next 5 years. Our report contains recommendations for addressing these problems. In particular, we recommend that the Attorney General (1) require that the department develop an IRM plan and clean up its case-management systems to provide uniform, accurate, and complete information; (2) clarify the senior IRM official's authority in implementing departmental IRM decisions; and (3) augment, where needed, central IRM office capabilities.

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<sup>12</sup>GAO/IMTEC-90-69, July 30, 1990.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared statement. I will be happy to respond to any questions at this time.