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**Government Business
Operations Issue Area**

Active Assignments

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Foreword

This report was prepared primarily to inform Congressional members and key staff of ongoing assignments in the General Accounting Office's Government Business Operations issue area. This report contains assignments that were ongoing as of October 2, 1995, and presents a brief background statement and a list of key questions to be answered on each assignment. The report will be issued quarterly.

This report was compiled from information available in GAO's internal management information systems. Because the information was downloaded from computerized data bases intended for internal use, some information may appear in abbreviated form.

If you have questions or would like additional information about assignments listed, please contact J. William Gadsby, Director, on (202) 512-8387; Gaston Gianni, Associate Director, on (202) 736-0479; or Michael Motley, Associate Director, on (202) 512-8387.

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Government Business Operations

ASSET MAINTENANCE AND USE

TITLE: REVIEW OF SMITHSONIAN AIRCRAFT RESTORATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES (240171)

BACKGROUND : GAO is evaluating whether the Smithsonian is restoring enough aircraft in its collection, and preventing historic aircraft from deteriorating.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What is the Smithsonian's program to restore historic aircraft? (2) Have historic aircraft deteriorated?

TITLE: UPDATE OF PRIOR REPORT ON THE STATUS OF THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (240180)

BACKGROUND : We were asked to update GAO's 1993 report on the Kennedy Center Capital Improvement Program in light of the 1994 congressionally directed changes in responsibility for management of the Kennedy Center.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What is the status of the capital funding transferred from the National Park Service to the Kennedy Center when the Center became responsible for its capital improvements? (2) What management actions have been taken by the Kennedy Center to ensure that capital projects are being undertaken in a systematic and efficient manner?

MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT

TITLE: QUALITY OF POSTAL SERVICE CUSTOMER SERVICE (222016)

BACKGROUND : GAO is researching progress USPS is making towards improving window, lobby, complaint handling, telephone assistance and other non-delivery services provided to residential customers. GAO is also examining how USPS uses customer survey data it collects to help improve these non-delivery services.

KEY QUESTIONS : Is the USPS taking actions to improve its non-delivery services? Specifically: (1) What are some ongoing initiatives and how are they tracked? (2) What are some of the major obstacles to improvement? (3) How are the results of successful initiatives disseminated?

Government Business Operations

MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT

TITLE: REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL MAIL MARKET (240137)

BACKGROUND : The Postal Service wants to expand its role in the international mail markets, but it may not have the authority or ability to effectively compete in these growing markets. It has less control over pricing than its competitors, and its delivery systems may not provide sufficiently reliable service for international competition.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What is the Service's statutory, current, and planned role in the delivery of international mail? (2) What relationships exist between the Service, foreign postal administrations and the Universal Postal Union? (3) Do current postal laws and international agreements limit the Service's ability to participate internationally?

TITLE: EVALUATION OF POSTAL SERVICE EFFORTS TO OBTAIN AUTOMATION COMPATIBLE MAIL (240174)

BACKGROUND : The Postal Service uses various pricing incentives and outreach methods to encourage businesses to prepare automation compatible mail. However, a recent study found that a substantial number of companies do not take advantage of postal discounts. The service is expanding its outreach efforts and will propose new mail classes and rates to encourage more mailers to participate.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Why do many business mailers not take advantage of mail preparation discounts? (2) Are Service reclassification and outreach efforts addressing obstacles preventing the preparation of automation compatible mail?

TITLE: REVIEW OF POSTAL SERVICE BULK BUSINESS MAIL ACCEPTANCE PRACTICES (240184)

BACKGROUND : Postage discounts are allowed for presorted and prebarcoded bulk business mailings because processing costs for the Postal Service are reduced. Discounts allowed in FY94 totaled \$8 billion. The requester is concerned that the Postal Service may allow discounts on mail that is not properly prepared and does not reduce processing costs.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Do the Postal Service's acceptance procedures provide reasonable assurance that all revenues due from bulk business mailings are being received? (2) What actions are the Postal Service taking to minimize its vulnerability to bulk business mail losses?

Government Business Operations

MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT

TITLE: MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION'S ONGOING FEDERAL OPERATIONS REVIEW MODEL ANALYSES OF 16 MAJOR BUSINESS LINES (240189)

BACKGROUND : As part of reinvention and with the assistance of Arthur Andersen & Co.(AA), GSA developed and is using a federal operations review model (FORM) to determine the most cost-effective method of carrying out each of its 16 major mission-support functions or business lines. GSA is considering various options, including privatization and outsourcing.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Did the methodology that GSA used as the analytical bases for its FORM analyses appear to be reasonable and valid? (2) Do any resulting GSA reform proposals have merit and are they adequately supported by the analytical evidence? (3) Did GSA establish and implement policies/procedures to adequately protect government information and avoid potential conflicts of interest?

TITLE: RTC/FDIC TRANSITION PLANS (247127)

BACKGROUND : At the oversight hearing on the Resolution Trust Corporation (RTC) on May 16, 1995, the requester stated that in October 1995 he wanted to take another look at how the transition of RTC to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) was proceeding. He said that he would ask GAO to report to the requester by October 1 on the status of the transition plans.

KEY QUESTIONS : What is the status of the RTC/FDIC Transition Task Force plans for merging RTC into FDIC?

ASSET & SUPPORT SERVICES ACQUISITION

TITLE: REVIEW OF SELECTED MAJOR POSTAL SERVICE PROCUREMENTS (240155)

BACKGROUND : The requestor is concerned that five major Postal Service procurements which encountered problems do not reflect favorably on the Service's procurement program or the decision to allow the Service to be exempt from most federal procurement laws that apply to other agencies.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What were the causes of the procurement deficiencies? (2) Is there a common thread that suggests a basic flaw in the procurement program?

Government Business Operations

ASSET & SUPPORT SERVICES ACQUISITION

TITLE: REVIEW OF FEDERAL COURTHOUSE CONSTRUCTION (240160)

BACKGROUND : Over the next 15 years, the government plans to spend about \$7.5 billion to construct 120 courthouses. A recent GAO report and congressional hearings questioned the process for forecasting the Courts future space needs. Concern has arisen that the government may be currently building lavish courthouses that are not needed.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) How are new courthouse construction projects identified, justified, prioritized, and funded? (2) What factors make federal courthouse construction more costly than federal office building construction and some courthouse construction projects more costly than others?

TITLE: SURVEY OF THE REASONABLENESS OF THE COST TO CONSTRUCT FAA'S BASE BUILDING IN LINCOLN, NE (240188)

BACKGROUND : The requester is concerned about the effect the processes followed by the federal government have on the construction cost of small buildings. As a case study, he asked us to examine the reasonablemess of the \$600,000 cost for a 2,500 square foot FAA base building in Lincoln, NE. Additional work would depend on what we learn from the Lincoln case study. All agreed with this.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Given the facility size, any required special features, and prevailing local construction rates; was the cost of the FAA building in Lincoln, NE reasonable? (2) Was the procurement process that FAA used for this relatively small building appropriate; and did it facilitate competition and acquiring the building at a fair and reasonable cost?

ASSET DISPOSITION

TITLE: SURVEY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FEDERAL AGENCY EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY EXCESS REAL PROPERTY (240134)

BACKGROUND : The U.S. government's vast real property portfolio includes 450,000 buildings and millions of acres of land worth billions of dollars. These assets should be viewed as capital resource tools supporting agencies' goals, policies, and missions; and managed, used, and disposed of to maximize taxpayers' return on investment in them. E.O. 12512 was intended to help attain these ends.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Have federal agencies effectively identified and reported to GSA their excess real property mission assets? (2) Are there obstacles or disincentives that impede the reporting, recycling, or sales of such property? (3) What reforms are needed to improve GSA and line agencies' management of real estate assets and maximize the government's return on investment in them?

Government Business Operations

ASSET DISPOSITION

TITLE: SURVEY OF THE EXCESS AND SURPLUS PERSONAL PROPERTY PROGRAM (240152)

BACKGROUND : Each year, agencies generate billions of dollars of excess personal property. In 1976, Congress passed P.L. 94-519 with the intent of giving federal agencies priority access to excess personal property and ensuring fair and equitable distribution of remaining property among non-federal users.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) How have various laws changed access to excess property since the passage of P.L. 94-519? (2) Are non-federal users of excess property receiving items that federal agencies need?

TITLE: HRA 1: REVIEW OF RTC SALE OF PERFORMING ASSETS TO ACQUIRERS OF MINORITY THRIFTS (247123)

BACKGROUND : The RTC Completion Act (PL 103-204) requires GAO to submit an annual report to Congress on RTC's transfer of performing assets to acquirers of failed minority-owned thrifts.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What type and how many performing assets were transferred to acquirers of failed minority thrifts? (2) How did RTC determine the fair market value of the transferred assets?

TITLE: GOVERNMENTWIDE SURVEY OF REAL PROPERTY MANAGEMENT AND DISPOSITION PRACTICES (247900)

BACKGROUND : The RTC Completion Act of 1994 requires GAO to study the desirability of having a single agency dispose of HUD, FmHA, FDIC, and RTC held real properties. This study is in line with programmed work, identified as critical, looking at property dispositions from an overall government perspective.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What are the key differences between the RTC, FDIC, HUD, and FmHA real property disposition activities? (2) What are the barriers/issues that would need to be addressed if Congress chooses to consolidate real property disposition activities of the four agencies into one agency? (3) What progress have agencies made to improve coordination of asset disposition?

Government Business Operations

OTHER ISSUE AREA WORK

TITLE: EVALUATION OF USPS OVERSIGHT OF NATIONAL CHANGE OF ADDRESS PROGRAM LICENSEES (240157)

BACKGROUND : The Postal Service National Change of Address (NCOA) Program mass disseminates postal customer address change data to licensees who use the data to update proprietary address lists they sell nationwide. To protect the privacy of its customers, the USPS imposes restrictions on licensees' use of NCOA information and monitors compliance with these restrictions.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What restrictions does the National Change of Address (NCOA) license agreement impose regarding the use and release of address information? (2) Are those restrictions consistent with "privacy" requirements of federal law? (3) How does USPS monitor the licensees' compliance with NCOA license agreements and oversee corrective actions for identified violations?

TITLE: FINANCIAL IMPACT ON THE POSTAL SERVICE OF NOT ENFORCING THE PRIVATE EXPRESS STATUTES (240158)

BACKGROUND : Delivery of letters by private carriers is restricted by Priv. Express Statutes. Priv. carriers have challenged the statutes & several bills were introduced in the 103rd Cong. to relax or repeal them. GAO was asked to assess the financial effects of restricting enforcement. The 104th Cong. has broadened debate to include privatization & related legislation has been introduced.

KEY QUESTIONS : 1. What are the arguments for and against the postal monopoly? 2. How are the Priv. Express Statutes (PES) administered & enforced? 3. How would USPS be affected if PES are relaxed or repealed? 4. Are reforms of the USPS needed & how do current proposals address those needs? 5. How have other advanced nations addressed postal monopoly & privatization issues?

TITLE: COMPARISON OF FEDERAL GRANTS RECEIVED VERSUS THOSE AVAILABLE TO THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA (240165)

BACKGROUND : GAO was asked to compare grants for which District agencies qualify against those they actually receive. This work was identified as a long term undertaking as part of the GAO analysis of the financial problems facing the District.

KEY QUESTIONS : Is the District of Columbia applying for . . . and receiving available grant opportunities?

Government Business Operations

OTHER ISSUE AREA WORK

TITLE: GOVERNMENT-WIDE CONCESSION CONTRACTS (240170)

BACKGROUND : Over the past several years, GAO has done extensive work on concessions management at six federal land management agencies, primarily in the Interior Department. The requester would like additional information, on a government-wide basis, in this area, as well as information on how other governments manage concessions.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What is the extent of concessions contracting government-wide? (2) Do agencies maximize concessions revenues to the government? (3) Do personnel who award and administer concessions contracts have sufficient direction and skills? (4) How do other governments manage their concessions contracts?

TITLE: POSTAL RATE SETTING PROCESS (240179)

KEY QUESTIONS : 1. Are GAO's recommendations on volume discounting and demand pricing still necessary for Congress to implement? 2. What are GAO's views of the strengths and weaknesses of the current rate setting process? 3. What are GAO's observations of the relative advantages and disadvantages of proposals for modifying the postal rate setting process?

TITLE: FINAL-OFFER ARBITRATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF RESOLVING CONTRACT DISPUTES BETWEEN POSTAL MANAGEMENT AND LABOR UNIONS (240186)

BACKGROUND : In 9/94, we reported that postal labor-management relations have been adversarial which has resulted in a reliance on arbitration to settle contract disputes. Both management and the unions have expressed dissatisfaction with this procedure. The requester asked that we obtain more information on final-offer arbitration as an alternative to the current procedure.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What is final-offer arbitration? (2) How and where has final-offer arbitration been used? (3) What do management and labor officials believe has been the effect of final-offer arbitration on their relations?

Government Business Operations

OTHER ISSUE AREA WORK

TITLE: REVIEW OF COMMEMORATIVE COIN PROGRAM (240187)

BACKGROUND : The requester has asked GAO to review the U.S. Mint's commemorative coin program because of recent losses on certain coins and complaints from the numismatic community about the proliferation of coins offered.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) How much have the government and sponsoring organizations lost or profited from commemorative coins? (2) Are there more effective mechanisms than current processes to approve commemorative coins? (3) What controls should be implemented to help assure that programs, themes, mintages, denominations, and prices are appropriate?

TITLE: REVIEW OF THE COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF THE U.S. MINT'S PENNY PRODUCTION AND OF OTHER FACTORS RELATED TO DECISIONS ON WHETHER TO CONTINUE PRODUCING PENNIES (240190)

BACKGROUND : In 1990, some legislative proposals called for eliminating production of the penny. GAO reported in May 1990, however, that demand for the penny remained strong and penny production was profitable to the government in that the face value of the penny exceeded its production and distribution costs. GAO has been requested to determine if the circumstances have changed.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Is penny production profitable? (2) Would budget savings result if penny production ceased? (3) What effects on Mint operations would eliminating the penny cause? (4) What is the public attitude toward the penny? (5) Could prices be rounded fairly if the penny were eliminated? (6) Are environmental problems caused by penny production and disposal of unused pennies?

TITLE: HRA16: FDIC PRIVATE SECTOR CONTRACTS FOR ASSET MANAGEMENT (247402)

KEY QUESTIONS : What is the current status of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) efforts to review its contracts with private sector asset managers in Massachusetts and determine the cost-effectiveness of terminating contracts prior to their normal expirations dates?

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