



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

029652

NATIONAL SECURITY AND  
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

August 1, 1984

B-206232

The Honorable Byron L. Dorgan  
House of Representatives



Dear Mr. Dorgan:

Subject: Actions Taken on GAO Recommendations  
Concerning Civilian Agency Aircraft Management  
(GAO/NSIAD-84-148)

In accordance with your letter of April 27, 1984, and subsequent discussions with your office, we are reporting on actions taken on recommendations we have made to improve civilian agency aircraft management. Your request for such a report stemmed from your concern about the findings of our June 24, 1983,<sup>1</sup> report that agencies had not acted on the recommendations we made in our December 22, 1977, report, "Improvements Are Needed in Managing Aircraft Used by Federal Civilian Agencies" (LCD-77-430).

Specifically, you asked us to provide you with

--a summary of the recommendations made in the June 24, 1983, report and in the three other reports<sup>2</sup> sent to

---

<sup>1</sup>"Federal Civilian Agencies Can Better Manage Their Aircraft and Related Services" (GAO/PLRD-83-64, June 24, 1983).

<sup>2</sup>"The Coast Guard Headquarter's Administrative Aircraft Operations: A Costly Way of Providing Transportation" (GAO/PLRD-83-45, March 3, 1983).

"FAA Can Better Manage the Aircraft It Uses to Keep Pilots Current and Provide Transportation" (GAO/PLRD-83-52, April 1, 1983).

"Actions Taken to Improve Management and Reduce Costs of Interior's Aircraft Operations and Further Improvements Needed" (GAO/NSIAD-84-45, April 2, 1984).

(391511)

029652

the Chairman, House Committee on Government Operations, that resulted from our assessment of federal civilian agency aircraft management, and

--a progress report on the implementation of our recommendations by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), General Services Administration (GSA), Department of Transportation (DOT), and Department of the Interior (DOI).

In addition, you asked for a summary of available data on the government-wide totals for the purchase prices, operating costs, utilization rates, and potential savings from using commercial flights and/or better management of agency aircraft.

Finally, we agreed to provide you with information on our ongoing review of the U.S. Postal Service's administrative aircraft.

#### CURRENT STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

To respond to your request for information about agency implementation of our recommendations, we used the agencies' official responses, as required by 31 U.S.C. 720. As you know, this law requires the head of a federal agency to submit a written statement on actions taken on our recommendations to the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs and to the House Committee on Government Operations not later than 60 days after the date of the report.

In June and July 1984, we also interviewed GSA, DOT, and DOI officials to find out the current status of their actions. In addition, on July 5, 1984, DOT gave us a written status of their actions on each recommendation made in the Coast Guard and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reports.

The agencies generally agreed with most of our recommendations. They have told us that they either have implemented many of the recommendations, or are planning to do so soon. Our analysis of the actions taken and planned lead us to believe that these actions, if all are indeed implemented, address the problems noted in the reports.

Enclosures I-IV list the specific recommendations made to OMB, GSA, DOT (Coast Guard and FAA reports), and DOI, respectively, and the specific actions the agencies have taken on each of these recommendations.

COST AND USE OF CIVILIAN AGENCY AIRCRAFT

As agreed with your office, we did not obtain data on government-wide totals on the purchase prices, operating costs, and the use of agency aircraft because (1) the data could not be obtained without a great deal of time and work and (2) the GSA aircraft management information system, which will be operational in the near future, should be able to provide most of this data for you more efficiently.

CURRENT STATUS ON U.S. POSTAL SERVICE  
AIRCRAFT REVIEW

Work on our review of the U.S. Postal Service aircraft is in process. Staff from our General Government Division will provide the requestor (Chairman, Subcommittee on Government Information, Justice, and Agriculture, House Committee on Government Operations) with a fact sheet and briefing when work is completed. A letter report to the U.S. Postal Service is anticipated. If a report is issued, a copy will be sent to you.

- - - -

We trust that the information provided in this report is responsive to your needs. As agreed with your office, we are sending copies of this report to the Chairman, House Committee on Government Operations. Copies are also being sent to the Director, Office of Management and Budget and to the Secretaries of the Interior and Transportation and to the Administrator, General Services Administration. Copies will also be made available to others upon request.

Sincerely yours,



Frank C. Conahan  
Director

Enclosures - 4

STATUS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE TO THE DIRECTOR,  
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET,  
AS OF JULY 1984

In our June 24, 1983, report on civilian agency aircraft operations, we made four primary recommendations to the Director, OMB. On October 26, 1983, OMB officially responded to our report and advised that it concurred with and had implemented all the recommendations except one. The recommendations made and their status, as of July 1984, follow.<sup>3</sup>

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Director, OMB, should develop uniform policies and procedures for aircraft management, including guidance on how, when, by whom, and for what purposes aircraft may be used, and require that civilian agencies, in accordance with OMB policies, implement uniform, clear, and specific guidelines that define and differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable aircraft use. The guidelines should require individuals responsible for aircraft management to compare the full cost of transporting passengers by scheduled air carriers with the cost of transporting them by Government aircraft. (See pp. 10 and 26.)

STATUS: On October 5, 1983, OMB issued Circular A-126, "Improving the Management and Use of Government Aircraft," which contains the policy guidance we recommended for civilian agency aircraft operations.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The Director, OMB, should work with agencies in developing overall criteria for a uniform cost-accounting system that will standardize aircraft program cost elements and require agency compliance. (See p. 10.)

STATUS: In its response, OMB disagreed with our recommendation and said that it believed that GAO was a more appropriate agency to develop criteria for aircraft cost-accounting systems. Subsequent to OMB's response, the Chairman, House Committee on Government Operations, requested that we and OMB work together on developing overall criteria to standardize government aircraft program cost elements. We expect to have the criteria developed by October 30, 1984.

---

<sup>3</sup>At the end of each recommendation, the page number of the report on which the recommendation appears is given in parentheses.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The Director, OMB should revise Circular A-76 to strengthen its application to the acquisition of aircraft and related services and enforce compliance with the circular through OMB's budget review process. (See p. 17.)

STATUS: In its response, OMB said that its revised circular, dated August 4, 1983, strengthens the applicability of A-76 to the acquisition of aircraft and related services as we recommended. Also, OMB said that its budget guidelines require agencies to consider the results of A-76 cost reviews when preparing their budget submissions. OMB added that its internal budget-examination procedures should be sufficient to enforce compliance with the circular.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The Director, OMB, should direct each civilian agency that has substantial aircraft needs to establish a central organization that would have oversight and management responsibilities for that agency's aircraft. (See p. 40.)

STATUS: In its response, OMB agreed with the recommendation and said that its Circular A-126 requires agencies to establish clear accountability for aircraft management at a senior management level. OMB also said that this provides agencies with sufficient flexibility to integrate the assignment of various aircraft management responsibilities with other related administrative functions.

STATUS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE TO  
THE ADMINISTRATOR, GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION,  
AS OF JULY 1984

In our June 24, 1983, report, we made three specific recommendations to the Administrator of GSA. GSA's official response, dated September 28, 1983, said that the three recommendations would be implemented. The recommendations made and their status, as of July 1984, follow.<sup>4</sup>

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Administrator of General Services should establish standards for aircraft use to ensure that government-owned and -leased aircraft are justified, based on their use for mission purposes. (See p. 34.)

STATUS: In its response, GSA said that the recommendation would be implemented. In July 1984, GSA advised us that standards for aircraft use will be established after the government-wide aircraft management information system is put into operation.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The Administrator of General Services should require agencies to dispose of those aircraft that cannot be justified for mission purposes due to their low and uneconomical utilization. (See p. 34.)

STATUS: In its response, GSA said that it would implement the recommendation. In July 1984, GSA informed us that once the aircraft management information system is operating, it will be able to monitor aircraft use and require agencies to dispose of those aircraft that have low use and cannot otherwise be justified.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The Administrator of General Services, should establish a single coordinating activity to provide and operate a government-wide aircraft management information system similar to the one operated by the Department of the Interior Office of Aircraft Services (OAS). The activity also could be given responsibility to standardize aircraft procurement policies and practices, to ensure compliance with OMB Circular A-76, to procure aircraft, and to establish aircraft standards. (See p. 45.)

---

<sup>4</sup>At the end of each recommendation, the page number of the report on which the recommendation appears is given in parentheses.

STATUS: In its response, GSA said that it would develop a data base for use in a management information system and, when completed, it will explore with agencies the best ways to use the system. GSA also said that procedures would be issued as appropriate. In July 1984, GSA advised us that the government-wide aircraft management information system should be in operation by September 30, 1984, and that data on agencies' aircraft should be available by January 1985.

STATUS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS  
MADE TO THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION,  
AS OF JULY 1984

In our March 3, 1983, report on the aircraft operations at the Coast Guard Headquarters and in our April 1, 1983, report on FAA aircraft, we made several specific recommendations to the Secretary of Transportation for corrective action. In its official response, dated October 7, 1983, DOT advised that, subsequent to the issuance of the draft versions of the GAO reports, the Department established an aircraft study task force to review the use of Departmental aircraft. DOT said that the Congress directed the review through House Conference Report No. 97-960, and that the task force considered the GAO findings and recommendations in the performance of its review.

According to DOT, the task force found, as we had reported, that there was need for improvement in certain areas of Departmental aircraft management. DOT determined that a Departmental aircraft policy was needed, that one of the two Coast Guard aircraft located at Washington National Airport should be reassigned, that one FAA Evaluation, Currency, and Transportation (ECT) aircraft located at Washington National Airport should be reassigned, that the FAA should reassess its ECT aircraft program, and that the Coast Guard and FAA should collocate their aircraft operations at Washington National Airport.

On July 5, 1984, DOT gave us a status report on each recommendation made in the Coast Guard and FAA reports. The three recommendations made in the Coast Guard report and their current status follow.<sup>5</sup>

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Secretary of Transportation should direct the Coast Guard to dispose of the two aircraft at National Airport through normal disposal practices. Coast Guard personnel assigned to support these aircraft should be reassigned where needed. (See p. 2.)

STATUS: On September 1, 1983, one of the two Coast Guard administrative aircraft (VC-4A Gulfstream I-Turboprop) was transferred to the Coast Guard Air Station at Elizabeth City, North Carolina, for use in support of Coast Guard mission requirements. At that time, 11 of the 23 personnel assigned to the Coast

---

<sup>5</sup>At the end of each recommendation, the page number of the report on which the recommendation appears is given in parentheses.



Guard National Airport operations were transferred with the aircraft to Elizabeth City, North Carolina.

DOT said that (1) the remaining headquarter's aircraft would be used to support Coast Guard command requirements and other high priority or cost-effective transportation requirements, and (2) it would be beneficial to relocate the remaining Coast Guard aircraft and personnel to the FAA National Airport hangar. The relocation took place on February 3, 1984, when the aircraft (Gulfstream II Jet) and the remaining 12 personnel were moved to the FAA hangar.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The Secretary of Transportation should require DOT and Coast Guard officials to use more economical commercial airline service to the maximum extent possible consistent with important mission accomplishment. For those instances where commercial airlines cannot be used, arrangements should be made for the officials to use FAA, the 89th Airlift Wing, other Federal Government, or private commercial aircraft. (See pp. 2 and 3.)

STATUS: DOT issued an aircraft policy (DOT order 6050.1, dated May 24, 1983), which establishes that Department aircraft may be used for the primary purpose of transporting passengers only when such use is clearly in the best interest of the federal government from an economic or mission-accomplishment standpoint. The order states that when aircraft are considered for use for the primary purpose of transportation, an economic analysis must be performed. Further, DOT aircraft will not be used when the cost comparison reflects that such use is more costly than commercial transportation, unless a specific mission objective cannot be met otherwise.

In October 1983, DOT said that the Coast Guard was responsible for developing policies and procedures to implement the order. On May 7, 1984, DOT approved Coast Guard policies and procedures which implement the provisions of DOT order 6050.1. These implementing instructions are being prepared for distribution as a change to the Coast Guard air operations manual (Commandant Instruction M3710.1A) and two new supplementary instructions (Commandant Instructions 3760.2 and 4630.1).

RECOMMENDATION 3: The Secretary of Transportation should issue a written policy generally prohibiting the transporting of spouses, dependents, and other nonofficial travelers on the DOT aircraft. (See p. 3.)

STATUS: DOT order 6050.1 establishes very high levels of authority for approving transportation of (1) official passengers (both for primary and secondary purposes), (2) spouses, dependents, and other nonofficial travelers, and (3) passengers during emergency situations. When spouses, dependents, and other nonofficial travelers are not in an official travel status, the transportation of such personnel aboard DOT aircraft is generally prohibited.

- - - -

The recommendations made in the FAA report and their current status follow.

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Secretary of Transportation should require the FAA Administrator to accurately determine ECT flight program requirements by implementing FAA Orders 4040.9A and 4040.19 and reassess ECT program pilot requirements to ensure that program pilots are in positions to require them to actually fly aboard aircraft as crewmembers. (See p. 10.)

STATUS: FAA has clarified which positions are authorized to participate in the ECT program. FAA Order 4040.9A and other applicable directives on aircraft management are being revised to incorporate changes as a result of our report. FAA expects to have 4040.9A and other related instructions implemented by October 1984.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The Secretary of Transportation should require the FAA Administrator to accurately determine ECT flight program requirements by implementing FAA Order 4040.9A and 4040.19 and ensure that flight program participants are limited to those that can be supported by the budget and programmed flight-hours. (See pp. 10 and 11.)

STATUS: FAA is reviewing and validating all ECT program participants annually to ensure strict adherence to participation criteria. The number of participants is limited to those that can be supported by the budget and programmed flight hours.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The Secretary of Transportation should require the FAA Administrator to accurately determine ECT flight program requirements by implementing FAA Order 4040.9A and 4040.19 and to ensure that flight programs are developed and flight-hours are allocated so that each designated pilot may meet the program's currency requirements. (See pp. 10 and 11.)

STATUS: FAA now distributes flight hours within the programs to ensure that the highest priorities of the agency are met. This methodology of distribution of flight hours and meeting currency requirements is in consonance with policy guidelines of FAA Order 4040.9 and other controlling directives.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The Secretary of Transportation should require the FAA Administrator to accurately determine ECT flight program requirements by implementing FAA Orders 4040.9A and 4040.19 and to ensure that pilots are removed from the program for failure to maintain the required level of currency or failure to meet minimum participation standards. (See pp. 10 and 11.)

STATUS: DOT advised us that the revised FAA Order 4040.9 will contain detailed participation criteria. Participation will be monitored by FAA's Aviation Standards National Field Office. Failure to maintain required levels of currency or meet minimum participation standards during two consecutive quarters (absent extenuating circumstances) will result in removal from the program.

RECOMMENDATION 5: The Secretary of Transportation should require the FAA Administrator to accurately determine ECT flight program requirements by implementing FAA Orders 4040.9A and 4040.19 and ensure that each program pilot is authorized no more currency hours than necessary to meet minimum standards, as previously required by regulations. (See pp. 10 and 11.)

STATUS: FAA is currently conducting critical reviews of all ECT program participants. FAA plans to better define the mission elements of currency, proficiency, evaluation, and transportation. FAA is also conducting an analysis of airworthiness inspectors. This analysis may have an impact upon the standards and criteria associated with the ECT program.

RECOMMENDATION 6: The Secretary of Transportation should require the FAA Administrator to accurately determine ECT flight-program requirements by implementing FAA Orders 4040.9A and 4040.19 and to prohibit transportation flights from being justified for currency, unless they are necessary to meet minimum standards. (See pp. 10 and 11.)

STATUS: FAA has determined that currency, check flights, and proficiency flying need to be better defined and documented. Action to do so, therefore, is in process.

RECOMMENDATION 7: The Secretary of Transportation should direct the Administrator of FAA to adequately justify the reasons for each flight on agency aircraft by properly filling out the aircraft request and use records as required by FAA Order 4040.9A. (See p. 22.)

STATUS: The DOT Order 6050.1, "Use of Department of Transportation Aircraft," implements our recommendation. FAA Order 4020.20 "Use of Federal Aviation Administration Aircraft," issued on September 22, 1983, implements the DOT order. Furthermore, DOT said that FAA, through the Aviation Standards National Field Office, has held meetings with the majority of FAA aircraft users and this issue has been thoroughly discussed. DOT also said that FAA is conducting a 100 percent review of all aircraft request and use records and that review of the records indicates that adequate justification is being documented.

RECOMMENDATION 8: The Secretary of Transportation should direct the Administrator of FAA to establish criteria, guidelines, and procedures that require consistent and valid comparisons of the cost of transporting passengers on agency aircraft versus commercial airlines. (See p. 22.)

STATUS: DOT Order 6050.1 implements our recommendation. And FAA Order 4040.20 implements the DOT order.

RECOMMENDATION 9: The Secretary of Transportation should direct the Administrator of FAA to require the use of commercial airlines, or other less costly means, to transport passengers when it is more economical and does not interfere with mission accomplishment. (See p. 22.)

STATUS: DOT Order 6050.1 implements our recommendation. And FAA Order 4040.20 implements the DOT order.

RECOMMENDATION 10: The Secretary of Transportation should direct the Administrator of FAA to limit VIP transportation on FAA aircraft to the absolute minimum necessary and permit it only when (1) commercial airlines cannot be used due to mission requirements and (2) the government benefits justify the costs. (See p. 22.)

STATUS: DOT Order 6050.1 implements our recommendation. And FAA Order 4040.20 implements the DOT order.

RECOMMENDATION 11: The Secretary of Transportation should direct the Administrator of FAA to require that the costs of transporting passengers be charged to the Transportation

Appropriations account and, where passengers are transported with a bona fide mission, the cost of such transportation should be prorated between the appropriations accounts on an equitable basis. (See p. 22.)

STATUS: According to DOT, this issue was addressed by OMB which chaired an Aircraft Policy Working Group that DOT participated in. Such a proposal on the costs of transporting passengers was contained in an earlier draft version of OMB Circular A-126, "Improving the Management and Use of Government Aircraft." However, DOT advised us that OMB made the decision not to issue such a policy in its circular. An OMB official told us that they decided not to issue such a policy because it would require major changes to their prescribed budget object classification accounts. Therefore, OMB officials concluded that such changes should not be made without a more thorough study of the government-wide impact and the changes that would be required if such a policy were adopted. We agree with OMB's decision in this matter.

RECOMMENDATION 12: The Secretary of Transportation should direct the Administrator of FAA to require that officials responsible for approving transportation flights be held accountable through their performance evaluations that these recommended practices are followed. (See p. 22.)

STATUS: The DOT and FAA Orders have now elevated the approval authority for flights to a very high level within the agency. Officials (such as regional directors) with approval authority are held accountable for their approval actions. DOT said, however, that it does not believe that it is appropriate to have this one specific function, which is not a significant portion of the officials' total responsibilities, formally included in their performance evaluations.

RECOMMENDATION 13: The Secretary of Transportation should direct the Administrator of FAA to reduce the number of evaluation, currency, and transportation aircraft to only those necessary to meet valid program requirements. (See p. 22.)

STATUS: The equivalent of one FAA aircraft used at FAA's National Airport operation has been eliminated from that location. At one time, FAA was rotating regional aircraft into Washington for ECT use. It has discontinued this rotation. Also, as part of its on-going ECT-program review, FAA is assessing aircraft requirements to determine if a need exists to reassign or eliminate additional aircraft.

RECOMMENDATION 14: The Secretary of Transportation should issue a written policy generally prohibiting the carrying of spouses, other dependents, and other nonofficial travelers on FAA aircraft. (See p. 26.)

STATUS: DOT Order 6050.1 and FAA Order 4040.20 implements our recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION 15: The Secretary of Transportation should require the Office of the Inspector General to periodically review FAA aircraft request and use records and to verify that aircraft are being used properly. (See p. 26.)

STATUS: During the past two years the Inspector General has conducted several audits of aircraft use, and additional audits are being scheduled for fiscal year 1985.

RECOMMENDATION 16: The Secretary of Transportation should direct the Administrator of FAA to revise FAA Order 4040.9A to incorporate the recommended Department of Transportation regulations and to strictly enforce them. (See p. 26.)

STATUS: FAA Order No. 4040.20 implements DOT order 6050.1.

RECOMMENDATION 17: The Secretary of Transportation should direct the Administrator of FAA to require that FAA aircraft request and use records be filled out correctly and kept in accordance with 4040.9A. (See p. 26.)

STATUS: FAA has identified required changes in its aircraft recordkeeping system. It will require detailed justifications to support that aircraft are being used efficiently and in accordance with established policy. Also, the records are being retained for 3 years; all records are examined to identify discrepancies; and erroneous records are returned to the official that requested the aircraft for corrective action.

RECOMMENDATION 18: The Secretary of Transportation should direct the Administrator of FAA to conduct an A-76 review of all ECT and logistics mission aircraft to see whether the private sector could provide more economical services. (See p. 35.)

STATUS: Action is in process. FAA is reviewing its aircraft flight operations in accordance with the revised OMB circular A-76.

RECOMMENDATION 19: The Secretary of Transportation should direct the Administrator of FAA to comply with A-76, as required, when modernizing, replacing, upgrading, or enlarging its aircraft fleet and related services. (See p. 35.)

STATUS: According to DOT, FAA will accomplish an A-76 review prior to, or in conjunction with, the fleet conversion plan as currently presented in the National Airspace System plan.

RECOMMENDATION 20: The Secretary of Transportation should direct the Administrator of FAA to consider less costly alternatives, like interagency sharing and commercial service, before buying either the four Beechcraft King F-90's currently being leased or the new logistics aircraft. (See p. 35.)

STATUS: A decision has been made to defer action on the purchase of the aircraft. Any decision to proceed with the acquisition will be based on an A-76 analysis and a cost-benefit determination at the Departmental level.

STATUS OF THE RECOMMENDATION MADE IN THE REPORT  
TO THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR, AND ACTIONS TAKEN  
ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE AND PROBLEMS NOTED  
IN A DRAFT REPORT,  
AS OF JULY 1984

In our April 2, 1984, report on DOI aircraft operations, we made one recommendation to the Secretary of the Interior. In a draft of the report, we made two additional recommendations and noted other problems. These were deleted from the final report because DOI took corrective action.

On July 6, 1984, DOI officially responded to our report and said that they believe that they are moving in the right direction with aviation management within the Department. The recommendation made in the report and its current status and the findings and recommendations that were discussed in the draft and their status follow.

RECOMMENDATION MADE IN APRIL 2, 1984 REPORT: The Secretary of the Interior should direct OAS to assume ownership and management of all departmental aircraft, aircraft facilities and equipment, and aviation-related personnel presently managed by other DOI bureaus and offices. (See p. 9.)<sup>6</sup>

STATUS: DOI, in its official response, said that it is taking the necessary action for OAS to assume financial management of the Department's aircraft in the contiguous 48 states. This management will include assumption of ownership of the aircraft by OAS. However, DOI said that because many of the aviation-related personnel are integral to the day-to-day bureau/office functions, the transfer of personnel will be an optional arrangement between the bureaus/offices and OAS.

FIRST PROPOSED RECOMMENDATION MADE IN DRAFT: The Secretary of the Interior should stop the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) efforts to develop its own aviation management division and systems, unless it can be clearly shown that OAS systems cannot provide the needed services at lower cost.

STATUS: In its comments, dated April 19, 1983, on the draft, Interior said that BLM fully intends to utilize OAS to the extent that no duplication of effort occurs.

---

<sup>6</sup>The page number in parentheses refers to the report page on which the recommendation appears.



Also, in November 1983, Interior's Assistant Secretary for Policy, Budget and Administration approved a memorandum of understanding between OAS and BLM, setting forth their respective responsibilities.

SECOND PROPOSED RECOMMENDATION MADE IN DRAFT: The Secretary of the Interior should allow OAS to provide its services to non-Interior agencies where it is in the government's best interest and where the costs of such services are recovered through OAS surcharges.

STATUS: In commenting on the detailed draft, Interior advised us that its latest departmental manual, dated November 17, 1982, authorizes OAS to provide assistance to non-Interior agencies upon request.

PROBLEMS NOTED IN THE DRAFT: In the draft, we questioned the year-round need of BLM's Boise Interagency Fire Center (BIFC) for one owned and nine leased aircraft and for government pilots and support personnel, which during fiscal year 1981 cost \$5.5 million. We also noted that the aircraft were used only to a limited extent for the Fire Center's firefighting mission and that the services they provided could have been obtained from the private sector at a much lower cost.

STATUS: In commenting on the draft, Interior said that BLM has drastically realigned the aircraft operations at BIFC. Accordingly, BLM has terminated BIFC's aircraft operations and abolished its Aviation Management Division. Thus, all the leased aircraft are gone; the owned aircraft has been declared excess and has been mothballed; and pilots and support personnel have been released or reassigned. As a result of these actions DOI realized savings of over \$4.5 million in fiscal year 1983.

