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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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The Honorable Henry M. Jackson
United States Senate

Dear Senator Jackson:

We are responding to your June 19, 1973, request for a report concerning a letter sent to our Office by Mr. Schuyler R. Mitchell, President, Computerized Interference Elimination, Inc., Renton, Washington. Mr. Mitchell's June 6, 1973, letter described some of the features of an advanced, computer-oriented, design system which his company developed. Mr. Mitchell says its general adoption by U.S. shipbuilders would bring about significant savings and help improve the competitive position of the U.S. shipbuilding industry.

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We arranged for members of our staff who will be responsible for reviewing Government ship procurement activities to meet with Mr. Mitchell on July 11, 1973, to discuss his system further. The computer-aided system, called the Decider System, can be used to detect potential physical interferences between ship component systems, such as piping, ductwork, and cableways, before the production departments initiate work. According to Mr. Mitchell, the Decider System can produce interference-free drawings, eliminate the need for expensive overlay or composite drawings, and eliminate field-discovered interferences and their associated costs.

Mr. Mitchell said the Decider System is gaining wider acceptance as a design tool by Government agencies and by private firms in the shipbuilding, construction, and design industries. He believes, however, that some agencies, such as the Coast Guard, and certain private shipbuilders have been slow to recognize the value of the system. Mr. Mitchell advised us that he had some informal discussions with Coast Guard officials about a year ago concerning the use of the

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system on the icebreakers which the Coast Guard is buying from Lockheed Shipbuilding and Construction Company in Seattle. Neither Lockheed nor the Coast Guard expressed an interest at that time. Mr. Mitchell indicated that he may renew his discussions with the Coast Guard on this matter.

Mr. Mitchell also advised us that, on July 12, 1973, he was meeting with Navy officials concerning the use of the Decider System on the design of the patrol frigate to be built by the Bath shipyard in Maine and that this would be an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the system's value. He said his ultimate goal is to convince the Navy and other purchasers of ships of the value of including in their contracts a requirement that some method of interference detection be used by the shipbuilders or designers to provide greater assurance of the accuracy of their working drawings.

Mr. Mitchell pointed out that he was not suggesting any specific action by us but wanted us to know about the Decider System and its uses in shipbuilding, because he knew of our continuing interest in ways to reduce Government procurement costs and because he recently learned of a current GAO study on the shipbuilding industry.

We appreciate the opportunity to learn about the Decider System and its possible uses in designing ships. We advised Mr. Mitchell that his information will be considered in our ongoing reviews of Government activities involving ship procurement.

As requested, we are returning the enclosure to your June 19, 1973, inquiry. If you wish additional information on this matter, please let us know.

Sincerely yours,



Comptroller General
of the United States

Enclosure