



United States General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

National Security and
International Affairs Division

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July 20, 1999

The Honorable Dick Arme
Majority Leader
House of Representatives

The Honorable Dan Burton
Chairman, Committee on Government Reform
House of Representatives

The Honorable Fred Thompson
Chairman, Committee on Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

Subject: Observations on the Department of Defense's Fiscal Year 2000 Performance Plan

As you requested, we have reviewed and evaluated the fiscal year 2000 performance plans for the 24 Chief Financial Officers (CFO) Act agencies that were submitted to Congress as required by the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (Results Act). Enclosure I to this letter provides our observations on the fiscal year 2000 performance plan for the Department of Defense (DOD). Enclosure II lists management challenges we and DOD's Inspector General identified that the agency faces and the applicable goals and measures in the fiscal year 2000 annual performance plan.

Our objectives were to (1) assess the usefulness of the department's plan for decisionmaking and (2) identify the degree of improvement the department's fiscal year 2000 performance plan represents over the fiscal year 1999 plan. Our observations were generally based on the requirements of the Results Act, guidance to agencies from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for developing the plan (OMB Circular A-11, Part 2), our previous reports and knowledge of DOD's operations and programs, and our observations on DOD's fiscal year 1999 performance plan. Our summary report on the CFO Act agencies' fiscal year 2000 plans contains a complete discussion of our objectives, scope, and methodology.¹

¹ Managing for Results: Opportunities for Continued Improvements in Agencies' Performance Plans (GAO/GGD/AIMD-99-215, July 20, 1999).

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As agreed, unless you announce the contents of this letter earlier, we plan no further distribution until 30 days from the date of this letter. The major contributors to this report are listed in enclosure III. Please call me on (202) 512-8412 if you or your staff have any questions.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David R. Warren". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

David R. Warren, Director
Defense Management Issues

Enclosures - 3

Observations on the Department of Defense's Performance Plan for Fiscal Year 2000

DOD's fiscal year 2000 annual performance provides a limited picture of intended performance across the Department, a general discussion of strategies and resources that will be used to achieve performance goals, and limited confidence that performance information will be credible.¹ For example, while the plan clearly states DOD's performance goals, it does not clearly explain how key output measures such as having ten active Army Divisions will be used along with other information to assess the outcomes that result from using DOD's resources. The plan does not explain the limitations of DOD's performance measure on infrastructure spending. As another example, the plan states that there are no known deficiencies in data to be used for some performance measures such as the disposal of unneeded property held by contractors, although DOD recently reported systemic problems in maintaining adequate control and management accountability over this property. DOD's corporate-level (strategic) goals are to (1) shape the international environment and respond to crises and (2) prepare now for an uncertain future. The following figure highlights the plan's major strengths and key weaknesses.

Figure 1: Major Strengths and Key Weaknesses of DOD's Fiscal Year 2000 Annual Performance Plan

Major Strengths

- Includes a clear discussion of corporate-level and annual performance goals
- Includes a general discussion of strategies and resources
- Includes output-oriented measures and indicators related to most major management challenges

Key Weaknesses

- Does not include information on how DOD will qualitatively assess results
- Does not explain coordinatoin for crosscutting efforts
- Does not relate budget program activities to performance goals
- Does not provide confidence that performance information will be credible

This year's plan represents a moderate improvement over the fiscal year 1999 plan. Specifically, some degree of progress was made in addressing the weaknesses we and others identified in last year's plan, which partially depicted intended performance across the Department, partially discussed how strategies and resources would help achieve goals, and did not provide sufficient confidence that performance information would be credible. Last year's plan also lacked a

¹ DOD's performance plan is included as appendix J of the Secretary of Defense's Annual Report to the President and the Congress. DOD officials stated that the fiscal year 2000 performance plan was designed to be a stand-alone document but that it was deliberately included in the Secretary's annual report because the annual report supports and elaborates on the performance plan. Therefore, we considered information throughout the Secretary's annual report in assessing DOD's plan.

discussion of coordination efforts for most crosscutting activities with other agencies, such as combating terrorism. Additionally, the plan was not presented in a single document. As a consequence, last year, the reader was required to refer to a number of other documents, such as the Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, to obtain relevant information.

Among improvements in this year's plan are (1) inclusion of baseline data for 39 of 43 unclassified performance measures and indicators;² (2) identification of some known deficiencies such as financial and accounting system problems; and (3) inclusion of performance goals, measures, and indicators related to six of nine major management challenges identified by us and/or the DOD Inspector General (see attached table).³ Also, this year's plan is set forth in a single document with references to key support information.

DOD's Performance Plan Provides a Limited Picture of Intended Performance Across the Agency

The plan provides only a limited picture of intended performance across the agency, principally because it does not discuss how information from performance measures and indicators will be used in conjunction with qualitative evaluations to assess outcomes. The plan has been improved by including more clearly stated annual performance goals and additional specific performance measures and indicators along with DOD's corporate-level goals. It also includes baseline data for comparing anticipated future performance. DOD's corporate-level goals are to (1) shape the international environment and respond to the full spectrum of crises by providing appropriately sized, positioned, and mobile forces and (2) prepare now for an uncertain future by pursuing a focused modernization effort that maintains U.S. qualitative superiority in key war-fighting capabilities, transform the force by exploiting the Revolution in Military Affairs, and reengineer the Department to achieve a 21st century infrastructure.

While clearly stating goals and measures, the plan lacks information on how DOD will use performance information to assess mission outcomes. For example, key output measures related to force structure, overseas presence, and acquisition expenditures, only reflect whether forces are available to perform assigned missions or levels of spending. The measures do not reflect the results achieved from DOD's use of the resources. Assessment of performance will require

² In addition, DOD plans to include eight classified readiness performance measures and indicators, along with classified goals for each and information on how the credibility of performance data will be ensured, in a classified document—the January-March 1999 Quarterly Readiness Report to the Congress.

³ The Senate Committee on Appropriation's report on DOD's fiscal year 1999 appropriation bill (S. Report 105-200) contains suggestions for improving the fiscal year 1999 performance plan. DOD's fiscal year 2000 plan responded to these suggestions.

complex considerations about such things as (1) assigned missions and how well they were accomplished and (2) whether weapon systems expenditures provide desired capabilities. In addition, the plan does not fully explain the limitations of some measures and indicators. For example, the plan includes the percentage of the budget spent on infrastructure as a performance indicator to support the goal of streamlining infrastructure. However, if other areas of the budget were to substantially increase, infrastructure as a percentage of spending could decrease, even if actual infrastructure spending were increasing. To make such instances evident, the plan could include measures for both the actual and constant dollars spent on infrastructure to provide additional information. Also, the plan does not sufficiently explain coordination with other agencies that conduct related activities. For example, it does not discuss how DOD coordinates with State and other agencies that cooperate in a number of programs and activities aimed at helping to shape the international environment.

This year's plan is moderately improved over last year's in that it demonstrates some degree of progress in addressing the weaknesses identified in last year's plan as it relates to describing intended performance across the agency. Specifically, last year's plan could have been improved by including (1) baseline data for comparative purposes; (2) goals and performance measures for both dollars spent on infrastructure and infrastructure costs as a percentage of spending; (3) performance goals and measures related to major management problems; and (4) more information on coordination efforts for activities that crosscut with other agencies' activities. The fiscal year 2000 plan addressed some of these weaknesses and additional weaknesses identified by others. For example, it included performance measures or indicators for six of nine major management challenges. However, it did not address other weaknesses such as by including goals and performance measures for actual and constant dollars spent on infrastructure.

DOD's Performance Plan Provides a General Discussion of the Strategies and Resources the Agency Will Use to Achieve Its Goals

The plan generally clearly presents the broad strategies and resources DOD will use to achieve performance goals. For example, the plan cites the importance of forces being continually ready to respond in order to provide the flexibility needed to shape the global environment, deter potential foes, and, when required, rapidly respond to a broad spectrum of threats. It also presents a broad strategy to maintain ready forces. Among others, the plan includes goals to maintain specified levels of (1) forces; (2) flying hours, tank miles, and steaming days; and (3) unit readiness.

The plan also identifies performance measures and indicators related to changes in program approaches that are being made to help achieve performance goals. For example, in support of the performance goal to streamline infrastructure, the plan discusses a basic strategy of redesigning

the support structure and pursuing business practice reforms. Additionally, the plan discusses performance measures or indicators related to the strategy such as (1) increasing the efficiency of logistics operations by improving the ability to track items in the supply system and (2) increasing public-private sector competition for functions that are not inherently governmental. The plan also contains some discussion of how proposed capital assets and mission-critical management systems support the achievement of performance goals and discussion of efforts to build, maintain, and marshal human capital. For example, the plan recognizes the tremendous importance of DOD's 1.4 million active duty military personnel, approximately 880,000 military reservists, and over 700,000 civilian personnel to achieving DOD's goals. Specifically, the plan includes considerable discussion of various aspects of human capital management strategies such as recruiting, training, and military retention. It also includes performance measures and goals for aspects of human capital management such as recruiting and retention. However, like last year, linkages are not established between performance goals and the program activities in the President's budget request for DOD. The plan does not show how requested budgetary resources relate to performance goals.

This year's performance plan is moderately improved over last year's in that it demonstrates some degree of progress from last year as it relates to specifically discussing strategies and resources DOD will use to achieve goals. Last year's plan could have been improved by (1) clearly identifying strategies for achieving performance goals; (2) discussing factors that might help mitigate known risks to implementing a strategy for achieving a performance goal, particularly in relation to recruiting and retaining well qualified personnel; (3) discussing strategies for mitigating any external factors that could negatively influence achievement of a performance goal, particularly in relation to contingency operations being funded from budget accounts intended to support the readiness of U.S. forces; and (4) identifying the specific resources DOD plans to use to achieve specific performance goals. This year's plan addressed several of these weaknesses and additional weaknesses identified by others. For example, the plan discusses actions DOD has taken and is planning to take to mitigate challenges faced in recruiting and retaining well qualified personnel. These actions include doubling recruitment advertising from 1995 to 1998 and increasing enlistment bonuses and funds for college. As another example, the plan discusses actions that have been taken to mitigate funding contingency operations from budget accounts that support readiness.

DOD's Performance Plan Provides Limited Confidence That Agency Performance Information Will Be Credible

We continue to have concerns about the credibility of data from DOD's financial, accounting, and other information systems. While DOD's performance plan discusses data verification and validation for some performance measures and indicators, and it acknowledges that data for

certain measures and indicators come from financial and accounting systems that have experienced problems, it provides only limited confidence that the performance information will be credible. To remedy accounting systems shortcomings, DOD has developed a financial management improvement plan. However, as we reported, the improvement plan has several critical omissions which, unless they are effectively addressed in the near term, will impair the implementation of a sound foundation for fundamentally reforming DOD's financial management operations.

DOD Inspector General and service audit organizations have reported that DOD's financial systems are not in compliance with federal systems requirements and applicable federal accounting standards. These problems limit the reliability and timeliness of currently available financial information needed to effectively manage operations. Moreover, the audit organizations have repeatedly found systems to be inadequate for measuring the cost of operations and programs. This deficiency, which the Secretary acknowledged in his 1999 annual report, has hampered the Department's ability to manage weapon systems' life-cycle cost. The lack of adequate cost information impairs the development of reliable cost-based performance measures and indicators across virtually the entire spectrum of DOD's program operations. While we agree that DOD's performance measures should center on mission performance, most programs have associated cost consequences that can be directly or indirectly measured as a factor in judging program results. Consequently, it is essential that DOD continue working to develop reliable cost information and, where appropriate, cost-based performance measures.

Additionally, although the plan states that there are no known data deficiencies for some performance measures and indicators audits continue to identify significant problems with the data integrity of DOD financial systems and supporting cost, logistical, and operations information systems. For example, the plan states that there are no known deficiencies in the data collection process related to the performance measure for the disposal of unneeded government property held by contractors. That measure supports the annual performance goal to meet combat forces' needs "smarter and faster". However, accurately accounting for and controlling contractor-held assets has been a long-standing issue at DOD. A 1997 report by the DOD Inspector General recommended that DOD develop short- and long-term solutions to the financial accountability and reporting problems regarding government property in the possession of contractors. In response the Department has set out an action plan with action steps for this area scheduled to be completed by October 1999.

This year's plan is moderately improved over last year's in that it demonstrates some degree of progress in addressing credibility of performance information weaknesses we and others identified in last year's plan. Specifically, last year's plan did not address known data and systems deficiencies, the degree to which these deficiencies affect specific performance information, or planned actions to address these deficiencies. Furthermore, the plan did not identify the extent to

which external evaluations such as audits would be used in the performance information validation process.

Improvements in this year's plan in this area include discussions on (1) verifying and validating data such as that generated by the components' automated inventory data collection systems; (2) known data and systems limitations for performance metrics, such as using Selected Acquisition Reports data as an absolute measure of research and development and procurement cost performance; and (3) planned actions to address data or systems deficiencies such as enhancing the interface among the military services and defense agencies to overcome data systems interoperability problems related to the location of inventory. However, this year's plan does not address how external evaluations will be used.

Other Observations on DOD's Implementation of Performance-Based Management

DOD is starting to implement performance-based management. Secretary-level guidance emphasizes this effort by requiring that subordinate-level strategic plans show a clear linkage to the Department's mission, vision statement, and corporate-level goals. The services are including linkages to performance-based management in their budget and planning documents. We have not made an overall assessment of performance-based management implementation. However, our work has shown that some difficulties are being experienced in DOD's Total Asset Visibility initiative, and at the U.S. Atlantic Command. In each instance, the performance measures that were developed were not helpful for measuring mission or program goal accomplishment. Defense officials stated that steps are being taken to improve the measures.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In oral comments on a draft of our observations, DOD did not agree with our overall assessment of the performance plan and asked that we include their view on two issues. First, DOD officials stated the principal output and outcome of DOD's annual budget is a specified military force ready to go to war, and the fiscal year 2000 performance plan defines performance goals relevant to that objective. The performance goals establish a measurable path to achievement of the corporate goals articulated in the Department's strategic plan. Second, officials stated that our characterization of the plan as being of limited use to decisionmakers does not fully reflect their views. They noted that this year's plan contains more information and is more useful to internal departmental decisionmakers than last year's plan. However, they recognized that the plan could be made more useful to external decisionmakers by including additional information such as more outcome-oriented measures for business operations such as logistics, which accounts for over half of the Department's budget.

Enclosure I

Observations on the Department of Defense's Performance Plan for Fiscal Year 2000

We agree that ready forces are a key output of DOD's efforts. However, we continue to believe that better results information will require a qualitative assessment of the conduct of military missions, as well as an assessment of investments in technology to improve weapons capabilities.

Management Challenges

The following table shows major management challenges confronting DOD and the goals and measures in its performance plan related to those challenges.

Table II.1: Management Challenges Confronting DOD and Applicable Goals and Measures

Management challenge	Applicable goals and measures in DOD'S fiscal year 2000 performance plan
<p><u>Financial Management</u></p> <p>We reported that DOD is struggling to overcome the problems brought about by decades of neglect and to fully institute sound financial management practices. The problems range from being unable to properly account for billions of dollars in assets to being unable to produce reliable and timely information needed to make sound resource decisions.</p> <p>The DOD Inspector General reported that DOD remains unable to comply with laws requiring auditable financial statements for its major funds and for the Department as a whole.</p>	<p>None. However, in late October 1998, DOD issued its first Biennial Financial Management Improvement Plan, which established DOD's strategy for managing financial management operations. According to the Secretary, the plan sets out DOD's first ever attempt to describe the overall concept for its future financial management operations. Additionally, Chapter 14 in DOD's 1999 Annual Report to the President and the Congress discusses financial management reform efforts.</p> <p>Also, various sections of the performance plan discuss procedures for verifying and validating data, along with the performance measures and indicators that the data support. Many of the metrics refer back to DOD financial and accounting systems that have experienced problems in accurately capturing costs and tracking disbursements. DOD has undertaken management reforms to remedy system shortcomings.</p>
<p><u>Information Management and Technology</u></p> <p>We reported that information management and technology issues are key DOD management challenges. A primary short-term concern centers on the implementation of the year 2000 conversions of date-sensitive information on computer systems. Also, information security for computer systems poses concerns, because malicious attacks on these systems are an increasing threat to our nation's security.</p> <p>The DOD IG also reported that DOD, which has about 28,000 computer systems, roughly 3,000 of which are considered mission critical, faces a monumental challenge in converting the systems for year 2000 compliance and faces major problems in providing information security for both old and new computer systems. The IG further reported that DOD faces a formidable challenge in managing the acquisition, migration, or modification of a large number of computer systems projects. Such projects have tended to cost more and take longer than anticipated, fail to meet data standardization and interoperability requirements, and shortchange user needs.</p>	<p>None. However, the plan notes that DOD works with other federal agencies to ensure the security of the increasingly interconnected and vulnerable U.S. infrastructures against physical or cyber attack.</p> <p>Additionally, the Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996 requires DOD to establish goals for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations through the use of information technology. It also requires DOD to include an annual report with the submission of its budget to the Congress on its progress in achieving the goals. The current report is Appendix K in DOD's 1999 <u>Annual Report to the President and the Congress</u>. The goals are to (1) become a mission partner; (2) provide services that satisfy customer needs; (3) reform information technology management processes to increase efficiency and mission contribution; and (4) ensure vital information resources are secure and protected. Appendix K discusses progress toward achieving these goals and efforts to meet the technical challenges related to year 2000 compliance.</p>

Enclosure II
Management Challenges

Management challenge	Applicable goals and measures in DOD'S fiscal year 2000 performance plan
<p><u>Weapon Systems Acquisition</u></p> <p>We reported that effectively managing the weapon systems acquisition process continues to be a concern. Although DOD has increased its procurement budget, it consistently pays more and takes longer than planned to develop systems that do not perform as anticipated.</p> <p>The DOD IG also reported a compelling need to accelerate the weapon systems acquisition cycle and reduce per unit costs. The IG further reported that a significant gap exists between weapon systems modernization requirements and planned funding. DOD has a goal to further increase procurement spending but the goal relies on shifting about \$10 billion of spending a year from other areas. The IG doubts that planned actions will free up that amount of funds.</p>	<p>The Performance Plan includes a performance goal to "meet combat forces' needs smarter and faster, with products and services that work better and cost less, by improving the efficiency of acquisition processes." The plan includes two related performance measures. They are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Defense Acquisition Program cost growth; and • Successful completion of weapon system operational test and evaluation events. <p>The plan also includes a related performance indicator—Major Defense Acquisition Program cycle time.</p>
<p><u>Contracting</u></p> <p>We reported that DOD spends over \$100 billion a year contracting for goods and services. Over the last few years, several broad-based changes have been made to acquisition and contracting processes to improve DOD-contractor relationships and rules. But we and the DOD IG continue to identify risks in contracting, including erroneous, fraudulent, and improper payments to contractors; payment of higher prices for commercial spare parts than necessary; and the award and administration of health care contracts.</p> <p>The DOD IG, which continues, as we do, to identify risks in DOD's contracting activity, also reported that the sheer volume and great variety of the contracting activity makes it a high-risk area. The IG also reported a lack of good cost information and significant levels of fraud, mostly by providers, in the Defense Health Program.</p>	<p>The Performance Plan includes a performance goal to "meet combat forces' needs smarter and faster, with products and services that work better and cost less, by improving the efficiency of acquisition processes." Three performance indicators for this goal relate to some aspects of contracting. They are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The percentage of purchases made by purchase card; • The percentage of paperless transactions; and • The percentage of paperless acquisition transactions.
<p><u>Defense Infrastructure</u></p> <p>We reported that although DOD has substantially downsized its force structure over the past 7 to 10 years, it has not reduced operations and support costs--the costs for its supporting infrastructure--commensurately. A key reason is that the services are reluctant to consolidate activities that span service lines and reduce capacity as necessary.</p> <p>The DOD IG reported that key infrastructure areas such as transportation, maintenance, facilities, and</p>	<p>The Performance Plan includes a performance goal to "streamline the infrastructure by redesigning the Department's support structure and pursuing business practice reforms." Key related performance measures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the number of positions subject to A-76 competition studies; • logistics response time; • the dollar amount of National Defense Stockpile • disposals and reductions in the supply inventory; and • disposals of excess real property.

Enclosure II
Management Challenges

Management challenge	Applicable goals and measures in DOD'S fiscal year 2000 performance plan
<p>supply offer opportunities to reduce costs. The IG noted, however, that many logical measures are highly controversial and that the Congress and DOD disagree over additional base closures and the distribution of workload between DOD and private sector maintenance facilities.</p>	<p>Key related performance indicators include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the percentage of budget spent on infrastructure; • the percentage of materiel assets that are visible and accessible to its Integrated Materiel Managers; and • the net operating results of working capital funds.
<p><u>Inventory Management</u></p> <p>We reported that DOD's inventory management practices continue to be ineffective and inefficient and are not well-suited to meet new missions and war-fighting strategies. As a result, DOD spends more than necessary to procure inventory, yet items are not available when needed.</p> <p>The DOD IG also reported shortages of spare parts and that war reserves are overstocked in some locations but short of critical items in others. The IG additionally reported problems with fraud and inappropriate practices in the disposal process.</p>	<p>The Performance Plan includes two performance measures related to inventory management. They are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • logistics response time; and • the dollar amount of National Defense Stockpile disposals and reductions in the supply inventory. <p>The plan also includes two related performance indicators. They are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the percentage of materiel assets that are visible and accessible to its Integrated Materiel Managers; and • the dollar amount of unfunded depot maintenance requirements.
<p><u>Military Personnel</u></p> <p>We reported that DOD's personnel programs to recruit, train, and retain a high-quality active-duty enlisted workforce have not received the management attention needed to ensure their successful operation. The military services recruit tens of thousands of new enlistees each year who fail to complete their contracts.</p>	<p>The Performance Plan includes a performance goal to "recruit, retain, and develop personnel to maintain a highly skilled and motivated force capable of meeting tomorrow's challenges." The plan includes three related performance measures. They are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the number of enlisted recruits inducted into the Active Force and into the Selected Reserve; • the Active Force components enlisted retention rates; and • the Selected Reserves' enlisted attrition rates. <p>The plan also includes a related performance indicator. It is the percentage of enlisted recruits that meet quality benchmarks (high school diplomas, etc.) for such recruits.</p>
<p><u>Military Readiness</u></p> <p>The DOD IG reported that DOD has difficulties in maintaining sufficient military readiness. The IG reported a concern about the accuracy of reporting for unit-level readiness; weaknesses in chemical and biological defense preparedness and in communications capability; impact of changes in the threat environment; and impact of currently approved budget levels.</p>	<p>The Performance Plan includes a performance goal to "maintain ready forces and ensure they have the training necessary to provide the United States with the ability to shape the international environment and respond to the full range of crises." The plan includes classified measures for the readiness of each service's forces.</p> <p>The plan also includes several related performance indicators, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the amount of time military personnel are deployed; • number of flying hours per month, by service; • number of tank miles per year; • number of steaming days per quarter; and

Enclosure II
Management Challenges

Management challenge	Applicable goals and measures in DOD'S fiscal year 2000 performance plan
<p><u>Turbulence From Change</u></p> <p>The DOD IG reported that all functional areas within DOD are engaged in fundamental reform and process reengineering efforts at the same time, causing turbulence. The turbulence brings with it several additional difficult challenges such as conflicting priorities, downsizing, outsourcing, dependence on new and unproven systems or processes, and deemphasis on management controls and oversight, all of which are putting considerable strain on DOD. The IG noted that DOD confronts a huge task in coordinating and integrating its hundreds of reform initiatives so that they do not work at cross purposes with each other.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• classified indicators for the percentage of billets filled in each service. <p>None. However, the plan and the Secretary's annual report discuss human capital management issues such as recruiting, training, operating tempo, and military retention. The Secretary's annual report also includes chapters on initiatives such as acquisition reform, financial management reform, and infrastructure.</p>

GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contacts

David R. Warren, (202) 512-8412
Charles I. Patton, Jr., (202) 512-4412

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