

June 1995

Administration of Justice Issue Area Plan Fiscal Years 1995-97



Foreword

As the investigative arm of Congress and the nation's auditor, the General Accounting Office is charged with following the federal dollar wherever it goes. Reflecting stringent standards of objectivity and independence, GAO's audits, evaluations, and investigations promote a more efficient and cost-effective government; expose waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement in federal programs; help Congress target budget reductions; assess financial and information management; and alert Congress to developing trends that may have significant fiscal or budgetary consequences. In fulfilling its responsibilities, GAO performs original research and uses hundreds of databases, or creates its own when information is unavailable elsewhere.

To ensure that GAO's resources are directed toward the most important issues facing Congress, each of GAO's 35 issue areas develops a strategic plan that describes the significance of the issues it addresses, its objectives, and the focus of its work. Each issue area relies heavily on input from congressional committees, agency officials, and subject-matter experts in developing its strategic plan.

The Administration of Justice issue area covers the Department of Justice, the Department of the Treasury's investigative agencies, the judicial branch of the federal government, and several independent agencies. GAO's work in this issue area generally seeks to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the justice system. The principal issues in the justice area include

- federal law enforcement's response, in partnership with state and local governments, to violent crime, drugs, and other major threats facing society;
- the efficiency and effectiveness of the federal judicial and corrections systems, as well as federal aid to state courts and prison systems;
- the Immigration and Naturalization Service's ability to support its enforcement and service delivery missions; and
- the U.S. Customs Service's effectiveness in implementing its reorganization efforts, fulfilling its trade enforcement mission, and collecting appropriate revenues.

In the pages that follow, we describe our planned work relating to these issues.

Foreword

Events in the justice area tend to move swiftly. Therefore, we designed a flexible planning process that will allow us to respond quickly to emerging issues. If you have any questions or suggestions about this plan, please call me at (202) 512-8777.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Norman Rabkin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Norman J. Rabkin
Director, Administration of
Justice Issues

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Table I: Key Issues

Issue	Significance
Law enforcement: How can federal law enforcement, working with state and local governments, more efficiently and effectively respond to violent crime, drugs, and other major threats facing society?	Crime has become one of the foremost concerns of the American public. To address this concern, the Congress made many crimes involving drugs and firearms federal offenses and increased the Department of Justice's (DOJ) budget to investigate and prosecute them. In addition, the Congress recently made billions of dollars available to states and localities to help them combat violent and other crime in their communities. Current congressional proposals, if passed, would provide even more funds.
Adjudication and corrections: What can be done to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of federal courts and the correction system, as well as federal aid to state courts and prison systems, given the increasing demands placed on them in an era of budget constraints?	Increasing the scope of federal crimes and DOJ's resources to investigate and prosecute them has created tremendous demands on the federal judiciary and corrections systems. For example, criminal trials in district courts have increased 24 percent since 1989. Although both the Judiciary and Bureau of Prisons (BOP) have received more resources, including 85 more federal judges and 39,000 more prison beds since 1989, questions are being raised about how efficiently the courts and prisons are operating.
Immigration: What actions can strengthen the Immigration and Naturalization Service's (INS) ability to enforce immigration laws and enhance service delivery?	Reflecting the mounting public concern over increasing illegal immigration, criminal activity by these illegal aliens, and INS' apparent inability to effectively enforce immigration laws, the federal government is increasing INS resources. The President's fiscal year 1996 budget requests \$2.6 billion for INS, a 27-percent increase over 1995. However, INS' past management record raises questions about its ability to properly spend these funds. For example, processing times for INS services have been increasing and backlogs of applications are continuing to grow.
Customs: Is the U.S. Customs Service effectively implementing its reorganization and reengineering efforts, fulfilling its trade enforcement mission, and collecting appropriate revenues?	The U.S. Customs Service enforces the nation's trade laws and generates the second highest amount of revenue annually—about \$26 billion in fiscal year 1995. Customs faces increased demands from recent trade agreements (NAFTA and GATT), its involvement in drug interdiction activities, and pressure from domestic and foreign businesses to facilitate the movement of goods and people across U.S. borders. Customs has undertaken a major reorganization effort to more efficiently and effectively satisfy these competing demands and is investing \$100 million in a modern information system.

Table I: Key Issues

Objectives	Focus of work
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess federal progress in implementing major crime control initiatives and enforcement programs. 2. Identify ways, such as “best practices,” to improve federal assistance to and cooperation with state/local enforcement efforts to combat serious crime. 3. Develop approaches/methodologies for analyzing enforcement budgets and identify opportunities for resource consolidation and cost savings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Assess progress of DOJ’s major crime control initiatives, including violent crime, drugs, and health care fraud. — Assess federal support for community policing and other local crime control efforts. — Evaluate efforts to stem money laundering and the illegal possession of firearms. — Assess DOJ’s progress in developing enforcement performance measures. — Analyze DOJ/Treasury enforcement budgets to identify potential savings.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Report periodically to the Congress on the judiciary initiatives to increase efficiency and promote best practices, including automation reforms. 2. Identify and track BOP efforts to reduce prison construction and operation costs. 3. Ensure that the 1994 Crime Bill prison construction standards have been developed and implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Analyze budgets to identify major drivers of judiciary and BOP workload and cost growth and to assess initiatives to reduce cost. — Assess impact of criminal cases on judiciary workload, resource needs, and civil case processing. — Assess state practices that may be applicable to federal court and prison operations.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that INS is addressing previously identified management weaknesses. 2. Identify ways INS can improve its enforcement efforts against illegal and criminal aliens. 3. Recommend steps INS can take to improve its processes for providing services to legal aliens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Assess INS’ management system and organizational changes. — Evaluate the process for identifying and removing criminal aliens. — Assess the implementation of border control initiatives. — Evaluate initiatives to enforce Immigration Reform and Control Act work provisions. — Evaluate INS’ provision of services to legal aliens and effectiveness in denying benefits to illegal aliens.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine the effectiveness of Customs’ reorganization and reengineering efforts, workforce realignment, and Customs management centers. 2. Determine the effectiveness of Customs’ cargo and trade enforcement efforts. 3. Determine if Customs is maximizing its opportunities to reduce costs and generate fee revenue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Evaluate Customs’ reorganization and reengineering implementation. — Assess Customs’ cargo compliance measurement program, in-bond transfers, and trade enforcement versus facilitation efforts. — Evaluate effectiveness of Customs’ interdiction programs and investigative operations — Assess the adequacy of Customs’ current user fee system.

Table II: Planned Major Work

Issue	Planned major job starts
Law enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —Criminal justice system's response to violent felons and related recidivism —Adequacy of federal laws and enforcement policies regarding health care fraud —Reauthorization of the Office of National Drug Control Policy —Community policing best practices —Community Oriented Policing Services Program grants —States' use and control of Bank Secrecy Act data —Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms' efforts to detect criminal sources of firearms —Annual review of DOJ's progress in implementing the Government Performance and Results Act
Adjudication and corrections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —BOP workload/budget and initiatives to reduce construction and operating costs —Follow up on judiciary initiatives to reduce costs and spread best practices —Issues, such as costs and accountability, involved in prison privatization —Controls over the movement of prisoners —The judiciary's ability to manage growth in supervised release —Judiciary implementation of automation fund reforms for fiscal year 1997 reauthorization.
Immigration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —INS' progress in addressing management problems —Institutional Hearing Program to deport criminal aliens after incarceration —Border enforcement activities at ports of entry —Efforts to implement employer sanctions —Efforts to establish a verification system to determine employment eligibility —Efforts to improve delivery of services to legal aliens
Customs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —Implementation of its reorganization plan —Cargo inspection program —Air and Marine Interdiction programs —Office of Investigations —Current fees and associated costs of providing services

Table III: GAO Contacts

Director	Norman J. Rabkin	(202) 512-8777
Associate Director	Laurie E. Ekstrand	(202) 512-8777
Assistant Directors	James M. Blume	
Core Group Managers	Danny R. Burton (Dallas) Darryl W. Dutton (Los Angeles) Daniel C. Harris William O. Jenkins Henry L. Malone (Chicago/Detroit) Weldon McPhail Rudolf F. Plessing (Boston/New York) Evi L. Rezmovic	

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