

**GENERAL MANAGEMENT:  
Follow-up Review on Recommendations  
Concerning TECS User Training**

OIG-CA-03-006

February 21, 2003



**Office of Inspector General**

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The Department of the Treasury

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## Abbreviations

Customs	U.S. Customs Service
FLETC	Federal Law Enforcement Training Center
OIT	Office of Information and Technology
SEACATS	Seized Asset and Case Tracking System
SCO	System Control Officer
TECS	Treasury Enforcement Communications System

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*The Department of the Treasury  
Office of Inspector General*

Robert C. Bonner  
Commissioner  
U.S. Customs Service

We conducted an evaluation to follow up on the corrective actions, which the U.S. Customs Service (Customs) implemented, in response to two of the recommendations in our 1998 audit report, *Treasury Enforcement Communications System Users' Needs* (OIG-98-060, issued March 11, 1998). That audit report made five recommendations to improve adequacy of the Treasury Enforcement Communications System (TECS) training. Our objective focused on two of these recommendations. It was to evaluate whether TECS users were surveyed: (1) on their evaluations of the formal TECS training courses, computer-based training, and self-help tools; and (2) for comments of their specific training needs.

We analyzed the responses to the survey Customs conducted of a group of 398 TECS users in October 1999. Customs personnel stated that necessary steps were taken to address TECS users' concerns and suggestions from their 1999 survey. In addition, we analyzed the responses to course evaluations that the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) administered to 718 students, who attended TECS training between May 1999 and June 2002. We provide a more detailed description of our review approach in Appendix 1.

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## Results in Brief

We believe that Customs has implemented its planned actions to address two of the recommendations from our 1998 report, previously mentioned. Customs conducted a survey of TECS users to evaluate TECS training courses and to identify specific training needs.

In the 1999 Customs-conducted survey, almost all of the respondents used TECS as part of their job, and also received training. Two out of three responded that training was adequate. The same number was also unaware of the training opportunities and their availability. About 10 percent of the respondents suggested the need for beginners and advanced training in TECS, and more general training in computers. Some also believed formal refresher classes were a necessity. Prior information of changes in the TECS system, and provision of written materials to aid TECS usage were considered to be helpful.

FLETC conducted 56 TECS training courses between May 1999 and June 2002. According to the FLETC-administered course evaluations, the students were extremely pleased with the TECS course and the instructor. The students suggested that extra classes be held to cover topics in greater detail. They requested that advanced TECS courses be offered, and trouble-free computers and equipments be made available. If possible, training materials should be tailored to each Agency's specific needs. The Office of Planning's comments are included as Appendix 2.

## Background

TECS is an automated law enforcement communications system managed by Customs. The TECS database contains enforcement, inspection, and intelligence records on people, aircraft, vehicles, vessels, businesses and firearms. Law enforcement officials from various agencies use TECS to manage caseloads, perform data

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analysis, profile and target suspects, and for a variety of work related to intelligence and investigative support.

In our 1998 report, we identified that TECS linked more than 29,000 users from 24 Federal agencies with two mainframe computers located at the Customs Data Center in Newington, VA. Currently, TECS still resides on two mainframe computers at the Customs Data Center and links 55,000 users from 32 law enforcement agencies. In addition to Customs, agencies using TECS include the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; the Drug Enforcement Agency; the Federal Aviation Administration; the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the Immigration and Naturalization Service; the Internal Revenue Service; the United States Secret Service; and the Departments of Commerce, State, and Defense.

In 1998, we issued the audit report, OIG-98-060, *Treasury Enforcement Communications System Users' Needs*. This report found that users were generally satisfied with TECS, but they had some concerns over the adequacy of training. Our audit report made five recommendations to address those concerns. However, we focused only on the results of recommendations two and three, which respectively stated that:

- "Users are surveyed to obtain their evaluations of the formal training courses, computer-based training, and self-help tools."
- "A training survey is performed soliciting user comments of their specific training needs."

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## Synopsis

### **A Customs-conducted in October 1999 Survey Revealed TECS Users Had Received Adequate Training, But Were Unaware of Training Opportunities**

In October 1999, Customs surveyed 398 persons, who were identified as TECS users. We believe this survey satisfied our two recommendations, previously mentioned, that a survey of users be conducted to evaluate TECS training and specific training needs. The survey contained 7 questions, of which 5 were in a 'yes' or 'no' format. The 5 questions along with the percentage of responses follow:

**Table 1: Customs-conducted Survey of TECS Users (in %)**

Questions	Yes	No
1. Do you use TECS as part of your job?	99.0	1.0
2. Have you received any TECS training?	89.6	10.4
3. Did the training give you enough information to do your job?	66.0	34.0
4. Are you aware of TECS training opportunities?	36.4	63.6
5. Do you know where to get information on TECS training?	40.7	59.3

We analyzed 398 user responses and calculated the percentages. Table 1 indicates that 99 percent of the users had used TECS as part of their job, and over 89 percent received TECS training. About two-thirds responded that the training provided sufficient information to do their job.

However, almost 64 percent of the users surveyed were unaware of training opportunities, and almost 60 percent did not know where to obtain information related to TECS training.

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The remaining two questions, which were asked of users, were open-ended:

6) Where did you receive the training?

7) Do you have any additional TECS training needs that have not been met? Please provide details.

The location of the training was not relevant to the review; therefore, we disregarded question 6, because it went into details not related to the scope of this report. However, we were interested with the responses to question 7, which we believed to be consistent with the objective of this study. We grouped these comments into seven categories. Only 40 users provided responses to question 7. Some of the users' responses were for other training in addition to TECS training. In the following Table 2, we combined suggestions, summarized TECS users' comments for improvements, and identified the percentage of the respondents per category.

**Table 2: TECS Users Suggestions for Improvements (Questions # 7)**

<b>1. More Basic and Beginner's Training (10% of Respondents)</b>
Users were generally dissatisfied with their initial training. Many users never received formalized, Academy training. Instead, they learned TECS through on-the-job experience and through interaction with other TECS users. Had it not been for the Academy, many users would have found it difficult to receive basic or beginner's training. Even for those users who received initial Academy training, training did not seem to be effective enough to enable users to use TECS efficiently. Many users were unaware of many useful and necessary TECS functions.
<b>2. Advanced Training (10% of Respondents)</b>
Users wanted to be more proficient in TECS and to have a better understanding of the entire system. Advanced training was requested for functions and queries into additional information sources, for example, Seized Asset and Case Tracking System (SEACATS), Automated Commercial System, and the Subject Query 11.

<b>3. General Computer Training (10% of Respondents)</b>
Users reported the lack of training in Microsoft Office Suite applications such as Excel and Word, as well as specific issues such as the correct way to change a password.
<b>4. The Need for Formal Refresher Classes (7% of Respondents)</b>
TECS users suggested the need for refresher training to do their jobs effectively. Many users were trained years ago, and have not had formalized training on the many updates and changes to TECS over the years. Users were aware, to varying degrees, of training methods in software package Phoenix, but had a desire for formal, classroom training with an instructor.
<b>5. Notice/Training for Changes to the System (3% of Respondents)</b>
Users were often unaware of changes to the TECS system and wanted a systematic method to inform them of the changes and details such as how and when they will be implemented. In addition, they also required some level of training to maneuver and work with these changes.
<b>6. Provide Written Materials to Aid TECS Usage (3% of Respondents)</b>
Users reported a lack of written materials designed to aid them in TECS usage. Some sort of information card, user manual, booklet, or pamphlet was suggested as possibly helpful. Users reported difficulty in getting written training material because no refresher courses were available.
<b>7. Formal/Instructor-led Training (2% of Respondents)</b>
Users wanted training to be in a formal, classroom situation with an instructor.

Subsequent to our 1998 report recommendations and the 1999 Customs-conducted user survey, Customs informed us that the following actions were implemented:

- It posted TECS and System Control Officer (SCO) training schedules on two Bulletin Boards—*Main* and *Computer Training*, and in the *TECS Daily News*.



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- In addition to the regularly scheduled training classes, the Office of Information and Technology (OIT) Training Branch conducted two or three courses per month in response to a special request from the TECS user community. Thirty sessions (TECS/SCO) were offered in calendar year 2000, 38 sessions in 2001, and 33 sessions in 2002.
  - The number of TECS instructors increased from one to three, which enables offering more courses.
  - Provided SEACATS training to over 2000 users nationwide.
  - Developed two computer-based training courses addressing SEACATS applications and two courses addressing NCIC policies, procedures, and query strategies, which are relevant to many TECS users.
  - When appropriate, OIT instructors included scenarios and examples that address the more complex features of the system.
  - Customs made available on its Intranet approximately 30 quick reference guides and user manuals addressing topics pertinent to TECS users.
  - Where feasible, agency-specific examples, exercises, and exceptions are incorporated in the training.

### **FLETC-administered Course Evaluations Suggested Students Were Extremely Pleased with TECS Course and Instructor**

In addition to the 1999 survey, Customs arranged with FLETC to conduct student evaluations of TECS training, which FLETC provides as part of FLETC-conducted courses for Customs. FLETC provided these evaluations to Customs. We believe these course evaluations continue to support our two recommendations by soliciting student comments on the formal TECS training and other training needs.

Between May 1999 and June 2002, FLETC administered course evaluations to students, who circled either a 'Yes' or 'No' in each of eight questions. FLETC received 718 TECS student evaluations

from 14 classes held in 1999, 12 classes in 2000, 20 classes in 2001, and 10 classes through June 2002. We analyzed all of the responses and calculated the responses in terms of a percentage for each question as summarized in Table 3, below.

The responses indicate that 97 to 99 percent of the students believe the level of instruction was appropriate for their skills. Over 98 percent of the student respondents believe the level of instructional detail was appropriate. At least 99 percent of the student respondents believe that the training leads to a better understanding of TECS. Finally, at least 98 percent of the students believe the instruction will be useful in their everyday work.

**Table 3: FLETC-administered Student Evaluations (in %)**

Questions	1999		2000		2001		2002	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Was the level of instruction appropriate for your skills?	99.0	1.0	97.0	3.0	97.0	3.0	99.0	1.0
2. Did the instructor(s) promote class participation?	100	0	100	0	100	0	100	0
3. Did the instructor(s) answer questions?	100	0	100	0	100	0	100	0
4. Was the instructor(s) knowledgeable on the subject matter?	100	0	100	0	99.0	1.0	100	0
5. Did the instructor(s) present the material in an easy to follow path?	100	0	100	0	99.0	1.0	100	0
6. Was the level of detail appropriate for this class?	100	0	99.0	1.0	100	0	98.5	1.5
7. Did the class instruction lead to a better understanding of the topic?	100	0	99.0	1.0	100	0	99.0	1.0
8. Do you feel the topics covered in the class will be useful in your everyday work?	98.0	2.0	100	0	99.0	1.0	99.0	1.0

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In addition to the eight 'yes' or 'no' questions, the course evaluation included the following three open-ended questions:

1. What are the major strengths of the course?
2. How could this course be improved?
3. Comments:

We analyzed the responses to these three questions and then summarized the results into the following four areas shown in Table 4, below.

**Table 4: Summarized of Student Responses to Three Open-Ended Questions Regarding TECS Courses**

1999	The major improvement requested was more time in which to explore new topics and other subjects in greater depth. Computer and equipment difficulties were also a concern. Training materials should be program or Agency specific.
2000	Many students requested extra class time to discuss some topics in greater depth and to include new subjects. Skill levels were inconsistent, as new and experienced users shared the same training session. Computer and equipment failures and shortages were a problem.
2001	Many students requested extra class time to explore additional topics and to include new topics. A need for an advanced class existed because many students were already familiar with the basics of TECS and wanted to be challenged with new material.
2002	Many students wanted extra class time to facilitate more in-depth discussions concerning TECS' relationship to other law enforcement data systems or software.

The students requested improvements to:

1. Provide additional class time to include new topics and cover the topics in more detail.
2. Offer advanced TECS course(s) for students, who were already familiar with TECS.

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3. Provide trouble-free computers and equipments, so as not to impede the learning process.
  4. Provide agency specific materials.

## Conclusion

We believe Customs implemented its planned actions to address our two recommendations. It conducted an October 1999 survey of 398 users and obtains student course evaluation information for FLETC-administered TECS training courses. The actions, which Customs initiated, based on the 1999 survey results and more recently on student evaluations, address the TECS training issues and other training needs.

### Management Response

Customs reviewed our draft report. They agreed with the substance of the report.

### OIG Comment

We concur with management's response.

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We performed our work in accordance with the *Quality Standards for Inspectors* issued by the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency. We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies extended to our staff. If you have any questions, please contact me at (202) 927-5171, or a member of your staff may contact John F. Lemen at (202) 927-5012.

Marj P. Leaming   
Director, Office of Evaluations

The objective of this review was to the follow-up on OIG recommendations to the 1998 audit report: *OIG-98-060, Treasury Enforcement Communications Systems Users' Needs*. We paid special attention to the following two recommendations:

- “Users are surveyed to obtain their evaluations of the formal training courses, computer-based training, and self-help tools.” (Recommendation 2)
- “A training survey is performed soliciting user comments of their specific training needs.” (Recommendation 3)

Customs conducted a survey to 398 TECS users in October 1999. We analyzed copies of Customs' survey results. The survey contained seven questions, of which five were of a 'yes' or 'no' format. We analyzed these five questions. The location of the training was not relevant to the review; therefore, we did not analyze the sixth question, “Where did you receive the training?” because it went into details outside the scope of this report.

We analyzed the seventh question, “Do you have any additional TECS training needs that have not been met? Please provide details,” because of its consistency with the study. For the seventh question, we identified and combined the responses into seven categories including the percentage of respondents out of the total number of responses.

Customs also provided us with original copies of FLETC-administered course evaluations of TECS students from March 1998 through June 2002. However, we analyzed course evaluations from May 1999 through June 2002, because the course evaluations from March 1998 through April 1999 had dissimilar questions. The course evaluation forms contained eight questions, where students circled a 'yes' or 'no'. We expressed students' responses to each of the eight questions as percentages.

There were also three open-ended questions, namely:

- 1) What are the major strengths of the course?
- 2) How could this course be improved?
- 3) Comments

We analyzed and summarized the open-ended responses for the following years: 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002. We combined those responses into four categories.

We conducted our work between May 2002 and December 2002 in accordance with the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency *Quality Standards for Inspections*.



**U.S. Customs Service**

*Memorandum*

DATE: February 12, 2003

FILE: AUD-1-OP SM

MEMORANDUM FOR MARJ P. LEAMING  
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF EVALUATIONS

FROM: Acting Director  
Office of Planning

SUBJECT: Draft Report of the Treasury Enforcement  
Communications System User Training

Thank you for providing us with a copy of your draft report entitled, "General Management: Follow-up Review on Recommendations Concerning TECS User Training" and the opportunity to discuss the issues in this report.

We have reviewed your report and agree with the substance of the report.

We have determined that the information in the report does not warrant protection under the Freedom of Information Act.

If you have any questions, please have a member of your staff contact Sandy Manuel at (202) 927-2096.

  
Brenda B. Smith

TRADITION



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Appendix 3  
Major Contributors to the Report

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Marj P. Leaming, Director, Office of Evaluations  
John Lemen, Supervisory Evaluator  
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