



**PREPARED STATEMENT OF
STEVE H. MURDOCK
DIRECTOR
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU**

Census in Peril: Getting the 2010 Decennial Back on Track

**Before the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
U.S. Senate**

5 March 2008

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to come before you to bring you up to date on preparations for the 2010 Decennial Census, and particularly the Field Data Collection Automation Program, what we call FDCA. FDCA is at the heart of the reengineered short-form 2010 Census. Reviewing and evaluating all Decennial Census preparations has been the focus of my Directorship since I was sworn in on January 4, 2008.

When the Census Bureau reengineered the 2010 Census at the beginning of the decade, the plan was threefold: 1) leverage Global Positioning System (GPS) technology to bring into GPS alignment the street center lines and geographic features in our address and mapping database (what we call MAF/TIGER); 2) replace the Decennial Census long form with the American Community Survey (ACS) to provide more timely and accurate household and demographic data; and 3) automate census data collection operations in the short-form 2010 Census.

This was a bold vision, and the Census Bureau has taken great strides toward making it a reality. MAF/TIGER is on schedule for completion in April of this year. This means that census maps and addresses are more accurate than ever before, and operations that depend on them, from censuses and surveys to commercial applications like MapQuest, are better than ever.

The ACS is now fully implemented, and we are mailing forms to 250,000 households per month. The ACS response rate is 97%, and it produces yearly estimates for municipalities of 65,000 and up. In 2008, ACS will be producing multiyear estimates for municipalities of 20,000 and up. As a result, government officials and data users have more accurate and timely data to inform policy and planning decisions. These are important accomplishments that dramatically improve the Census Bureau's ability to fulfill its mission.

As you have just heard from Secretary Gutierrez, most components of the 2010 Decennial Census are proceeding according to plan; however, the Field Data Collection Automation (FDCA) program is facing significant schedule, performance and cost issues.

The FDCA program is designed to supply the information technology infrastructure, support services, hardware and software to support a network for almost 500 local offices and hand-held computers (HHCs) that will be used around the country. It is helpful to think of FDCA as being made up of three fundamental components:

1. Automated data collection using handheld devices both to verify addresses, called Address Canvassing or AdCan, and to collect data during the nonresponse follow-up, known as NRFU, of those households that do not return the census survey;
2. The Operations Control System (OCS) that tracks and manages Decennial Census workflow; and
3. Census Operations Infrastructure which provides office automation and support for Regional and Local Census Offices.

In late November 2007, as a result of concerns raised regarding the ability to meet deadlines and budgets, the Deputy Director of the Census Bureau initiated a comprehensive assessment to determine the status of the program and to better understand any issues or concerns as the program approaches key 2010 Census milestones. This assessment included a series of wide-ranging meetings with Census Bureau staff directly involved in the FDCA program. The Deputy Director also met with Harris Corporation, the company developing the FDCA system, and Mitre Corporation, an information technology firm under contract with the Census Bureau. Mitre's role is to provide an internal, independent assessment of the information technology systems in the decennial programs and also IT systems in the bureau.

This process identified issues that raised concerns about the complete development of all of the operations initially planned for the FDCA system in time for the 2010 Census.

HHC Functionality -- Assessments of the Address Canvassing operation for the 2008 Dress Rehearsal revealed that there were difficulties in obtaining efficient transmission to and from the hand-held computer, resulting in enumerator downtime. In addition, the HHCs did not function well if the number of addresses in the enumerator assignment area was too large.

OCS Requirements -- The sheer volume of requirements, as well as the complexity of the operations that FDCA supports, contribute to problems that are particularly significant in the development of the OCS. Contract deliverables in the Fall indicated that problems remained despite steps taken to clarify and strengthen the process we use to define contract requirements.

Accordingly, the Deputy Director established an Integrated Project Team (IPT) made up of key, high ranking 2010 Census managers. The IPT was tasked with producing the final set of FDCA program requirements by January 16, 2008.

This process was nearing completion when I arrived in early January. When Harris Corporation provided feedback at the end of January, the full scope of our problem came into focus.

As we grappled with this problem, I established a task force, chaired by former Deputy Director William Barron and made up of some of the Census Bureau's and the Department's best people, as well as representatives from MITRE, to help us develop a strategy for moving forward.

The Task force outlines four options for moving forward. All of these options call for using the handheld computers for Address Canvassing and we are continuing to work to ensure this requirement is met. For the other major components of FDCA each of the options considers a combination of responsibilities between Harris and Census in terms of capabilities, expertise, staffing, timing and costs.

Option 1 - Baseline

The first option is continuing with the current baseline largely as envisioned in the original FDCA project plan and contract. Harris would complete the handheld computers for Address Canvassing and nonresponse follow-up. Harris would also complete the development of the operations control system and the field operations infrastructure. Harris has already developed major parts of the operations control system and has the IT infrastructure and staff to support further testing and development. However, given various issues related to handhelds, we would simultaneously evaluate the feasibility of a paper-based back-up plan for nonresponse follow-up should the next FDCA dress rehearsal not succeed.

Option 2

In the second option, we would shift everything but Address Canvassing back to the Census Bureau including nonresponse follow-up, the operations control system and the field operations infrastructure. The nonresponse follow-up would be paper based and handhelds would not be used for NRFU. Census has extensive experience in conducting paper-based nonresponse follow-ups.

Option 3

The third option would shift nonresponse follow-up and field operations infrastructure to Census, but Harris would continue to develop the operations control system. As noted, Harris has already developed major parts of the operations control system. Again, this option would mean a paper based nonresponse follow-up.

Option 4

Option four would shift only nonresponse follow-up back to Census and Harris would keep responsibility for the operations control system and field operations infrastructure. This option depends on Harris being able to successfully complete both. Again, the nonresponse follow-up would be paper-based.

The task force report will provide rough cost estimates and risk assessments for each of these options. Our next step is to analyze the report and provide a recommendation to the Secretary, who is establishing a panel of experts to provide an independent review for him of the report and the appropriate options.

We will work with this Expert Panel to finalize a plan to get the 2010 Census back on track.

Mr. Chairman, I cannot over-emphasize the seriousness of this problem. My colleagues and I recognize that we must move quickly to address this problem, and implement solutions. While we still have an enormous challenge in front of us, I am confident that we are close to defining and implementing a strategy that will ensure a successful 2010 Census.

Thank you for this opportunity. I am happy to answer any of your questions.