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RELEASED

Need For Improvements In Management Activities Of The Immigration And Naturalization Service

B-125051

Department of Justice

BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

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AUG. 14, 1973



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

B-125051

C1 The Honorable William J. Randall
Chairman, Subcommittee on Legal and
Monetary Affairs
Committee on Government Operations
House of Representatives

HOUSE

C2 The Honorable John W. Wydler
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman and Mr. Wydler:

This is the second report in response to your requests of February 1 and April 4, 1972, respectively, that we examine certain aspects of operations of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). We previously reported to the Congress that more needs to be done to reduce the number and adverse impact of illegal aliens in the United States (B-125051, July 1973).

This report discusses the need for improvements in the (1) record system for identifying nonimmigrants who overstay their permitted time, (2) controls over Mexican border crossing cards, (3) procedures and practices for obtaining fingerprint searches on illegal aliens, (4) procedures for requesting Mexican aliens to pay their own transportation costs within the INS Southwest Region, and (5) procedures used in the alien address reporting program. INS has taken actions to correct some of these problems.

3-04 Release of this report will be made only if you agree or publicly announce its contents. We want to direct your attention to the fact that this report contains recommendations to the Attorney General. As you know, section 236 of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 requires the head of a Federal agency to submit a written statement on actions he has taken on our recommendations to the House and Senate Committees on Government Operations not later than 60 days after the date of

B-125051

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the report and to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations with the agency's request for appropriations made more than 60 days after the date of the report. Your release of this report will enable us to send it to the four committees to set in motion the requirements of section 236.

As agreed to by the Subcommittee, we are sending copies of this report to the Attorney General.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James B. Stacks".

Comptroller General
of the United States

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ABBREVIATIONS

CNDC centralized nonimmigrant document control
FBI Federal Bureau of Investigation
GAO General Accounting Office
INS Immigration and Naturalization Service

D I G E S T

WHY THE REVIEW WAS MADE

At the request of Chairman William J. Randall, Special Studies Subcommittee (now Chairman, Legal and Monetary Affairs Subcommittee), House Committee on Government Operations, and Congressman John W. Wydler, GAO examined operations of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

Basic facts

INS maintains records on the arrival and departure of more than 5 million visitors each year. An unknown number of visits are made by holders of border crossing cards, and INS estimates that about 1.7 million Mexican border crossing cards are outstanding.

INS estimates that a million aliens are in the United States illegally. The number of illegal aliens it has apprehended increased from about 200,000 to 500,000 from fiscal years 1968 through 1972.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

GAO found that improvements were needed in the

- record system used in identifying nonimmigrants who overstay their permitted time,
- controls over Mexican border crossing cards,

- procedures and practices for obtaining fingerprint searches on illegal aliens,
- procedures for requesting illegal Mexican aliens to pay their own transportation costs within the INS Southwest Region, and
- procedures used in the alien address reporting program.

Record system

Due to inaccuracies in the record system used in identifying nonimmigrant aliens who overstay, INS field offices must follow up many cases involving aliens who have already left the country or had their status adjusted.

Although INS recently started using a computer to process documents in this record system, it needs to establish a plan of action which, when implemented, will increase the system's effectiveness in providing accurate data for following up overstay cases. (See p. 10.)

Mexican border crossing cards

INS officials in the Southwest Region said many Mexican aliens use the border crossing cards to enter the country and, after violating the terms regulating their entry, mail the cards to their homes in Mexico to prevent confiscation. If apprehended by INS in an illegal status and granted voluntary departure the

aliens are able to use the same cards to reenter.

The existence of about 1.7 million Mexican border crossing cards with no expiration dates and limited controls to confiscate cards from known abusers of the border crossing privilege make it easier for would-be illegal aliens to enter the United States. (See p. 16.)

Fingerprint searches

INS policies and procedures for requesting identification of apprehended illegal aliens through fingerprint searches by the Federal Bureau of Investigation need to be clarified to eliminate useless searches. Some searches are made for aliens who have left the country or been released from INS custody before results of searches are received. Local INS officials said many fingerprint searches were of doubtful value. (See p. 19.)

Transporting illegal aliens

INS has made substantial progress in reducing costs of transporting illegal aliens within the Southwest Region. During this review GAO suggested that INS request aliens to pay their transportation costs on INS-owned buses. INS adopted the suggestion in November 1972 and had collected \$287,000 in fares through May 1973. Such collections could total about \$800,000 a year. (See p. 21.)

Alien address reporting program

Under the address reporting program, aliens must report their address to INS each year. The Government's costs of this program could be reduced by about \$333,000 a year by requiring aliens to pay the postage on address reports.

Changes in the design of the address report forms could further reduce the Government's cost by about \$10,000 a year by making it possible to reuse excess forms from year to year.

GAO found INS makes limited use of the alien address reports, and GAO's limited tests indicate that only about 25 percent of the aliens change their addresses each year.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

GAO recommends that the Attorney General have INS:

- Establish a plan to increase its record system's effectiveness in providing accurate data for follow-up on aliens who overstay their permitted time. (See p. 11.)
- Study the feasibility of periodically reissuing Mexican border crossing cards, explore alternatives to periodically reissuing the cards, and initiate a system for more effective monitoring of Mexican aliens allowed to extend their visits. (See p. 16.)
- Examine its procedures for requesting fingerprint searches on illegal aliens to eliminate searches which serve no useful purpose. (See p. 20.)
- Revise the alien address report forms to allow use of excess forms from year to year, and evaluate the management benefits of yearly filings of address reports. (See p. 24.)

During its review, GAO suggested that INS

- request aliens to pay their transportation costs on INS-owned

buses which could result in considerable savings to the Government (see p. 21), and

--require aliens to pay the postage on alien address reports. (See p. 23.)

AGENCY ACTIONS AND UNRESOLVED ISSUES

GAO discussed its findings with INS on May 30, 1973, and INS agreed with the conclusions and recommendations.

INS officials said they did not believe alien address reports should be eliminated, but they planned to determine how to better use the reports.

INS agreed to GAO's suggestions and has taken action to request aliens to pay their transportation costs on INS-owned buses and to require aliens to pay postage costs on the annual alien address reports. Estimated annual savings from these actions could be about \$1.1 million.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This is our second report in response to requests of Chairman William J. Randall, Special Studies Subcommittee (now Chairman, Legal and Monetary Affairs Subcommittee), House Committee on Government Operations, and Congressman John W. Wydler that we examine certain aspects of the operations of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). We previously reported to the Congress that more needs to be done to reduce the number and adverse impact of illegal aliens in the United States (B-125051, July 1973).

INS has about 7,300 employees and administers and enforces the laws for admitting, excluding, deporting, and naturalizing aliens. INS patrols borders, inspects aliens entering the country, naturalizes aliens, investigates aliens' status, and detains and deports illegal aliens. INS activities in fiscal year 1972 cost about \$130 million.

The Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101) provides for entry and stay of aliens. Aliens are categorized by three broad groups.

1. Immigrants seeking permanent residence.
2. Nonimmigrants entering temporarily for such purposes as business, pleasure, schooling, or work.
3. Illegal aliens, such as those who sneak in, use fraudulent visas or documents or make false claims to citizenship.

Aliens deportable under the act include those entering illegally and those violating the conditions of their entry. Immigrants become deportable by certain actions or convictions as defined in the law. Nonimmigrants become illegal aliens by overstaying their permitted time or taking unauthorized jobs.

INS estimates that a million aliens are in the country illegally. The number of illegal aliens it has apprehended increased from about 200,000 to 500,000 from fiscal years 1968 through 1972.

The following chapters discuss the need for improvements in the (1) record system used in identifying nonimmigrants who overstay their permitted time, (2) controls over Mexican border crossing cards, (3) procedures and practices for obtaining fingerprint searches on illegal aliens, (4) procedures for requesting Mexican aliens to pay their own transportation costs within the INS Southwest Region, and (5) procedures used in the alien address reporting program.

SCOPE OF REVIEW

We reviewed the laws prescribing conditions for entry into the United States of immigrants and nonimmigrants and examined the policies, procedures, and practices of INS in administering and enforcing these laws. We made this review at INS offices in Washington, D.C., California, Florida, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, and Vermont.

CHAPTER 2

IMPROVEMENT NEEDED IN RECORD SYSTEM FOR

IDENTIFYING NONIMMIGRANTS WHO OVERSTAY

The INS record system for identifying nonimmigrant aliens who overstay their permitted time has not been effective because the data in the system has not been current or complete. Although INS recently began using a computer to process the documents in this record system, additional improvements are needed to make the system fully effective.

The Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1360) requires the Attorney General to maintain records of aliens admitted to and excluded from the United States. INS maintains centralized nonimmigrant document control (CNDC) records on the arrival and departure of more than 5 million visitors¹ each year. When an alien leaves the United States, INS removes his records from CNDC and the departure data becomes part of a master index.

INS has not been able to effectively use these records to identify aliens who overstay their permitted time because many documents, such as those extending stays or changing status, cannot be matched with arrival documents. As a result, overstay cases are needlessly referred to the INS field offices for followup.

USE OF THE RECORD SYSTEM

INS uses CNDC and the master index to follow up on aliens overstaying their permitted time and to respond to requests for information from (1) INS enforcement officials for immigration data on apprehended illegal aliens, (2) INS and U.S. consulate officials on applicants for border crossing cards, and (3) other enforcement agencies to assist them in discharging their duties. INS made over 870,000 searches of the records in CNDC and the master index in fiscal year 1972.

¹ Excludes border crossing card users. (See p. 12.)

When the records show that an alien's permitted time has expired and that he apparently has not departed (possible overstay), the case is referred to the appropriate INS field office for investigation if the alien (1) is an iron curtain national from any of 12 countries, (2) is a crewman, (3) is an ethnic Arab from any of 21 countries, or (4) had been given permission to enter the country under special circumstances.

As of March 1, 1973, of about 923,000 possible overstay cases, only a small percent were in these four categories.

MOST POSSIBLE OVERSTAY CASES
RESOLVED WITHOUT INVESTIGATION

During fiscal year 1972, the INS central office referred 25,331 possible overstay cases to its field offices for followup. The field office checks its local records and/or corresponds with the alien to determine his location and/or current status. If this office verifies the alien's departure or determines that he is in the country legally, it notifies the central office and the records are so noted; otherwise, the case is referred to the investigations division of that field office for resolution.

INS reports showed that during fiscal year 1972 the central office referred 25,331 possible overstay cases to the field offices. The field offices resolved 14,497, or about 57 percent, without investigation and referred 3,223 for investigation. The remaining cases were pending action as of June 30, 1972. The cases resolved without investigation involved aliens who had left, adjusted their status, or properly extended their stays. Resolving so many cases by merely referring to the local records or corresponding with the aliens indicates that CNDC records are not being kept up to date.

Of the 3,223 cases referred for investigation, 2,665 were resolved as of June 30, 1972; 1,771, or about 66 percent, involved aliens who had already left or were in the country legally. CNDC records should have shown aliens' departures or current status, which would have precluded case referral to the field offices.

CHANGE TO COMPUTER-BASED CNDC

INS initiated a study in 1965 to determine the feasibility of using automatic data processing for its records and decided to automate both CNDC and the master index. CNDC automation was completed in February 1973. The transition from the manual to the computer-based CNDC began March 1, 1972. INS began referring possible overstay cases to the field offices under the computer-based CNDC system in January 1973. INS currently plans for the automated system to be completely implemented by 1978.

Converting to computer processing should significantly improve the system, as shown below.

<u>Type of processing</u>	<u>Days of processing time</u>	
	<u>Manual</u> <u>CNDC</u>	<u>Computer-based</u> <u>CNDC</u>
Document of arrival	42	4
Extension of permitted stay	42	2
Document of change of status	42	2
Document of departure	42	3
Retrieval of information from system:		
Expedited	1	(a)
Regular	7	(a)

^a 1 hour.

A major problem with the manual CNDC was that data, such as departure of aliens, was not current; the computer-based CNDC has significantly improved the timeliness of the data. The most difficult problem with the computer-based CNDC is that input documents, such as extension of stay and change of status, cannot always be matched with existing data on a particular alien. This was also a problem under the manual CNDC.

CNDC uses an alien's name and such identifying information as birth date to match input documents. Inability to match documents is attributable to

- illegible input documents, handwritten by the alien;
- keypunch errors; and
- information being slightly different on documents filed by the same alien at different times.

On several recent occasions the INS central office notified the field offices that complete, accurate, and legible input data was needed for CNDC. A subsequent test of input documents in March 1973 by INS showed that 17 percent of the documents could not be initially matched with existing data on aliens. After more extensive testing (which is not normally done) another 9 percent of the documents were matched. Because of these tests, INS modified the computer program and was able to match more documents.

An INS official told us that the field offices were not sending many documents to the central office to keep the records up to date and that aliens did not always turn in their departure documents when leaving the country.

CONCLUSIONS

Referring possible overstay cases to INS field offices because of inaccurate data in CNDC causes needless followup. About 57 percent of the cases referred by the central office to the field offices during fiscal year 1972 were resolved either by checking field office records or by corresponding with the alien. Further, about 66 percent of the cases which were investigated were resolved by either verifying the alien's departure or determining that the alien was in a legal status. If the data in CNDC had been current and complete, these cases could have been resolved without referral to the field offices. All of these cases were referred to the field offices before INS converted to the computer-based CNDC.

The computer-based CNDC, however, has similar problems although their extent was not fully measurable at the time of our review because INS did not begin referring overstay cases to the field offices from the computer-based system until January 1973. Although converting to computer processing should improve the timeliness of the overstay data, not being able to match new documents to existing documents

remains a problem. Using prenumbered forms so that all documents filled out by an alien would have the same number could alleviate this problem.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

We recommend that the Attorney General have INS establish a plan of action which, when implemented, will increase the effectiveness of CNDC in providing accurate data for following up overstay cases. The plan should include

- a reasonable goal for the accuracy of CNDC input data,
- necessary monitoring tests of CNDC data to measure progress in achieving the desired accuracy,
- a time frame for bringing CNDC to full effectiveness, and
- a provision for using prenumbered forms to reduce the problem of matching documents in the system.

CHAPTER 3

NEED TO IMPROVE CONTROLS OVER

MEXICAN BORDER CROSSING CARDS

INS and certain U.S. consulates in Mexico issue Mexican border crossing cards to allow Mexican aliens to visit the United States within 25 miles of the border for 72 hours or less. About 1.7 million cards, such as the sample below, were outstanding as of July 1972.

INS officials in the Southwest Region told us that the Mexican border crossing card was the document most used by illegal Mexican aliens to gain entry into the United States. They said many aliens use the cards to enter the country and then mail the cards back home to prevent their confiscation. If INS apprehends them in an illegal status and grants voluntary departure, the aliens can use the same cards to reenter. These officials said that illegal aliens who use the cards to enter the country often falsely claim they entered without inspection when they are apprehended and that few of them have their border crossing cards in their possession.

The chief Border Patrol agent of the Miami, Florida, Sector, told us that during fiscal year 1972, about 15 illegal Mexican aliens apprehended by officers of the sector had border crossing cards. He estimated that another 70 illegal Mexican aliens had used cards to enter but did not have the cards on them when apprehended.

During fiscal years 1968-72 INS apprehended about 1.4 million illegal Mexican aliens. INS records show that about 1.2 million entered the United States without inspection and about 135,000 entered as visitors, using visitor visas or border crossing cards. These statistics are based, in part, on the aliens' statements about their entry methods.

CURRENT CONTROLS

Mexican border crossing card applicants are interviewed and photographed, and a name check is made of INS records. When deemed appropriate, Mexican police records are checked.

SAMPLE - MEXICAN BORDER CROSSING CARD

BEARER MAY NOT BE EMPLOYED IN THE U.S.	John Doe		IDENTIFYING MARKS	
	DATE OF BIRTH	SEX		
	Oct. 30, 1940	M		
	SAMPLE		18 Oak Place Tijuana, Mexico	
ISSUED AT			ON	
		MTR	Dec. 11, 1969	
VALID UNTIL REVOKED				

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE No. 5681298

FRONT

THIS CARD WHEN USED AS THE SOLE ENTRY DOCUMENT IS VALID ONLY FOR VISITS TO THE U.S. WITHIN 25 MILES OF THE MEXICAN BORDER FOR PERIODS OF 72 HOURS OR LESS IF THE BEARER IS FOUND OTHERWISE ADMISSIBLE BY U.S. IMMIGRATION OFFICER. TO REMAIN FOR A LONGER PERIOD OR PROCEED TO OTHER AREAS IN THE U.S. THE BEARER MUST BE IN POSSESSION OF A FORM SW-434 OR FORM I-94 ISSUED BY AN OFFICER OF THE U.S. IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE.

SAMPLE

PRESENTE ESTA TARIETA CADA VEZ QUE ENTRA A LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS. SI USTED DESEA PERMANECER EN LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS DURANTE UN PERIODO DE MAS DE 72 HORAS O TRASLADARSE A MAS DE 25 MILLAS DE LA FRONTERA MEXICANA USTED DEBE POSEER UNA FORMA SW-434 O FORMA I-94 EXPEDIDA POR UN OFICIAL DEL SERVICIO DE INMIGRACION Y NATURALIZACION DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS.

USTED NO PUEDE ACEPTAR EMPLEO EN LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS.

BACK

BEST DOCUMENT AVAILABLE

Applicants are not routinely fingerprinted and do not sign the issued card. INS discontinued fingerprinting applicants for border crossing cards in March 1967 after its study showed that information obtained through fingerprint checks with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was either already in INS records or of no consequence in adjudicating the applications. Fingerprints may be required if INS officers suspect an applicant of using an alias or otherwise concealing an arrest or prior immigration violation.

INS and consulate offices processed 680,370 applications for border crossing cards in fiscal years 1971 and 1972 and denied 185,537 or about 27 percent.

The current version of the card was initially issued in 1969. Although the cards issued in 1965 and 1966 had 4-year expiration dates they can still be used to enter the United States. The estimated 1.7 million Mexican border crossing cards outstanding as of July 1972 are valid until revoked.

When INS apprehends an illegal alien with a card in his possession, the apprehending officer confiscates the card and it is revoked.

There are no controls to permit INS to determine whether users of border crossing cards abide by the 72-hour restriction.

EXTENDED VISITS

INS may permit the holders of border crossing cards to remain in the country beyond 72 hours and/or to travel outside the 25-mile limit. It issues a document (SW-434) which permits visits of up to 15 days in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. About 1.6 million SW-434s were issued in fiscal years 1971 and 1972. INS does not keep copies of this document and has no way to determine whether the holders of SW-434s abide by the terms of their extended visits. INS has considerable enforcement personnel and equipment within 100 miles of the Mexican border to prevent illegal entry. Because use of the SW-434 is not controlled and because INS can permit aliens to travel more than 100 miles into the country, this enforcement could be partially negated.

For visits longer than 15 days or outside the four border States, INS issues an arrival-departure record which becomes part of CNDC. (See p. 7.) The alien's departure is documented

by his turning in a copy of that record if and when he leaves the country.

ABUSES OF CARD PRIVILEGE

A 6-week special search in the INS Los Angeles District in 1970 resulted in the apprehension of 10,031 illegal aliens. INS records showed that 874, or 9 percent, of them had border crossing cards.

A central office records check of a sample consisting of 387 illegal Mexican aliens who claimed they entered without inspection during April and May 1971 showed that 18, or 5 percent, had been issued border crossing cards. This check included only those aliens that INS suspected had been issued border crossing cards or arrival-departure records. The check relied on the alien giving his correct name when apprehended so the actual number of aliens who used border crossing cards to gain entry could be more than the number disclosed if some gave false names.

An INS study in the Southwest Region showed that 6,794 border crossing cards, 974 of them altered or counterfeit, were confiscated from apprehended illegal Mexican aliens in fiscal year 1972.

A June 2, 1972, report by the INS Los Angeles District Director pointed out that many border crossing cards issued by the San Diego border station were duplicates, replacing cards alleged to have been lost and that there was strong reason to believe many of the lost cards were subsequently sold in Mexico.

We requested the INS central office to search the records for 3,266 illegal Mexican aliens apprehended during a 5-day period in 1972. This search showed that:

--105 of the apprehended illegal aliens entered the country with border crossing cards or arrival-departure records, of which 30, or 29 percent, used border crossing cards.

--3,161 of the apprehended illegal aliens claimed they entered without inspection. Of this number, 102, or 3 percent, had been issued border crossing cards and 5 had been issued 2 cards each.

Thus, of the 3,266 illegal aliens 132, or 4 percent, had been issued border crossing cards.

PERIODIC REISSUE OF CARDS

INS central office officials told us in February 1973 that the cost of reissuing the Mexican border crossing cards far outweighed any benefits to be derived. INS, however, had prepared no estimate of the cost to reissue the cards and had no criteria as to what constituted an acceptable rate of abuse before reissue of the cards would be considered. The officials pointed out that INS (1) confiscates border crossing cards from apprehended illegal aliens when found in their possession, (2) denies many applications for the cards, and (3) inspectors at ports-of-entry can, in some cases, detect aliens who may intend to violate the conditions of their entry.

CONCLUSIONS

The estimated 1.7 million Mexican border crossing cards in use with no expiration date and the limited controls to confiscate cards from known abusers make it easier for potential illegal aliens to enter the country.

By periodically reissuing Mexican border crossing cards, INS could reduce the abuse of the cards' privileges by denying cards to persons previously apprehended in an illegal status in the United States and could reduce the possibility of lost, stolen, or duplicate cards being used for entry.

INS should study the feasibility of periodically reissuing Mexican border crossing cards. The study should consider the savings that could result from the need to apprehend and expel fewer illegal aliens and the fact that only border crossing cards in regular use would need to be reissued. The cost of a program of this nature would depend on how often the cards were reissued. There may be alternatives to reissuing the cards which would provide the needed control.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

We recommend that the Attorney General require INS to:

- Study the feasibility of periodically reissuing Mexican border crossing cards. This study should

consider that (1) the number of illegal aliens would be reduced, resulting in reduced apprehension and deportation costs and (2) only the cards in regular use would need to be reissued.

- Explore alternatives to periodically reissuing Mexican border crossing cards.
- Initiate a system for more effective monitoring of Mexican aliens permitted to extend their visits by using the SW-434.

CHAPTER 4

DOUBTFUL BENEFITS FROM FINGERPRINT SEARCHES

ON CERTAIN ILLEGAL ALIENS

INS policies and procedures for requesting identification of apprehended illegal aliens through fingerprint searches by the FBI need to be clarified to eliminate useless searches.

The practice of requesting fingerprint searches, varied in the INS field offices included in our review. Officials in these offices said they request fingerprint searches for all apprehended illegal aliens

- 14 years or older except Canadians granted voluntary departure (Boston District Office),
- 14 years or older except Mexicans granted voluntary departure under INS supervision (Kansas City District Office),
- 14 years or older (New York and Miami District Offices and Miami Border Patrol),
- who have been served with either an order to show cause why they should not be deported or a warrant of arrest (Los Angeles District Office).

INS operating instructions require fingerprint searches of crewmen who willfully violate their status and other illegal aliens 14 years or older who are (1) served with a warrant of arrest, (2) served with an order to show cause, or (3) arrested without a warrant when attempting to enter illegally or found to be in the country illegally. Fingerprint searches of other aliens are discretionary. During fiscal year 1972 INS apprehended 4,391 willful crewmen violators and served 23,523 warrants of arrest and 19,178 orders to show cause. INS had no statistics showing how many aliens had been arrested without a warrant; however, according to INS, most illegal aliens apprehended each year are in this category.

During fiscal year 1972 the FBI made 80,259 criminal fingerprint analyses (technical searches) for INS at a cost to the Government of about \$300,000. The searches involved about 16 percent of the 505,949 illegal aliens apprehended by INS during 1972.

Local INS officials told us that many of the fingerprint searches are of doubtful value.

--The Miami Border Patrol told us that it does not receive the results of the searches from the FBI for 3 weeks, and by then illegal Mexican aliens have left.

It takes the New York District Office 2 weeks to receive the results. By then most aliens have (1) been released from custody, (2) left the country, or (3) been determined during interrogation to have a prior immigration violation. About 20 percent of the fingerprint charts are returned by the FBI marked "unable to classify" due to the poor quality of the fingerprints.

--The Boston District Office believes results are not received in time to be of much use in identifying aliens with criminal records or prior immigration violations.

FBI officials said it requires about 3 days to complete a routine fingerprint search; however, an expedited case can be completed in 1 day. INS said that because it usually mails the fingerprint charts to the FBI, it sometimes takes 2 or 3 weeks to receive the FBI response. The 2- to 3-week delay limits the usefulness of the information, especially in view of INS's limited funds for detaining illegal aliens and its emphasis on speedy removal of most illegal aliens from the United States.

INS has not made any comprehensive studies of the benefits from fingerprint searches, but after studying the benefits of such searches on applicants for border crossing cards, it discontinued that practice. (See p. 14.)

CONCLUSIONS

Requests for fingerprint searches on illegal aliens vary in INS field offices. Local INS officials doubt the benefit of many of the searches presently being requested.

The operating instructions require fingerprint searches in certain cases but do not preclude searches in cases for which the aliens will be expelled from the country or otherwise released from INS custody before the results can be received from the FBI.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

We recommend that the Attorney General require INS to examine its procedures and practices for requesting fingerprint searches on illegal aliens to eliminate searches which serve no useful purpose. This examination should also consider ways to reduce the time needed to receive reports on fingerprint searches.

CHAPTER 5

DEPORTATION AND DETENTION PRACTICES

REDUCING COST OF TRANSPORTING ALIENS IN SOUTHWEST REGION

In our report to the Attorney General dated August 26, 1971 (B-125051), we pointed out that, although INS had reduced the cost of transporting Mexican aliens within its Southwest Region, it could further reduce costs by using buses in lieu of INS-owned passenger planes. We proposed to the INS Commissioner that aliens who are granted voluntary departure in the Southwest Region and who are financially able, be requested to pay their transportation costs within the Southwest Region.

Subsequently, INS discontinued the use of its passenger planes and began using buses. Also, beginning in November 1971, INS began requesting aliens to pay their transportation costs on chartered buses within the Southwest Region. During fiscal year 1972, 18,750 aliens were transported on charter buses and 16,688 paid \$210,887 in fares.

During this review we suggested to INS that requesting aliens to pay their transportation costs on INS-owned buses could also accrue considerable savings to the Government. During calendar year 1972, INS transported 170,242 aliens on INS-owned buses. INS agreed with the suggestion and in November 1972 began requesting aliens to pay their transportation costs on INS buses within the Southwest Region.

Data available for November 1972 through May 1973 showed that of the 62,990 aliens transported on INS buses 36,491, or 58 percent, paid part or total fares amounting to about 287,000. Collections from this change in practice could total about \$800,000 a year.

ELIMINATING INSPECTION OF CERTAIN DETENTION FACILITIES

INS procedures provided for regional and district offices to periodically inspect and evaluate all non-INS facilities used to detain aliens; frequently used facilities once a year and other facilities every 2 years. As of

June 26, 1972, inspection reports for 478 non-INS facilities were on file at the INS central office. We could not readily determine the cost to inspect these facilities. The Bureau of Prisons, Department of Justice, is responsible for inspecting about 200 of the same facilities and preparing evaluation reports on their fitness for housing Federal prisoners, including aliens.

In July 1972 we suggested that INS revise its procedures to eliminate inspecting those detention facilities already inspected and evaluated by the Bureau of Prisons. INS agreed and revised its procedures in February 1973.

CHAPTER 6

OPPORTUNITIES TO REDUCE COSTS OF ALIEN ADDRESS REPORTING PROGRAM

Significant savings in the alien address reporting program can be achieved by requiring aliens who file address reports to pay postage and by changing the address report forms. INS should also reconsider the mandatory filing of address reports by all aliens in the country on January 1 of each year.

The Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1305) requires most aliens in the United States on January 1 to file address reports during January, whether or not their addresses have changed.

Each year about 4 million aliens file address report cards. The INS central office makes the cards available to post offices and local INS offices. After the cards are filled out by the aliens, they are mailed to the local INS offices by the United States Postal Service which bills INS for postage and handling--about \$644,000 a year. INS also incurs costs for printing and sorting the cards, preparing reports, and advertising, for which we identified costs of about \$67,000 a year.

We suggested in January 1973 that INS require aliens who file the January reports to pay the postage. INS agreed with the suggestion and has taken action to design the address report card so the alien must place the postage on either the card or on an envelope. This action, if implemented, could save about \$333,000 a year in postage. The amount of the reduction in handling costs cannot be estimated at this time.

Since 1969 INS has procured about 15 million address report cards each year to distribute to post offices and INS offices. Each card is printed with a specific year (e.g., 1971, 1972, 1973) on it. Because about 4 million aliens file cards each year, the remaining cards--costing about \$10,000 a year--are disposed of. The procurement of an excess quantity is partially justified by the fact that cards must be sent to about 32,000 post offices, and the exact number needed

is difficult to determine. Eliminating the preprinted date on the cards, however, would allow excess cards in one year to be used in following years.

DISTRICT OFFICE USE OF REPORTS

Our inquiry into the use of the alien address report cards by the INS district offices in Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and New York City revealed that these cards are occasionally referred to when investigating an alien's status. INS also uses the cards to prepare statistical reports on the number of aliens in each State.

In the Southeast Region the cards are sorted into alphabetical order by a private contractor. The Washington District Office is in this region. In the Southwest Region INS contracts with other Government agencies to sort the cards. INS personnel manually sort the cards in the Northeast Region. The New York District is in this region. The Northeast Regional Office has decided to alphabetize the cards for only 19 iron-curtain nationality groups due to lack of manpower. Normally the cards are alphabetized into 158 nationality groups. The usefulness of these cards as reference sources in the Northeast Region is therefore significantly diminished.

Our comparison of 100 randomly selected 1972 cards in the Washington District Office with 1971 cards showed that 75 percent of the reporting aliens had the same address in both years. This data casts further doubt on the need for requiring aliens to file address reports each year if their addresses have not changed.

CONCLUSIONS

INS has acted to reduce the cost of the alien address reporting program by revising the procedures under which the Government pays the cost of postage for each address report. Further savings can be realized by revising the address report cards so that cards not used in one year can be used in subsequent years.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

We recommend that the Attorney General have INS revise the address report forms to allow use of excess forms from year to year.

We recommend also that the Attorney General have INS evaluate the management benefits of yearly filings of address reports in view of the limited use being made of the reports and of the fact that our limited review indicated that only 25 percent of the reporting aliens change their addresses each year.

CHAPTER 7

AGENCY COMMENTS

We discussed our findings with INS officials who agreed with our conclusions and recommendations. They did not believe the alien address reports should be eliminated, but they planned to make a study to determine how to better use the reports.

These officials also pointed out that the number of Mexican border crossing cards issued by the U.S. consulates in Mexico has been substantially reduced. The Acting Commissioner of INS told us that actions have been taken to improve practices for issuing Mexican border crossing cards.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR
ADMINISTRATION OF ACTIVITIES DISCUSSED
IN THIS REPORT

	Tenure of office	
	From	To
<u>DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE</u>		
ATTORNEY GENERAL:		
Elliot L. Richardson	May 1973	Present
Elliot L. Richardson (acting)	Apr. 1973	May 1973
Richard G. Kleindienst	June 1972	Apr. 1973
Richard G. Kleindienst (acting)	Feb. 1972	June 1972
John N. Mitchell	Jan. 1969	Feb. 1972
Ramsey Clark	Oct. 1966	Jan. 1969
COMMISSIONER, IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE:		
James F. Greene (acting)	Apr. 1973	Present
Raymond F. Farrell	Jan. 1962	Apr. 1973