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Information Resources Management

Active Assignments

Foreword

This report was prepared primarily to inform Congressional members and key staff of ongoing assignments in the General Accounting Office's Information Resources Management. This report contains assignments that were ongoing as of April 15, 1997, and presents a brief background statement and a list of key questions to be answered on each assignment. The report will be issued quarterly.

This report was compiled from information available in GAO's internal management information systems. Because the information was downloaded from computerized data bases intended for internal use, some information may appear in abbreviated form.

If you have questions or would like additional information about assignments listed, please contact Jack Brock, Director, on (202) 512-6406; or Linda Koontz, Associate Director, on (202) 512-7487.

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CRITICAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

TITLE: REVIEW OF FAA'S EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE YEAR-2000 COMPLIANCE (511533)

BACKGROUND : This is one of a series of GAO jobs on government-wide efforts to address year 2000 (Y2K) date conversion problems. AIMD has developed a draft guide on assessing agencies' readiness to achieve Y2K compliance. We will test this guidance at FAA where a Y2K failure could impact aviation safety.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Are there opportunities for FAA to improve its Y2K efforts? (2) What lessons learned and best practices identified at FAA can be applied to other federal agencies' Y2K efforts? (3) How can AIMD enhance the usefulness and application of its Y2K readiness guide?

IMPROVING INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

TITLE: BEST PRACTICES IN IMPLEMENTING IT PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT (511036)

BACKGROUND : To meet the requirements of the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) and the Clinger-Cohen Act (CCA), federal agencies need guidance to develop IT/IRM measures and data systems.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Based on GAO's research at public and private sector organizations, what approaches can be used by federal agencies to measure the effectiveness of IT/IRM resources applied in support of federal agency programs? (2) What are some key measurement areas that can be used by IT programs/managers to assess IT performance?

EMERGING TECHNOLOGY ISSUES

TITLE: BUSINESS PROCESS REENGINEERING (BPR) ASSESSMENT GUIDE (511005)

BACKGROUND : Many federal agencies, including the Internal Revenue Service and the Social Security Administration, have initiated large-scale reengineering initiatives. Because reengineering can be complex, risky, and expensive, GAO needs standard guidance for assessing these initiatives.

KEY QUESTIONS : What are the important issues that should be addressed in assessing federal agencies' reengineering initiatives?

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DEFENSE INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE

TITLE: HRA 24: DOD'S MIGRATION SYSTEMS STRATEGY (511355)

BACKGROUND : One of the major near-term goals of DOD's CIM initiative, which we have reported as a high risk, is to support and reduce the cost of its business processes with "migration" systems. DOD is spending billions to implement the migration systems strategy over several years and expects to achieve savings by terminating redundant legacy systems.

KEY QUESTIONS : 1) What are the expenditures for migration systems and legacy systems DOD expects to terminate? 2) How many and what type of migration systems did DOD designate, how many legacy systems did DOD terminate, and how many are scheduled for future termination? 3) What economic studies did DOD prepare and use to justify migration actions?

TITLE: REVIEW OF DEFENSE INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE COMMON OPERATING ENVIRONMENT EXISTING AND PLANNED CAPABILITIES (511362)

BACKGROUND : Defense is modernizing its information infrastructure through the development of a common operating environment (COE). The COE is the foundation for building systems which meet departmental goals for integration and interoperability. These systems support every facet of the Defense mission from the commander-in-chief to the foxhole.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What is COE intended to achieve and what goals and objectives have been established? (2) What is DOD's approach for implementing COE and what management structures are being used to assess the progress and effectiveness of the COE?

DEFENSE WEAPON SYSTEMS

TITLE: REVIEW OF NAVY'S F/A-18E/F PROGRAM AND STATUS OF JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER PROGRAM (707194)

BACKGROUND : The decision to procure the F/A-18E/F, based on C/D deficiencies, should be reconsidered due to its high cost and limited increase in operational capability over the current C/D model. We previously recommended that the Navy could meet requirements by continuing to procure C/Ds until the more capable, less expensive Joint Strike Fighter is available.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Are F/A-18E/F development costs being accurately reported? (2) How costly will F/A-18E/F procurement be, given realistic total buy and annual production rates? (3) Based on developmental and operational testing, how capable will the F/A-18E/F be and what problems has testing identified? (4) Are JSF cost and operational capability projections valid?

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DEFENSE WEAPON SYSTEMS

TITLE: REVIEW OF SEA-BASED THEATER BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE PROGRAMS (707197)

BACKGROUND : Sea-basing of tactical ballistic missile defenses (TBMD) allows the U.S. to take advantage of the strength and presence of its naval forces. Two sea-based systems--the Navy Area Defense program and the Theater-wide Defense program--are included in the U.S. core theater ballistic missile defense program. This review will focus on the Area program.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What is the status of the Area theater ballistic missile defense program? (2) Are tests being conducted or planned to adequately demonstrate the Area System's capabilities before production and deployment of both prototype missiles and the objective system?

HIGH RISK SYSTEMS

TITLE: ADEQUACY OF THE DEFENSE FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING SERVICES FOR PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATIONS OF ITS TELECOMMUNICATIONS (511358)

BACKGROUND : DFAS is consolidating over 300 accounting offices into 5 large existing finance centers and 15 new sites called operating locations. This effort is aimed at (1) reducing the number of accounting and finance personnel from 46,000 to 23,000; (2) streamlining DOD's financial operations. A key factor to the success of the effort is a cost effective telecommunication network.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Are DOD's telecommunication and IRM resources supporting DFAS' OPLOC operations being used in a cost effective manner? (2) Can significant savings be achieved through a more efficient use of telecommunications and IRM resources dedicated to OPLOC operations?

TITLE: INFORMATION SECURITY AT THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE (511361)

BACKGROUND : The security of information stored in government computer systems is of increasing concern to the Congress and the general public. The Subcommittee is holding a series of hearings and has requested GAO to perform a series of reviews of federal agencies information security practices, beginning with the Department of State.

KEY QUESTIONS : 1. How susceptible are State's information systems to unauthorized access over the Internet? 2. What is State doing to address this potential problem?

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HIGH RISK SYSTEMS

TITLE: REVIEW OF DOD'S Y2K STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION (511614)

BACKGROUND : The millennium problem is one of the most critical issues facing DOD. Most computer programs written since the 60's have two-digit year fields which will cause catastrophic system failures when 00 digits are processed for the year 2000. Defense readiness, C3, and intelligence systems will be vulnerable and estimates for fixing the problems are in the billions.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) How appropriate are DOD strategies and actions for ensuring that Y2K problems will be successfully addressed? (2) To what extent has DOD assessed the impact and cost of the year 2000 problems?

CRITICAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

TITLE: SOFTWARE CAPABILITY EVALUATION OF DEFENSE FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING SERVICES - ARMY (511502)

IMPROVING INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

TITLE: REVIEW OF THE PROLIFERATION OF DEFENSE NETWORKS (511368)

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OTHER ISSUE AREA WORK - DIFM

TITLE: HRA 19: NAVY EFFORTS TO REDUCE COSTS TO STREAMLINE OPERATIONS AND REDUCE COSTS IN THE ORDNANCE BUSINESS AREA (511612)

BACKGROUND : Our work in Navy ordnance business area is a two part effort involving NSIAD and AIMD. The first job looked at the reasons for price increases and continued operating losses. The second job will look at operational issues regarding (1) streamlining operations and reducing costs, including overhead costs and (2) improving customer support.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What actions can be taken to streamline the business area's operations and reduce its costs? (2) What actions can be taken to improve the timeliness and effectiveness of the support that the business area provides to its customers?

TITLE: HRA 19: DBOF PRICING OF GOODS AND SERVICES FOR FMS CUSTOMERS (511613)

BACKGROUND : The Arms Export Control Act (P.L. 90-629) provides that defense items will be sold to FMS customers at full cost. DOD policy requires DBOF activities to use one set of standard/stabilized rates for all customers, including FMS. This policy may result in undercharges for FMS customers and violate the Act. DBOF sells about \$2 billion to FMS customers each year.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Is DOD's current pricing practice of billing FMS customers at stabilized prices consistent with the Arms Export Control Act (P.L. 90-629)? (2) Is there a dollar difference in pricing FMS goods and services at full costs and at stabilized rates?

TITLE: HRA 24: REVIEW OF THE FISCAL YEAR 1998 DEFENSE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY BUDGET REQUEST (511615)

BACKGROUND : DOD requests over \$20 billion each year to support its IT investment. In the past GAO's budget support efforts have assisted the authorization, appropriations, and oversight committees. GAO's support has become an expectation of Congress.

KEY QUESTIONS : 1. Does Congress have total asset visibility of the DOD IT investment? 2. Is DOD in compliance with laws and Congressional direction? 3. Does DOD have proper controls over its IT investments? 4. Are these investments adequately justified?

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OTHER ISSUE AREA WORK - DIFM

TITLE: HRA 19: DOD WORKING CAPITAL FUND PRICING FOR FISCAL YEAR 1998 (511616)

BACKGROUND : The Nat'l Defense Authorization Act for FY97 directed GAO review Army, Navy, and Air Force Working Capital Fund Prices to be charged to the Funds' customers in FY98 and submit the results of our review not later than 30 days after DOD submits the annual report and budget for the Fvaas to the Congress. This job is being run in conjunc- tion with NSIAD's 709242 (DBOF Pricing)

KEY QUESTIONS : Are the prices to be charged Working Capital Fund customers during FY 1998 reasonable?

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CRITICAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

TITLE: REVIEW OF CUSTOMS' AUTOMATED COMMERCIAL ENVIRONMENT (511104)

BACKGROUND : The Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) is a \$150 million system development project that is planned to support modernization of the Customs Service. A previous GAO report (GAO/AIMD-96-57) and recent follow-up correspondence (GAO/AIMD-97-43R) discussed several general concerns about Customs' automation modernization efforts, including ACE.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) How has Customs defined ACE and what will ACE do? (2) How well is Customs managing its investment in ACE, in the context of the Clinger-Cohen Act?

IMPROVING INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

TITLE: INFORMATION SECURITY PRACTICES AT LEADING ORGANIZATIONS (511105)

BACKGROUND : Generally accepted good security practices are documented in a number of publications, including OMB and NIST guidance. However, recent audits show that agencies are not effectively implementing these practices. This assignment's objective is to identify security implementation practices of leading organizations that could be adopted by federal agencies.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What organizations are recognized as having well designed and implemented security programs? (2) How have these organizations implemented their programs and what do they consider critical success factors? (3) How do the organizations' practices generally compare to federal agency practices and could they be successfully adopted by federal agencies?

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WELFARE SYSTEMS

TITLE: REVIEW OF HHS'S MANAGEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDS SPENT FOR STATE CHILD SUPPORT SYSTEMS (511206)

BACKGROUND : Since the Family Support Act of 1988, the federal government has spent over \$2.2 billion for automated systems to assist states in collecting child support. States were required to develop automated systems by October 1995, but only a few have fully met federal standards. The Chairman is concerned that HHS may not have adequately addressed GAO's recommendations in our 1992 report.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What is the status of state systems, including cost? (2) Has HHS implemented GAO's 1992 recommendations and is HHS providing effective oversight of state systems to ensure that the government is getting a return on its investment?

HIGH RISK SYSTEMS

TITLE: HRA 5: REVIEW OF HCFA'S MTS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (511212)

BACKGROUND : In January 1994, HCFA awarded a contract for a new computer system—the Medicare Transaction System (MTS)—to process Medicare claims. In our November 16, 1995 testimony, we cited problems with the MTS project's schedule, cost/benefit estimates, and software requirements. As a result, GAO was asked to continue to evaluate HCFA's management of MTS.

KEY QUESTIONS : To what extent is HCFA (1) managing the MTS project as an investment, and (2) applying effective system development processes to reduce risks.

TITLE: PILOT TEST AIMD'S YEAR 2000 READINESS GUIDANCE ON SSA'S YEAR 2000 PROGRAM (511215)

BACKGROUND : This is one of a series of GAO jobs on government-wide efforts to address year 2000 (Y2K) date conversion problems. AIMD has developed a draft guide on assessing agencies' readiness to achieve Y2K compliance. We will test this guidance at SSA—considered to be a leader in addressing Y2K problems but also an agency where the impact of a Y2K failure could be dramatic.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Are there opportunities for SSA to improve its Y2K efforts? (2) What lessons learned and best practices identified at SSA can be applied to other federal agencies' Y2K efforts? (3) How can AIMD enhance the usefulness and application of our Y2K readiness guide?

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CRITICAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

TITLE: VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION SYSTEMS MODERNIZATION FOLLOW-UP (511208)

BACKGROUND : In June 1996 testimony, we identified technical and management weaknesses in VBA's systems-modernization effort. As a result, the subcommittee has requested a follow-up review to determine VBA actions taken to address the weaknesses we raised.

KEY QUESTIONS : What actions has VBA taken to address the management and technical weaknesses relating to (1) creating credible business and information resources management plans, (2) developing a much improved investment strategy for selecting and managing information technology projects, and (3) strengthening VBA's technical capability to develop software applications?

IMPROVING INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

TITLE: HRA 6: NSLDS COMPLIANCE ASSESSMENT (511211)

BACKGROUND : The Dept of Education (ED) provides billions of dollars in postsecondary student loans and grants. Although the 1992 Higher Education Act amendments required ED to integrate the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS)—a nationwide grant/recipient data repository-- with other Title IV program participation databases by January 1, 1994, ED has apparently not yet done this.

KEY QUESTIONS : What actions does ED need to take to integrate NSLDS with other Title IV program participation databases?

TITLE: SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION'S MANAGEMENT OF ITS SYSTEMS MODERNIZATION INVESTMENTS (511216)

BACKGROUND : In September 1996, we reported on major challenges that SSA faced in managing its multibillion dollar systems modernization effort, including developing software. As a result, the subcommittee has requested an update on SSA's management of information technology, focusing on SSA's Intelligent Workstation/Local Area Network and efforts to improve its software development process.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What is the status of SSA's implementation of the Intelligent Workstation/Local Area Network (IWS/LAN)? (2) How is SSA's transition to the IWS/LAN infrastructure impacting its field operations? (3) What is the status of efforts to improve SSA's software development process? (4) How is SSA managing its systems modernization investments?

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TRANSPORTATION/TELECOMMUNICATIONS ISSUES

TITLE: REVIEW DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR (DOI) EFFORTS TO REDUCE COSTS BY CONSOLIDATING AND OPTIMIZING TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES (511414)

BACKGROUND : DOI spends over \$60 million annually for telecommunications services--voice and data--that are individually acquired and managed by its component bureaus and service organizations in hundreds of field offices across the U.S. Consolidating these services at high-traffic locations presents opportunities to reduce costs by eliminating unnecessary services.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Has DOI consolidated and optimized its telecommunications services to eliminate unnecessary services and maximize savings?

HIGH RISK SYSTEMS

TITLE: HRA 25: REVIEW OF NWS SYSTEM CAPABILITIES TO SUPPORT WEATHER FORECASTING (511422)

BACKGROUND : The National Weather Service has been modernizing its information systems and work processes to enable improved forecasts while at the same time reducing the number of forecast offices and staff. NWS is required by law to certify that any closed office will not result in a degradation of forecasting service to the area involved.

KEY QUESTIONS : 1) How has NWS implemented its modernization and restructuring process to reduce staff and offices by relying on new automated systems, using Erie, Pennsylvania, as a case example?

TITLE: HRA 22: REVIEW OF FAA'S ATC INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (511534)

BACKGROUND : FAA's high-risk air traffic control (ATC) modernization program is a multi-billion dollar portfolio of information technology (IT) investments. Effectively managing the program requires disciplined selection, control, and evaluation of these investments. FAA's new Acquisition Management System is intended, in part, to improve its investment management processes.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What is FAA's approach to managing its ATC modernization investments? (2) Does FAA have an effective approach for managing these investments? (3) What efforts does FAA have planned or underway to improve its ATC modernization investment management approach?

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HIGH RISK SYSTEMS

TITLE: HRA 22:REVIEW OF FAA'S AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL (ATC) COMPUTER SECURITY (511536)

BACKGROUND : As FAA modernizes its ATC systems it faces an increasing challenge to protect the integrity, confidentiality, and availability of ATC information. Computer security violations could result in expensive nationwide delays and even loss of life. Therefore, effective controls are essential to minimize the risks associated with potential vulnerabilities.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What is FAA's approach to computer security? (2) Is FAA effectively managing computer security for its operational ATC systems? What security measures could be strengthened? (3) Is FAA effectively managing computer security for future ATC modernization systems? What security measures could be strengthened?

IMPROVING INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

TITLE: SBA SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT (511421)

BACKGRUND : The Small Business Improvement Act of 1996 required the Small Business Administration (SBA) to establish a management information system to help identify loan underwriting, recovery, and liquidation problems. The requester asked GAO to review this system development effort and other SBA IRM planning and management activities.

KEY QUESTIONS : 1) Is SBA taking adequate steps to develop a management information system that will meet the provisions of the Small Business Improvement Act of 1996? 2) What is the status of SBA's major IRM planning and management efforts, including the development of strategic business and IRM plans and the resolution of year-2000 problems?