

May 1996

# Administration of Justice Issue Area Plan Fiscal Years 1995-97



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# Foreword

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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 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 32 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 the justice area generally seeks to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the justice system. The principal issues in the justice area are

- 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 drug interdiction mission, fulfilling its trade enforcement mission, and collecting appropriate revenues.

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

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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) 512-3610.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Norman Rabkin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'N' and 'R'.

Norman J. Rabkin  
Director, Administration of  
Justice Issues

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# Contents

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Foreword	1
Table I: Key Issues	4
Table II: Planned Major Work	6
Table III: GAO Contacts	7

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# Table I: Key Issues

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Issue	Significance
<b>Law enforcement:</b> 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, Congress has made federal offenses of many crimes involving drugs and firearms and increased the Department of Justice's (DOJ) and the Department of the Treasury's budgets to investigate and prosecute them. Congress also has made billions of dollars available to states and localities to help them combat violent and other crime in their communities. In addition, the President in his 1996 State of the Union message cited violent crime, gangs, and drugs as major challenges facing America; proposed several strategies; and called for a federal, state, and local partnership to address the crime problem.
<b>Adjudication and corrections:</b> What can be done to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of federal courts and the corrections 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. While 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. The overall costs of our correctional systems, as a result of our "get tough on crime" policies, has become a significant issue.
<b>Immigration:</b> What actions can strengthen the Immigration and Naturalization Service's (INS) ability to enforce immigration laws and enhance service delivery?	Reflecting the increased public concern over increasing legal and 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 of \$2.6 billion for INS was almost a 25-percent increase over 1995. However, INS' past management record raises questions about its ability to properly spend these funds. For example, backlogs of applications continue to grow.
<b>Customs:</b> Is the U.S. Customs Service effectively performing its drug interdiction mission, 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 in a \$100 million modern information system.

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**Table I: Key Issues**

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

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# Table II: Planned Major Work

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Issue	Planned major job starts
<b>Law enforcement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Justice and Treasury policies, procedures, and controls for developing and approving arrest and search warrants</li><li>•Community policing "best practices"</li><li>•Reauthorization of the Office of National Drug Control Policy</li><li>•Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms' efforts to detect criminal sources of firearms</li><li>•Survey of Justice and Treasury law enforcement budgets to identify programs and activities involving potential unnecessary duplication and overlap</li></ul>
<b>Adjudication and corrections</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Follow up on judiciary initiatives to reduce costs and spread best practices</li><li>•The Judiciary's ability to manage growth in supervised release</li><li>•Judiciary implementation of automation fund reforms for fiscal year 1997 reauthorization</li><li>•Issues, such as costs and accountability, involved in prison privatization</li><li>•Trends in federal and state incarceration costs</li></ul>
<b>Immigration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Institutional Hearing Program to deport criminal aliens after incarceration</li><li>•Border enforcement activities at ports of entry</li><li>•Efforts to implement employer sanctions</li><li>•Efforts to establish a verification system to determine employment eligibility</li><li>•Efforts to improve processing of aliens' applications</li></ul>
<b>Customs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Analyze Customs' efforts to interdict drugs, including its air and marine programs.</li></ul>

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# Table III: GAO Contacts

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