

March 1998

Administration of
Justice Issue Area Plan
Fiscal Years 1998-99



Foreword

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 (DOJ), 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

- the efficiency and effectiveness of the federal courts and corrections systems, given the increasing demands placed on them and current budgetary constraints;
- the Immigration and Naturalization Service's (INS) ability to effectively and efficiently enforce immigration laws and enhance service delivery;
- the development, implementation, and evaluation of the federal drug control strategy; and
- federal law enforcement's response, in partnership with state and local governments, to violent crime, terrorism, and other major threats facing society.

In the pages that follow, we describe our planned work for 1998 and 1999 relating to these issues.

Foreword

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) 512-8777.



Norman J. Rabkin
Director, Administration of
Justice Issues

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Table I: Key Issues

Issue	Significance
Courts and judicial administration: How can management of courts and judicial administration be improved?	The increased 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, from 1992 to 1996, immigration cases rose from 4 to 12 percent of all criminal cases, and drug cases account for 26 percent of all criminal cases and 37 percent of all defendants. On the civil side, 1996 bankruptcy filings exceeded 1 million for the first time. Questions are being raised about how efficiently the courts and prisons are operating in light of these challenges.
Immigration: What actions can strengthen enforcement of immigration laws and INS' system of internal controls?	The effects on this country of legal and illegal immigration continue to be of major public and congressional concern. INS estimated that there were about 5 million illegal aliens residing in the United States in October 1996, and their numbers have been increasing at an average rate of 275,000 per year since October 1992. INS' fiscal year 1998 budget is \$3.8 billion, an increase of 153 percent over fiscal year 1993 and 23 percent over fiscal year 1997. In late 1997, the Commission on Immigration Reform reported problems with the management of core functions of the immigration system and recommended a major restructuring of responsibilities within the federal government. INS is under increasing scrutiny from Congress because of questions about INS' ability to effectively manage its resources, accomplish its many priorities, and carry out its new legislative mandates.

Table I: Key Issues

Objectives

- Report periodically to Congress on judiciary initiatives and other changes that could increase efficiency.

Focus of work

- Assess status of selected Judicial Conference recommendations for efficiency.
- Assess bankruptcy workload and the judiciary's efforts to match resource distribution to workload.
- Assess the Judiciary's determination of the need for new judgeships.

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- Identify ways to improve immigration enforcement efforts.
 - Identify ways INS can improve internal controls over its programs.

- Assess enforcement efforts to reduce illegal alien employment.
- Assess the implementation and results of expedited procedures to remove aliens who attempt to enter the country without proper documents.
- Assess the performance of the criminal alien removal program.
- Review aspects of INS' Citizenship USA program.

(continued)

Table I: Key Issues

Issue	Significance
Drug control and money laundering: How are federal efforts to control illegal drugs and money laundering being developed, implemented, and evaluated?	Federal drug control efforts have been a continuing public policy concern. The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) is responsible for developing and coordinating the implementation of a national drug control strategy. The current strategy calls for \$16 billion in federal funding and involves over 50 federal agencies, including the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Customs Service, as well as state and local governments, nongovernmental groups, and the media. Congress has enacted major anti-crime bills with drug-related provisions that enhanced penalties, provided new funding for drug control initiatives, and sought to improve coordination of federal drug control activities. However, despite long-standing efforts and expenditures of billions of dollars, interdicting illegal drugs at the borders of the United States and eliminating them from the streets remain problems. In addition, drug trafficking in this country accounts for an estimated \$100 billion to \$300 billion in money laundering activities each year.
Law enforcement and related issues: How can federal law enforcement, working with state and local governments, better respond to crime?	Crime is one of the foremost concerns of the American public. To address this concern, Congress has, among other initiatives (1) made many crimes, including those involving firearms, federal offenses and (2) increased the budgets of DOJ and the Department of the Treasury to investigate and prosecute them. Congress also has made billions of dollars available to states and localities to help them prevent and combat violent crime, drug trafficking gangs, and juvenile delinquency in their communities. In the aftermath of the World Trade Center and Oklahoma City Federal Building bombings, Congress has further enhanced the authority of federal agencies to address the increasing threat of domestic and international terrorism and has increased funding to support counterterrorism activities. Other federal law enforcement initiatives include white collar crime, including health care fraud, financial crimes, enforcing civil rights laws, and maximizing use of asset seizure and forfeiture authority.

Table I: Key Issues

Objectives	Focus of work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess federal progress in implementing certain drug control initiatives, including interdiction, investigative, and intelligence efforts.• Determine the effectiveness of efforts to curb money laundering activities.• Determine the effectiveness of federal drug control efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess the strategy for measuring the performance of federal drug control agencies.• Evaluate DEA's and Customs' drug interdiction and investigative efforts.• Evaluate federal law enforcement intelligence and anti-money laundering activities in support of drug control efforts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess federal progress in implementing certain major crime control initiatives and enforcement programs.• Review federal implementation and states' use of selected categorical grants for crime control to provide information on their outcomes and impacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess progress of federal firearms control efforts.• Assess FBI's role in carrying out the President's counterterrorism strategy.• For specific programs and activities, such as juvenile delinquency, assess federal law enforcement agencies' progress in implementing legislatively required plans and in establishing goals and performance measures.• Assess law enforcement agencies' management of asset forfeiture authority.

Table II: Planned Major Work

Issue	Planned major job starts
Courts and judicial administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess implementation of judiciary initiatives with the most promise for reducing costs. • Assess judiciary's management of its rising bankruptcy workload.
Immigration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review INS' efforts to curb the employment of unauthorized workers. • Evaluate the results of INS' efforts to identify and remove imprisoned aliens. • Assess the internal controls over aliens applying for benefits, including citizenship. • Assess proposals to restructure the federal immigration system.
Drug control and money laundering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the status of ONDCP's and federal drug control agencies' development of performance measures and compliance with requirements of the Government Performance and Results Act. • Assess coordination and use of intelligence in support of Southwest border drug interdiction and enforcement efforts. • Analyze Customs' allocation of resources for its importing and passenger core business processes at selected geographic locations. • Assess Customs' air interdiction program and its effect on drug seizures.
Law enforcement and related issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the FBI's development and use of terrorist threat and risk assessments. • Review implementation of the "instant check" system required by the Brady Act. • Review the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms' efforts to detect criminal sources of firearms. • Review Justice and Treasury management of seized property.

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