

## General Government Division

July 6, 1992

Sheriff Sherman Block  
Los Angeles County  
Sheriff's Department  
211 W. Temple Street  
Los Angeles, California 90012



147042

Dear Sheriff Block:

On June 26, 1992, we testified before the Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights, House Committee on the Judiciary on the Gang Reporting, Evaluation, and Tracking (GREAT) system and its implications for a national gang information network (GAO/GGD-92-52). Our work was done at the request of the Chairman of the Subcommittee. We were asked to examine various aspects of the GREAT system, its records, and its controls and safeguards. While we found that most of GREAT's controls and safeguards appeared to be generally adequate, we identified certain issues that you may want to consider to increase the accountability and integrity of the system.

First, we found that requests for gang member information from law enforcement agencies that were not a part of the system frequently were not being recorded by officers responding to such requests. We believe that recording such off-line requests provides an audit trail that is important for accountability by protecting against possible misuse of the disseminated information. We discussed this matter with Sergeant Wes McBride, the Coordinator for GREAT, who agreed with our finding. He said that he would follow up with the designer of the GREAT software to determine whether off-line requests could be recorded more efficiently and effectively by making an entry directly on the gang member record. We discuss this issue in more detail on page 4 of our testimony.

Second, GREAT has never been audited. We believe that independent audits to assure that system controls and safeguards are in place and functioning as intended are essential for establishing and maintaining a system's integrity. We understand that the primary reason the GREAT system has never been audited is lack of funding. We can

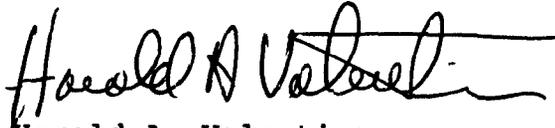
GAO/GGD-92-19R  
L.A. County Sheriff's Gang Tracking System

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appreciate the problem that local jurisdictions face in times of fiscal distress. However, we would hope that were funds to become available, you would consider addressing this issue. Given the type and importance of information in the system, assuring its integrity is critical. This finding is discussed in greater detail on page 5 of our testimony.

In closing, I wish to express our appreciation to you and the officers in your Department who provided the utmost cooperation and assistance to our effort. I particularly would like to note the cooperation and patience of Sergeant Wes McBride. If you or your staff have any questions regarding our work, please contact me or Mr. Dan Harris, Assistant Director, on (202) 566-0026.

Sincerely yours,



Harold A. Valentine  
Associate Director, Administration  
of Justice Issues

cc: Lt. Mike Sabidan  
Sgt. Wes McBride