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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON D C 20548

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MAR 7 1973

The Honorable Birch Bayh, Chairman
Subcommittee on the District of Columbia
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman.

In a letter dated July 27, 1972, Senator Daniel K. Inouye, your predecessor, requested that we assist the Subcommittee in determining (1) what additional personnel the Department of Corrections, District of Columbia Government, will need to staff the new correctional facilities planned for construction at Lorton, Virginia, and (2) what effect the new facilities will have on the personnel requirements of other District-operated detention facilities. Your office later agreed that, because the proposed construction at Lorton has been delayed and because the District did not plan to request funds to staff new facilities in fiscal year 1974, we should not examine personnel requirements at this time but should report on our review of estimates of future inmate population at Lorton and the need for additional facilities.

The District's estimate of future inmate population at Lorton, used in the appropriation hearings to justify the construction program, was overstated and the anticipated increases in the number of inmates have not materialized. We believe, therefore, that not all the proposed facilities may be needed at this time.

When we advised the Commissioner of the District of Columbia of our questions concerning the reasonableness of the estimates of future inmate population, he suspended plans to award contracts for constructing new facilities at Lorton until a supportable estimate was developed.

LORTON EXPANSION PROGRAM

The existing detention facilities at Lorton include a correctional complex, a minimum security unit, and two youth

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centers. The correctional complex has a maximum security unit which houses adult male felons needing close supervision and a medium security unit which houses adult male felons requiring less supervision. The minimum security unit houses adult male misdemeanants and felons requiring minimum security and serves as a prerelease unit. The two youth centers treat and train young male offenders who were committed under the Federal Youth Corrections Act (18 U.S.C. 5005) and who, in the opinion of the courts, have not developed into professional criminals.

In the 1972 second supplemental budget, the District requested \$67.3 million to build 4 new detention facilities at Lorton to house 2,000 additional inmates--3 medium security facilities to house 500 adult men each and 1 facility to house 500 youths. The Congress subsequently authorized the District to borrow \$65.2 million to construct the new facilities. The District expected some of these facilities to be operational in fiscal year 1974.

The District, using \$19,400 of its own funds and \$263,000 of grant funds from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, Department of Justice, awarded a contract in January 1972 for development of a master plan for the new facilities. On August 21, 1972, the contractor submitted the master plan to the District.

The master plan proposed construction of 7 new facilities to house 2,000 additional inmates as follows

- Three facilities each with a capacity for 400 adult men.
- Three facilities each with a capacity for 200 youths.
- One facility with a capacity for 200 women.

The contractor estimated that the expansion would cost \$63.1 million.

District officials advised us that about \$400,000 had been obligated for preconstruction services, that no contracts for architectural services had been awarded, and that it was highly unlikely that any new facilities would be operational in fiscal year 1974. They advised us also that the District did not plan to request, in the fiscal year 1974 budget, funds to staff any of the new facilities.

In the 1972 second supplemental appropriation, the Congress also authorized the District to borrow \$2.4 million for expanding Youth Center 2 to house an additional 150 inmates and for constructing supporting projects. Plans for expanding the Center have been delayed and the District does not expect to request, in the fiscal year 1974 budget, funds to staff this facility.

Other correctional facilities operated by, and located in, the District are the D.C. Jail and the Women's Detention Center, which house men and women, respectively, awaiting trial or sentencing, and 12 community correctional centers, which provide housing and social services to court-assigned misdemeanants, offenders on bail, and inmates prior to being placed on parole.

The District plans to construct a new detention facility in the District at an estimated cost of about \$38 million, which will replace the D.C. Jail and the Women's Detention Center. This facility is being designed. The District expects construction to start in February 1974 and to be completed in fiscal year 1976.

INMATE POPULATION ESTIMATES

When justifying the \$67.3 million Lorton expansion program at appropriation hearings in March 1972, the District estimated that the inmate population at Lorton would increase by about 2,800 by June 30, 1973.

In January 1972, when the budget justification was prepared, the Lorton inmate population was 2,393. The population

increased to a peak of about 2,650 by August 1972, started to decline after that, and, as of January 8, 1973, was 2,434--an increase of only 41 since January 1972.

In December 1970 a task force appointed by the Deputy Commissioner established a rated capacity for each correctional facility at Lorton. The following tabulation compares the rated capacities, which we adjusted to reflect later changes in capacity, with the actual inmate population on January 8, 1973, the latest count available at the time of our review.

<u>Facility</u>	<u>Inmate population 1-8-73</u>	<u>Adjusted rated capacity</u>	<u>Over or (under) capacity</u>
Maximum security	315	291	24
Medium security	1,374	1,074	300
Minimum security	192	300	(108)
Youth Center 1	347	376	(29)
Youth Center 2	<u>206</u>	<u>250</u>	(44)
Total	<u>2,434</u>	<u>2,291</u>	

We did not evaluate the inmate population estimate used in the budget justification because it was subsequently revised. The latest available estimate, which was developed by the Department of Corrections in October 1972, as a working estimate, showed that the inmate population would be about 3,500 by June 30, 1973, and would level off at about 4,000 by June 1975. If the inmate population reaches 3,500 by June 30, 1973, there will be an increase of about 1,100 since January 1972, compared to the increase of about 2,800 during that period as anticipated in the budget justification. However, the inmate population had been generally declining during the past several months and was only about 2,400 as of January 8, 1973.

Our review of the latest estimate indicated that it may have been significantly overstated and raised doubts on the

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need at this time for all of the detention facilities planned for construction at Lorton. For example, at the time the estimate was made, it was expected that there would be about 4,200 felony indictments a year, however, later information showed that felony indictments would total only 3,800 a year.

Because the award of construction contracts was imminent, and as agreed to by your office, we met with the Commissioner and his staff on November 20, 1972, and advised him of our questions concerning the reasonableness of the estimates of future inmate population at Lorton. He indicated that the District would develop reasonable and supportable estimates before awarding contracts for any new facilities at Lorton.

The Commissioner appointed a task force to develop the new estimate of future inmate population. The preliminary estimate indicates that the number of Lorton inmates may be about 2,500 at June 30, 1973, and may level off in the near future at about 1,925, which would be less than the adjusted rated capacity of the existing facilities.

In commenting on our draft report, the Assistant Director for Administration, Department of Corrections, in a letter dated February 9, 1973, said that due to a lack of a common definition of terms, interpretation of figures can often be the subject of some differences of opinion but that, in general, the Department had found little fault with the facts presented in the report.

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We do not plan to further distribute this report unless you agree or publicly announce its contents.

Sincerely yours,



Comptroller General
of the United States