United States General Accounting Office

GAO

Report to Congressional Requesters

December 1994

# SECURITY PROTECTION

## Costs of Services Provided for Selected Cabinet Officials

GAO/GGD-95-50

GAO

**United States**
**General Accounting Office**
**Washington, D.C. 20548**

**General Government Division**

B-258939

December 30, 1994

Congressional requesters

On July 22, 1994, Congressman Jack Kingston and 104 other members of the House of Representatives asked that we review matters relating to security protection for selected cabinet department officials. They asked us to determine who receives security protection at 10 of the 14 cabinet-level departments, why they receive protection, the costs of providing such protection, whether security personnel were performing personal duties for the officials, and whether the security personnel had received training.[1]

Following that request, Appropriations Conference Report 103-733, dated September 20, 1994, directed us to review the need for security protection for cabinet officials. Staff of the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies agreed to accept the scope and methodology of work for the July 22 request but asked that we also obtain some additional cost data for the departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services. We will provide that information in a separate report. Appendix I contains a complete list of the requesters.

Congressional interest in security matters resulted from news accounts that questioned the need to protect cabinet officials who may not be widely recognized by the public. The news media also reported that security personnel who protect cabinet officials sometimes performed what might be considered as personal duties for the officials, such as handling their baggage at airports.

## Results in Brief

From October 1991 through June 1994, security protection was provided on at least 1 occasion to each of the cabinet-level secretaries of the 10 departments in our review. While one department protected an official only once during that period, other departments provided security protection more frequently. The extent and frequency of protection varied significantly from department to department but generally included protecting the secretaries while they worked in their offices, attended public events, and traveled on official business. Security officials told us that the secretaries of two departments received protection services while on personal business on five occasions. In addition to the cabinet

[1]The departments were Agriculture, Commerce, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Labor, Transportation, and Veterans Affairs.

secretaries, two departments provided occasional protection for their deputy secretaries, and another department once provided temporary protection to another high-level official in the department who had been threatened.

We asked the 10 departments to provide the costs of providing security protection from October 1991 to June 1994, including salaries and overtime of security personnel, travel, special executive protection training, and other expenses such as equipment and residential security improvements. The 10 departments reported they spent a total of $1.5 million to protect officials in fiscal year 1992, $1.6 million in fiscal year 1993, and $2 million for the first 9 months of fiscal year 1994. At individual departments, the costs of security protection for fiscal year 1992 ranged from zero at one department to $409,842 at another. For fiscal year 1993, costs ranged from $817 at one department to $379,424 at another; and costs for the first 9 months of fiscal year 1994 ranged from zero at one department to $455,721 at another.

At three departments, the costs of security protection during the first 9 months of fiscal year 1994 increased substantially compared to fiscal year 1992 spending. Security officials at the three departments said that spending increased because (1) policies changed and had become more controversial, generating more threats against officials; (2) the officials traveled more than their predecessors; and (3) the secretary of one department was much more recognizable to the public than the department's previous secretaries. The fiscal year 1994 costs for protection at the other seven departments did not change significantly from fiscal year 1992.

Although some security personnel said that the secretaries of their departments were recognized by the general public, they justified the need for providing security protection to the officials primarily because of potential threats from individuals who were (1) affected by the policies and issues being handled by the department or (2) apparently suffering from mental problems. Security personnel at all 10 departments provided us with information about threats against officials; 6 provided information on specific death threats.

Security protection was provided by the Office of Inspectors General at five departments and security or police officers at the other five departments. Security officials at all 10 departments reported that their agents had attended or were scheduled to attend executive protection

training courses offered by law enforcement agencies such as the U.S. Secret Service.

None of the departments' security personnel reported using a firearm or making an arrest to protect officials during the review period. However, some reported limited use of physical intervention. Further, security personnel stressed that effective security protection serves as a deterrent and that without protection, some physical harm may have been inflicted on officials.

Although some agents said they occasionally carried baggage or checked officials through hotels, the agents said they did so because they were the only staff traveling with officials or because they considered such duties to be security related.

## Scope and Methodology

We interviewed security officials and collected data relating to security protection provided to officials from October 1991 to June 1994 for 10 cabinet-level departments: (1) Agriculture, (2) Commerce, (3) Education, (4) Energy, (5) Health and Human Services, (6) Housing and Urban Development, (7) Interior, (8) Labor, (9) Transportation, and (10) Veterans Affairs. We did not obtain data from the departments of Defense, Justice, State, and Treasury.

At each of the 10 departments, we reviewed security policies and information on the costs of providing protection during the period of our review, including salaries and overtime, travel, special executive protection training, and other expenses such as equipment and residential security improvements. We asked the departments to provide costs in these categories, based on records of actual costs or estimates if the actual cost data were not maintained. Departments that did not employ full-time security personnel furnished prorated portions of agents' salaries based on timekeeping records or estimates of the amount of time spent on protection. Travel expenses included per diem and transportation expenses incurred by security personnel while protecting officials on travel. Training costs included tuition and related travel expenses for specialized, executive protection courses. Costs for residential security improvements consisted of expenses incurred for the installation of security systems and monitoring. Departments also reported other costs for security equipment acquired during the period, such as radios and ammunition, which we included. We did not verify the accuracy of the cost information provided.

At all 10 departments, we interviewed the officials in charge of providing security protection. We also interviewed a judgmental sample of the security agents at the four departments with the highest expenditures for protection to inquire whether the agents performed personal duties for officials and whether the agents had received training. At each of the four departments, we interviewed three of the agents who spent the most time protecting officials. Our review was not designed to determine whether the departments were providing officials with the appropriate levels of protection.

We also reviewed information on who was protected, the nature and frequency of threats made against officials, and when and how protection was provided. In this report, we have not identified particular departments or disclosed the details of when and how security was provided to particular officials. Security officials expressed concern that public disclosure of specific information regarding the protection provided at individual departments might endanger the officials. We agreed with their concerns.

We did our work from August 1994 to November 1994 in Washington, D.C., in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. We discussed a draft of this report with the officials in charge of security protection at each department and incorporated their comments where appropriate.

## Background

News accounts of cabinet officials' security protection questioned whether cabinet-level officials, who often are not widely recognized by the public, should be protected at all. The news reports also asserted that bodyguards were being used for nonprotective purposes, such as providing emergency car washes, speeding bags through airports, and escorting officials to movie theaters.

Four departments in our review employed security personnel whose full-time duties were to protect officials.[2] Of those four departments with full-time security staff, one department employed four full-time security agents,[3] two employed three full-time security agents, and another employed one full-time agent. The other six departments without a

[2]We defined full-time security staff as those employees who spent at least 90 percent of their time providing security to officials.

[3]This department plans to reduce the security detail to three agents after a current threatening situation is resolved.

full-time protection detail had agents who provided protective services as a collateral duty to other work.

Protection was provided by personnel from the Office of Inspectors General at 5 of the 10 departments and by security and police officers at the other 5 departments. Protection was provided primarily by criminal investigators/special agents at six departments, security specialists at three departments, and police officers at one department. The departments also used weapons couriers, investigators, security protection specialists, a security program analyst, and a special assistant to provide protection.

The departments in our review cited various sources as the basis for their legal authority to provide security protection to cabinet officials. These included the Inspector General Act of 1978, several Comptroller General decisions,[4] regulations authorizing the U.S. Marshals Service to deputize other federal officers to perform the functions of a deputy U.S. Marshal,[5] and a White House policy adopted in the early 1970s that authorized departments to provide and maintain a force to protect cabinet officials. Further, we note that underlying the cited authorities is 18 U.S.C. 351, which provides that it is a federal offense to assault, kidnap, or kill various government officials, including specified cabinet officials.

## Who Receives Protection

From October 1991 through June 1994, security protection was provided on at least 1 occasion to each of the cabinet-level secretaries of the 10 departments in our review. While one department protected an official only once during the review period, other departments provided security protection more frequently. The extent and frequency of protection varied significantly from department to department, but generally included protecting the secretaries while they worked in their offices, attended public events, and traveled on official business. Security officials told us that the secretaries of two departments received protection services while on personal business on five occasions. In addition to the cabinet secretaries, two departments provided occasional, short-term protection for their deputy secretaries, and another department once provided short-term protection to another high-level official in the department who had been threatened.

[4] 54 Comp. Gen. 624, 628-29 (1975) and 55 Comp. Gen. 578, 580-81 (1975).

[5] 28 CFR 0.112.

## Basis for Security Protection

Security personnel at the 10 departments justified the need for protection on the basis of potential threats to officials. All 10 departments provided documentation of incidents that had posed or could pose threats to officials' safety, such as the receipt of threats or visits to areas where people were hostile to the departments' decisions or policies.

Security personnel at all 10 departments provided information showing implied threats to the safety of officials. Although some security personnel said that the secretaries of their departments were recognized by the general public, they justified providing security protection to the officials primarily on the basis of potential threats from individuals who were (1) affected by the policies and issues being handled by the department or (2) apparently suffering from mental problems. Further, security officials at 6 of the 10 departments provided information on specific death threats[6] that were made against officials from October 1991 to June 1994. In cases where threats were considered sufficiently serious, security personnel sought the assistance of other law enforcement entities to investigate them.

Security personnel said that their duties included preventing potentially dangerous individuals from entering the secretaries' offices. Five departments reported instances when potentially dangerous individuals attempted to enter the offices or buildings where they work. Security personnel said the uninvited visitors included an individual who sent gifts and dozens of letters of an admiring nature to an official, an individual who stalked an official, and members of a protest group.

Security personnel at the department reporting the most threats against an official indicated that they identified 18 individuals, the majority of whom had records of violent behavior or mental health problems, who had attempted to contact the secretary. The secretary of that department also had received two specific death threats.

Security officials said that providing security to officials when traveling overseas is justified because officials may be targets of those who disagree with U.S. policies. Further, security officials said that the need for protection is greater at public events, particularly where protesters are likely to be present or controversial issues will be raised.

[6]We defined "specific death threat" as one where a specific intent had been expressed to kill a particular official.

Security personnel stressed the need for protection when officials visit geographic areas most affected by the departments' policies. Security officials also said that security protection is needed for cabinet secretaries because they are in the line of presidential succession.

None of the departments' security staffs said they had to use a firearm or make an arrest to protect officials during our review period. However, security personnel reported incidents involving limited physical intervention to protect officials, such as crowd control. Further, officials reported that other law enforcement agencies had taken action against individuals making threats against department officials. They also said that effective security protection serves as a deterrent and that without protection, physical harm may be inflicted on officials.

## Costs of Providing Protection

We asked officials to provide data on the costs of providing protection during the period of our review, including (1) salaries and overtime of security personnel; (2) travel associated with providing security; (3) special protection training; and (4) any other expenses associated with providing security, such as equipment and residential security improvements.

The 10 departments in our review spent a total of $1.5 million on protection in fiscal year 1992, $1.6 million in fiscal year 1993, and $2 million for the first 9 months of fiscal year 1994, as shown in tables 1, 2, and 3. At individual departments, the costs of security protection for fiscal year 1992 ranged from zero at one department to $409,842 at another. For fiscal year 1993, costs ranged from $817 at one department to $379,424 at another. Costs for fiscal year 1994 (through June 1994) ranged from zero at one department to $455,721 at another.

**Table 1: Costs of Security Protection at 10 Departments During Fiscal Year 1992**

| Category of security costs | Department A[a] | Department B[b] | Department C | Department D |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personnel | $294,670 | $41,364 | $241,064 | $315,356 |
| Travel | 114,000 | 33,320 | 108,877 | 87,607 |
| Special training | 0 | 1,000 | 0 | 632 |
| Other | 1,172 | 10,740 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | **$409,842** | **$86,424** | **$349,941** | **$403,595** |

| Department E | Department F | Department G | Department H | Department I[c] | Department J[d] | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| $5,940 | $20,542 | $82,260 | $51,836 | $12,300 | $0 | |
| 8,686 | 18,095 | 48,313 | 9,468 | 760 | 0 | |
| 0 | 0 | 8,574 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| **$14,626** | **$38,637** | **$139,147** | **$61,304** | **$13,060** | **$0** | **$1,516,576** |

Note 1: Travel costs include per diem and transportation expenses incurred by security personnel while protecting officials who are traveling outside of Washington, D.C.

Note 2: Training costs include tuition and related travel expenses for specialized, executive protection courses.

[a]"Other" costs for department A include installation of residential security system and monitoring.

[b]Department B's special training and other costs are annual estimates. "Other" costs are for Department B's estimated prorated costs of a vehicle lease, ammunition, and rental and maintenance of radios, cellular phones, and pagers. The Department's security personnel said the vehicle and communications equipment are also used for other security purposes, and provided the estimated time they were devoted to protecting the Secretary.

[c]Department I's personnel costs are based on the department's estimate that its security personnel spent 2.5 percent of their time protecting officials.

[d]Department J reported that it did not expend any funds on security protection during fiscal year 1992 because it did not protect any officials that year.

Source: Data provided by the departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Labor, Transportation, and Veterans Affairs.

**Table 2: Costs of Security Protection at 10 Departments During Fiscal Year 1993**

| Category of security costs | Department A[a] | Department B[b] | Department C | Department D |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personnel | $266,010 | $159,708 | $237,079 | $251,227 |
| Travel | 75,119 | 101,735 | 60,854 | 127,565 |
| Special training | 2,113 | 1,000 | 0 | 632 |
| Other | 4,807 | 10,740 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | **$348,049** | **$273,183** | **$297,933** | **$379,424** |

| Department E | Department F | Department G | Department H | Department I[c] | Department J | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| $44,187 | $16,740 | $76,082 | $13,166 | $14,300 | $681 | |
| 16,466 | 10,093 | 32,537 | 2,475 | 840 | 136 | |
| 22,978 | 0 | 5,212 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| **$83,631** | **$26,833** | **$113,831** | **$15,641** | **$15,140** | **$817** | **$1,554,482** |

Note 1: Travel costs include per diem and transportation expenses incurred by security personnel while protecting officials who are traveling outside of Washington, D.C.

Note 2: Training costs include tuition and related travel expenses for specialized, executive protection courses.

[a]"Other" costs for department A include installation of residential security system and monitoring.

[b]Department B's special training and other costs are annual estimates. "Other" costs are for Department B's estimated prorated costs of a vehicle lease, ammunition, and rental and maintenance of radios, cellular phones, and pagers. The Department's security personnel said the vehicle and communications equipment are also used for other security purposes, and provided the estimated time they were devoted to protecting the Secretary.

[c]Department I's personnel costs are based on the department's estimate that its security personnel spent 2.5 percent of their time protecting officials.

Source: Data provided by the departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Labor, Transportation, and Veterans Affairs.

**Table 3: Costs of Security Protection at 10 Departments During the First 9 Months of Fiscal Year 1994**

| Category of security costs | Department A[a] | Department B[b] | Department C | Department D |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personnel | $271,950 | $249,032 | $280,432 | $258,353 |
| Travel | 182,870 | 165,616 | 80,617 | 91,339 |
| Special training | 691 | 750 | 39,500 | 0 |
| Other | 210 | 8,055 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | **$455,721** | **$423,453** | **$400,549** | **$349,692** |

| Department E | Department F | Department G | Department H | Department I[c] | Department J[d] | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| $94,158 | $35,660 | $52,117 | $33,563 | $11,100 | $0 | |
| 66,510 | 40,389 | 7,065 | 13,391 | 4,600 | 0 | |
| 0 | 0 | 4,000 | 994 | 0 | 0 | |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| **$160,668** | **$76,049** | **$63,182** | **$47,948** | **$15,700** | **$0** | **$1,992,962** |

Note 1: Travel costs include per diem and transportation expenses incurred by security personnel while protecting officials who are traveling outside of Washington, D.C.

Note 2: Training costs include tuition and related travel expenses for specialized, executive protection courses.

[a]"Other" costs for department A include installation of residential security system and monitoring.

[b]Department B's special training and other costs are annual estimates. "Other" costs are for Department B's estimated prorated costs of a vehicle lease, ammunition, and rental and maintenance of radios, cellular phones, and pagers. The Department's security personnel said the vehicle and communications equipment are also used for other security purposes, and provided the estimated time they were devoted to protecting the Secretary. Fiscal year 1994 costs are prorated for 9 months.

[c]Department I's personnel costs are based on the department's estimate that its security personnel spent 2.5 percent of their time protecting officials. 1994 costs are prorated for 9 months.

[d]Department J reported that it did not expend any funds on security protection during the first 9 months of fiscal year 1994 because it did not protect any officials during that period.

Source: Data provided by the departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Labor, Transportation, and Veterans Affairs.

The costs of security protection during the first 9 months of fiscal year 1994 increased substantially compared to fiscal year 1992 at three departments. At one department, spending increased from $38,637 to $76,049, or 97 percent. At another department spending increased from $93,584 to $428,823, or 358 percent, and at the third department, spending increased from $14,626 to $160,668, or 999 percent. Security officials said that spending increased because (1) departmental policies changed and had become more controversial, generating more threats against officials; (2) the officials traveled more than their predecessors; and (3) the secretary of one department was much more recognizable to the public than the previous secretaries of that department. The fiscal year 1994 costs for protection at the other seven departments did not change significantly from fiscal year 1992.

## Personal Duties

We interviewed agents at the four departments that spent the most money on protection to determine whether the agents performed any duties for officials that might be considered personal, as suggested by some news media reports.

All of the agents we interviewed denied performing or being asked to perform any personal duties for officials. Agents at three departments said they had occasionally carried an official's baggage while on a trip but said they did so as a courtesy or because they considered the task to be security related. Further, agents said that when they travel with officials, they may be the only staff available to perform certain duties, such as checking an official into a hotel. In addition to providing physical protection for officials, security agents said they made security plans for trips and investigated threatening situations. Agents at two departments also said that they drove officials to official events.

## Training

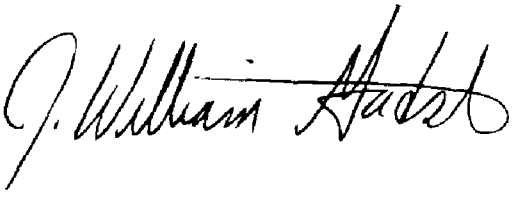
All 10 departments reported that their agents were scheduled to attend or had received executive protection training through courses offered by their own departments or other law enforcement agencies, such as the U.S. Secret Service. At the four departments where we interviewed agents, two agents reported that they had not received any executive protection training, but said they had recently joined the detail and were scheduled to attend training. One of the agents was a police officer for 18 years, and the other agent said that he had previous security experience with the military. The other 10 agents we interviewed said they received executive protection training from various sources, including their own departments, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, the U.S. Secret Service, the State Department, and the U.S. Marshals Service.

## Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to security officials at the 10 departments to review its accuracy and how we discussed information regarding the protection provided. Security officials at the departments of Agriculture, Energy, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Labor, and Veterans Affairs, and an Executive Officer for the Secretary of Education said that the facts were accurately presented in the report. The Security Director at the Department of Energy also made some minor clarifications, which we incorporated in the report. Officials from the departments of Commerce, Interior, and Transportation made no comments on the report.

Copies of this report will be distributed to the requesters and interested congressional committees. Copies will also be made available to others upon request.

If you have any questions about this report, please call me on (202) 512-8387. Major contributors to this report are included in appendix II.



J. William Gadsby
Director, Government Business
Operations Issues

# List of Requesters

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Arlen Specter, Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Neal Smith, Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives

The Honorable John Porter, Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives

The Honorable Wayne Allard
The Honorable Richard Armey
The Honorable Cass Ballenger
The Honorable Bill Barrett
The Honorable Douglas K. Bereuter
The Honorable Michael Bilirakis
The Honorable Peter I. Blute
The Honorable John A. Boehner
The Honorable Henry Bonilla
The Honorable Jim Bunning
The Honorable Dan Burton
The Honorable Steve Buyer
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The Honorable Michael N. Castle
The Honorable William F. Clinger Jr.
The Honorable Mac Collins
The Honorable Jim Cooper

The Honorable Michael D. Crapo
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The Honorable Vern Ehlers
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The Honorable Tillie Fowler
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The Honorable Robert W. Goodlatte
The Honorable Porter J. Goss
The Honorable Rod Grams
The Honorable Jim Greenwood
The Honorable Steven Gunderson
The Honorable Melton D. Hancock
The Honorable James V. Hansen
The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
The Honorable Joel Hefley
The Honorable Wally Herger
The Honorable David L. Hobson
The Honorable Peter Hoekstra
The Honorable Martin R. Hoke
The Honorable Steve Horn
The Honorable Michael Huffington
The Honorable Duncan Hunter
The Honorable Tim Hutchinson
The Honorable Henry J. Hyde
The Honorable Bob Inglis
The Honorable James M. Inhofe
The Honorable Ernest Jim Istook
The Honorable Nancy L. Johnson
The Honorable John R. Kasich

The Honorable Jack Kingston
The Honorable Gerald D. Kleczka[7]
The Honorable Scott Klug
The Honorable Joe Knollenberg
The Honorable Rick A. Lazio
The Honorable Jerry Lewis
The Honorable Ron Lewis
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The Honorable Joe Skeen
The Honorable Christopher H. Smith
The Honorable Lamar Smith
The Honorable Floyd Spence
The Honorable Cliff Stearns
The Honorable James M. Talent
The Honorable Craig Thomas

[7]In a August 12, 1994, letter, Rep. Gerald Kleczka asked to be added as a corequester to the July 22, 1994, request from Rep. Kingston and 104 other signatories.

The Honorable William M. Thomas
The Honorable Peter G. Torkildsen
The Honorable Fred Upton
The Honorable James T. Walsh
The Honorable Donald E. Young
The Honorable Bill Zeliff
The Honorable Dick Zimmer

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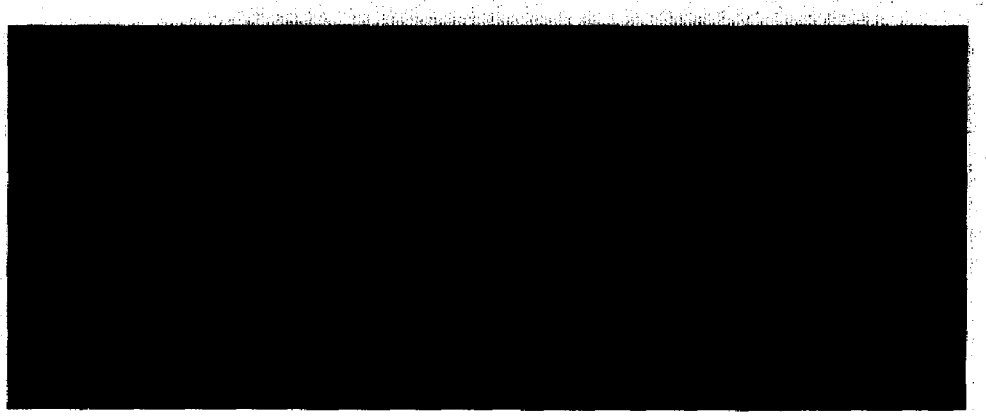
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