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Reports and Testimony: November 1990

Highlights

Voting

The steady decline in U.S. voter turnout since 1960 could probably be reversed by replacing cumbersome registration and voting procedures with a system of automatic registration and all-mail balloting. Page 14.

Food Safety

More data and better test methods are needed before the Food and Drug Administration can assure consumers that unsafe animal drug residues are not contaminating the nation's milk supply. Page 2.

International Trade

Despite a "high risk" credit rating by the Agriculture Department and evidence of human rights violations, Iraq has received billions of dollars in crop export guarantees since 1983 because the U.S. apparently wanted to build a strategic and trade relationship with Baghdad. Page 17.

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Reports and Testimony: November 1990

Agriculture and Food

Food Safety and Quality: FDA Surveys Not Adequate to Demonstrate Safety of Milk Supply

GAO/RCED-91-26, Nov. 1 (40 pages).

The Food and Drug Administration is responsible for ensuring the safety of billions of gallons of milk produced in the United States each year. Yet GAO concludes that because of limitations in the survey methodology FDA uses in testing the milk supply, the nation's milk cannot be assumed to be free from unsafe animal drug residues like antibiotics. Specifically, FDA's surveys are not statistically valid and present—at best—"snapshots in time" of a small number of milk samples tested for the presence of a small number of drug residues. However, collectively, because the surveys show instances of drug residues in milk, they suggest the need for more thorough examination to identify the types and amounts of animal drug residues present. Even if the surveys had been statistically valid, the results would still be of limited use because FDA lacks test methods to detect and confirm many drugs believed to be used in dairy cows, and some of FDA's methods cannot detect drug residues at the concern level set for human consumption. GAO's review also raises questions about the adequacy of routine monitoring of the milk supply by FDA and cooperating state agencies, FDA's "extra-label use" policy that permits the use of drugs not specifically approved for dairy cows, and the setting of health concern levels for unapproved drugs.

Budget and Spending

Impoundments: Information on Proposed Deferrals of Security Assistance and Emergency Refugee Funds

GAO/OGC-91-2, Nov. 20 (five pages).

On October 4, 1990, the President submitted to Congress his first special impoundment message for fiscal year 1991. This message reports seven deferrals of budget authority relating to international security assistance, U.S. Forest Service activities, Department of Defense wildlife conservation efforts, Social Security Administration administrative expenses, emergency refugee programs, and Federal Aviation Administration activities. GAO reviewed these deferrals and found them to be in accordance with the Impoundment Control Act.

Business, Industry, and Consumers

Coast Guard: Anti-Reflagging Act Has Mixed Impact on U.S. Fishing and Ship Rebuilding

GAO/RCED-91-27, Oct. 25 (18 pages).

GAO evaluated the effects of the Commercial Fishing Industry Anti-Reflagging Act of 1987, which was intended to ensure control by Americans of the U.S. fishing industry in U.S. coastal waters. However, GAO found that because of a Coast Guard interpretation of the act's grandfather exemptions for ships licensed before July 28, 1987, the act has done little to increase American control of the U.S. fishing industry. The Coast Guard believes that the exemptions remain with the vessels even if the vessels are later sold to foreign-owned companies. This interpretation gives foreign-owned companies continued access to U.S. fisheries. Conversely, GAO concludes that the act's prohibitions against foreign rebuilding of vessels used in U.S. fisheries are likely to have a significant impact. This is because the grandfather exemptions that allowed foreign rebuilding are tied to specific deadlines, all of which have passed. Generally, vessels rebuilt in a foreign country were required to be delivered to the owners before July 28, 1990, in order to be eligible for U.S. fishery privileges. Because the deadlines have passed, owners who want to rebuild their boats and who wish to operate in U.S. fisheries will likely rebuild in U.S. shipyards.

Economic Development

Rural Development: Problems and Progress of Colonia Subdivisions Near Mexico Border

GAO/RCED-91-37, Nov. 5 (35 pages).

Colonias, which first appeared in the 1950s when developers began creating unimproved subdivisions outside city boundaries, are mainly found today in counties along the Texas-Mexico border. Of the four states GAO reviewed, Texas reported 842 colonias with almost 200,000 residents, and New Mexico reported 15 colonias with about 15,000 residents. Water, sewage, and sanitation appear to be major problems in these communities. For example, less than one percent of the colonias GAO visited in Texas had sewage systems. Some Texas colonia residents lack indoor plumbing and rely instead on outside water spigots; hook-up and monthly service charges for the water system are unaffordable for some residents. In New Mexico, colonia residents typically use wells that are vulnerable to contamination. In colonias without sewers, residents

often use septic tanks and pit privies that do not meet public health standards. Both Texas and New Mexico have programs to fund water and sewer development. Over the years, municipal water suppliers and nonprofit water corporations have extended public water to 60 percent of the Texas colonias and 80 percent of the New Mexico colonias; however, efforts to provide sewer systems to those colonias have been minimal. While all four states in GAO's review have requirements that would limit the future development of colonias, there are concerns that future colonia developments may not be fully precluded because of exemptions in the statutes.

Education

Education Regulations: Reasons for Delays in Issuance

GAO/HRD-91-4BR, Nov. 15 (49 pages).

This briefing report examines the reasons for delays in the Department of Education's issuance of regulations related to three laws: Education of the Handicapped amendments of 1986 and 1988, Higher Education amendments of 1986 and 1987, and Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement amendments of 1988. Education is required by statute to issue regulations within 240 days after Congress enacts legislation; however, out of the 83 regulations that GAO examined, Education issued only 13 within the required time period. Education officials attributed the failure to issue the regulations within the established time frame to (1) the sheer volume of regulations to be issued during the time frame, (2) lengthy periods required to obtain and respond to comments on the regulations, (3) complex legal and policy issues involved with the regulations, and (4) the fact that they were developing the regulations while doing their normal program duties.

Drug Education: School-Based Programs Seen as Useful but Impact Unknown

GAO/HRD-91-27, Nov. 28 (29 pages).

A primary goal of the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1986 was to foster drug abuse education and prevention programs. GAO evaluated implementation of the Act in six school districts: Los Angeles, Dade County (Miami), Detroit, Cleveland, Houston, and the District of Columbia. The five states and the District account for \$330 million or 30 percent of funds allocated since the program began in October 1986. GAO

found that, overall, the six school districts used more than 50 percent of funds for student assistance (primarily counseling) targeted to high-risk junior and senior high school children. The remaining funds were used primarily for training teams of school officials to develop drug prevention curricula and materials. Each district included alcohol abuse in its drug education programs. GAO also reports that overall, students and principals interviewed believed that the program message is reaching school children and that drug abuse would be worse without the federally funded Drug Free programs.

Employment

Occupational Safety & Health: Inspectors' Opinions on Improving OSHA Effectiveness

GAO/HRD-91-9FS, Nov. 14 (80 pages).

To identify ways in which worker safety and health might be improved in this country, GAO did a broad review of Occupational Safety and Health Administration activities and issued a report on its findings in August 1990. (See GAO/HRD-90-66BR.) This fact sheet supplements that report with more detail from a questionnaire GAO sent to OSHA inspectors. GAO obtained their views on the effectiveness of OSHA enforcement, safety and health standards in the workplace, education and training efforts geared toward employers and workers, and employer and worker involvement in health and safety activities.

Energy

Electricity Supply: The Effects of Competitive Power Purchases Are Not Yet Certain

GAO/RCED-90-182, Aug. 23 (36 pages).

GAO reviewed plans for meeting the nation's future electric power needs through utilities' use of competitive power purchases. Competitive bidding is a relatively recent development in the utility industry; the first competitive bid solicitation for purchases of electricity occurred in 1984. This report examines electric utilities' use of competitive bidding to buy electricity from nonutility generating sources and identifies how these purchases might affect the reliability and cost of electric power. GAO focused on the experiences of three utilities—Boston Edison, Central Maine Power, and Virginia Power—that are among the first in the country to use competitive bidding for electricity purchases.

**Nuclear Safety:
Potential Security Weaknesses at Los Alamos and Other DOE
Facilities**

GAO/RCED-91-12, Oct. 11 (43 pages).

In March 1989, the contract security force at the Department of Energy's Los Alamos National Laboratory began a 10-week strike as a result of longstanding labor-management relations problems, including disputes over overtime, disciplinary, and sick leave policies. Because Los Alamos carries out nuclear weapons research and testing activities, around-the-clock security is essential. During the strike, DOE used temporary replacements. However, GAO is concerned about the adequacy of security at Los Alamos before, during, and after the strike. At issue is whether the security force was properly trained. GAO is also concerned about security at other DOE facilities. DOE inspections found recurring and similar weaknesses but DOE rated only one security program as unsatisfactory. GAO believes that this was due to a lack of DOE criteria specifying the severity and frequency of inspection findings that would result in a satisfactory or unsatisfactory rating. Also, DOE lacks an effective mechanism for ensuring that corrective actions are taken on inspection findings. GAO found that some inspection findings went uncorrected for as much as five years. While DOE believes that federal and contract forces are equally capable of protecting its facilities and that the costs for both are similar, DOE lacks current cost data. GAO estimates that annual labor and benefits costs could be cut \$15 million if DOE federalized the security forces at the nine facilities GAO reviewed.

**Nuclear Safety and Health:
Counterfeit and Substandard Products Are a Governmentwide
Concern**

GAO/RCED-91-6, Oct. 16 (42 pages).

Nonconforming products like fasteners, pipe fittings, electrical equipment, and valves have been installed in U.S. nuclear power plants. Some of these products that failed to conform to design or other specifications were fraudulently produced (counterfeit) and/or substandard. GAO found that utilities have installed nonconforming products in, or are suspected of having received them for, almost two-thirds of the nation's 113 domestic nuclear power plants. Also, during the past five years, inspections by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission have uncovered problems with 12 of 13 utilities' quality assurance programs. While NRC

took enforcement action against eight utilities, in April 1990 the Commission withdrew action against two utilities and deferred the quality assurance program inspections for at least one year. Nonconforming products are a governmentwide problem; however, consolidated data that could help stop the purchase of these products by government and utility officials are not to be found. Further, the magnitude of the problem, cost to the taxpayers, and potential dangers resulting from using such products are unknown. While the Office of Management and Budget agreed in 1988 to act as a clearinghouse for information on nonconforming products, OMB has not yet fulfilled its commitment.

**Energy Security:
Impacts of Lifting Alaskan North Slope Oil Exports Ban**

GAO/RCED-91-21, Nov. 8 (30 pages).

The export of Alaska North Slope (ANS) oil is restricted by law; the ban can be lifted only by Presidential certification that exports of this commodity are in the best interest of the nation. GAO examined the energy and economic impacts of removing the export restriction compared with leaving it in place. While GAO's analysis was underway and virtually complete by August 1990, the report recognizes the potential impact of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. If the export ban were lifted, some ANS oil would likely go to Pacific Rim nations. Shipments to U.S. east coast ports, which are costly compared with oil transportation to the Pacific Rim, would virtually cease, and some shipments to some west coast destinations might be reduced. The probable economic effects would be an increase in the wellhead price of ANS crude oil; improved economic efficiency in the ANS oil trade, due mainly to lower transportation costs, resulting in increased domestic oil production, better use of refinery processing resources, and improved allocation of ANS oil to its highest valued uses; and accelerated decline in U.S. tanker demand because exports would likely be transported on foreign vessels. From an energy security standpoint, the effect of lifting the export ban would probably be to increase total U.S. imports but decrease net imports (imports minus exports) and to improve worldwide oil market efficiency to some extent, which could contribute to U.S. energy security.

Environmental Protection

Air Pollution: Improvements Needed in Detecting and Preventing Violations

GAO/RCED-90-155, Sept. 27 (44 pages).

Over one-third of the American people live in areas plagued by high levels of air pollution and, as a result, are at increased risk for cancer, lung disease, and other health problems. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that nearly 40 percent of all air pollution comes from stationary sources like electric utilities, oil refineries, steel mills, and large factories. EPA believes that emission monitors are 10 times more likely to detect air quality violations from these stationary sources than are on-site inspections because they measure emissions directly, provide nearly continuous coverage of facility operations, and detect violations that inspectors cannot. Yet GAO found that EPA has installed monitors at only about 11 percent of the sources where installation is possible. Further, while proposed legislation calls for the use of monitors at 1,100 sources—principally major utilities that emit large amounts of sulfur dioxide—some of these sources already have monitors installed and EPA has no plans to require additional monitors beyond those called for in the legislation. When violations are found, EPA favors the use of cash penalties to counter any financial benefit that violators derived through noncompliance with air quality requirements. However, over half of the fiscal year 1988 and 1989 violations defined as “significant”—EPA’s highest enforcement priority—involved no cash penalty being imposed.

Global Warming: Emission Reductions Possible as Scientific Uncertainties Are Resolved

GAO/RCED-90-58, Sept. 28 (72 pages).

Since the Industrial Revolution, industry, agriculture, and transportation have undergone rapid change. However, an unforeseen consequence of this development has been the buildup of “greenhouse gases” in earth’s atmosphere. Many experts now anticipate long-term, potentially dramatic changes in global climates, including rising sea levels and changes in ecosystems and agricultural productivity. This report describes what is known and not known about greenhouse gases, examines the strengths and limitations of enhanced global warming, and identifies possible policy responses.

**Water Pollution:
Greater EPA Leadership Needed to Reduce Nonpoint Source
Pollution**

GAO/RCED-91-10, Oct. 15 (56 pages).

Nonpoint source pollution is the by-product of a variety of land use practices, including farming, timber harvesting, mining, and construction. It also occurs in urban areas when rain washes pollutants like lawn fertilizers and pesticides into sewer systems and storm drains. Among the problems GAO identified as significantly affecting state and local efforts to control nonpoint source pollution are the inherent conflicts between some federal agencies' policies and states' water quality goals. A prime example is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's farm commodity programs, which indirectly contribute to nonpoint source pollution through policies that encourage use of chemicals and pesticides. Other problems confronting state and local efforts include (1) insufficient monitoring data on the nature of the problem and on the effectiveness of potential solutions and (2) political sensitivities in controlling land uses that indirectly cause water pollution. In 1989 EPA unveiled an ambitious five-year agenda to deal with many of these problems. Nevertheless, GAO believes that EPA's agenda will remain largely unfulfilled if the agency stays on its present course. While resource constraints are a problem in many environmental programs, in the case of nonpoint source pollution these resource constraints may also be due to inappropriate allocation of available funds among the agency's point source and nonpoint source pollution control programs.

**Solid Waste:
Trade-offs Involved in Beverage Container Deposit Legislation**

GAO/RCED-91-25, Nov. 14 (55 pages).

In response to the lack of data on beverage container reuse and recycling, GAO examined the effects of a national beverage container deposit law. GAO found that although nine states have deposit laws on the books and various studies on the effects of these laws have been done, it is still unclear whether a mandatory national deposit system would be advantageous from a strict cost/benefit standpoint. Existing studies generally conclude the beverage container deposit laws increase capital and operating costs for the beverage industry but also reduce litter, conserve energy and natural resources, and divert solid waste

from landfills. GAO believes that quantifying the potential costs and benefits with a high degree of confidence is unlikely: many variables like differing marketing considerations and local solid waste conditions and programs would have to be taken into account, and many assumptions about industry operations, marketing decisions, economic conditions, and consumer reactions would have to be made. As a result, GAO concludes that the desirability of national legislation on this matter is essentially a public policy decision in which value judgments must be made about the trade-offs between costs and environmental benefits and the desirability of federal involvement in solid waste management, an area that has generally been a local responsibility. A GAO telephone survey indicates that the vast majority of Americans would support a national beverage container deposit law.

Financial Institutions

Resolution Trust Corporation: Real Estate Activities in Southeast Pennsylvania

GAO/GGD-91-4FS, Nov. 9 (seven pages).

This is one in a series of six GAO reports looking at Resolution Trust Corporation activities in six geographic regions. This fact sheet examines RTC real estate holdings and property management activities in one of those areas—a portion of southeastern Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia. GAO discusses (1) thrifts and real estate assets placed under RTC control; (2) the managers of any high-value real estate properties in the inventory and what they are paid; (3) real estate assets that have been sold and the purchasers of those sold for \$1 million or more; and (4) the number of real estate agents who have been qualified or disqualified for RTC contracts, and for those disqualified, the reasons why.

Resolution Trust Corporation: Real Estate Activities in Bellevue, Washington

GAO/GGD-91-18FS, Nov. 9 (five pages).

This is one in a series of six GAO reports looking at Resolution Trust Corporation activities in six geographic regions. This fact sheet examines RTC real estate holdings and property management activities in one of those areas—Bellevue, Washington.

**Resolution Trust Corporation:
Real Estate Activities in Pine Bluff, Arkansas**

GAO/GGD-91-6FS, Nov. 9 (five pages).

This is one in a series of six GAO reports looking at Resolution Trust Corporation activities in six geographic regions. This fact sheet examines RTC real estate holdings and property management activities in one of those areas—Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

**Resolution Trust Corporation:
Real Estate Activities in North Little Rock, Arkansas**

GAO/GGD-91-15FS, Nov. 13 (six pages).

This is one in a series of six GAO reports looking at Resolution Trust Corporation activities in six geographic regions. This fact sheet examines RTC real estate holdings and property management activities in one of those areas—North Little Rock, Arkansas.

**Resolution Trust Corporation:
Real Estate Activities in Houston, Texas**

GAO/GGD-91-16FS, Nov. 13 (55 pages).

This is one in a series of six GAO reports looking at Resolution Trust Corporation activities in six geographic regions. This fact sheet examines RTC real estate holdings and property management activities in one of those areas—Houston, Texas.

**Resolution Trust Corporation:
Real Estate Activities in Austin, Texas**

GAO/GGD-91-11FS, Nov. 15 (67 pages).

This is one in a series of six GAO reports looking at Resolution Trust Corporation activities in six geographic regions. This fact sheet examines RTC real estate holdings and property management activities in one of those areas—Austin, Texas.

Financial Management

Rural Telephone Bank: Accuracy of Interest Rate Charged to Borrowers

GAO/AFMD-91-32, Nov. 2 (five pages).

GAO is required to review annually the interest rate charged to borrowers—known as the cost of money rate—as determined by the Governor of the Rural Telephone Bank. In October 1990, GAO received the Rural Telephone Bank's rate determination, which established the Bank's fiscal year 1990 cost of money rate at five percent, the minimum rate allowable by the Rural Electrification Act of 1936. GAO found the rate to be in accordance with the law.

Financial Audit: Northeast-Midwest Congressional Coalition Financial Statements for 1989 and 1988

GAO/AFMD-91-2, Nov. 7 (12 pages).

GAO audited the financial statements of the Northeast-Midwest Congressional Coalition, a legislative service organization sponsored by a group of Members of Congress who pool their resources to pursue a common legislative goal. In GAO's opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Coalition for 1989 and 1988.

Financial Audit: U.S. Government Printing Office's Financial Statements for Fiscal Year 1989

GAO/AFMD-91-1, Nov. 8 (20 pages).

This report presents the results of GAO's audit of the consolidated financial statements of the U.S. Government Printing Office for fiscal year 1989. GAO found no material weaknesses in GPO's internal control structure and found that GPO complied with laws and regulations for the transactions GAO tested that could have materially affected its financial statements.

**Financial Management:
Problems in Accounting for DOD Disbursements**

GAO/AFMD-91-9, Nov. 9 (25 pages).

Defense Department agencies and the services routinely make cross disbursements—disbursements by one organization on behalf of another. DOD has had problems in accounting for cross disbursements; GAO believes that the problems are caused by a failure to use uniform information, which leads to unnecessarily complex processing of disbursements and frequent clerical processing errors. Data on total cross disbursements provided by the Army and the Air Force in late 1989 and early 1990 showed an aggregate of \$6 billion of cross disbursements that could not be matched with obligations. To improve its financial management operations and standardize its accounting information, DOD has undertaken the Corporate Information Management (CIM) initiative, and was considering another, independent improvement project known as Single Numbering; that project was put on hold due to resource constraints, but DOD expects to pursue it beginning in January 1991. GAO believes that if these projects are implemented as planned, they will help solve DOD's problems in matching cross disbursements with obligations. The report recommends that Single Numbering be integrated into CIM and its supporting accounting and financial systems.

**Financial Audit:
Department of Veterans Affairs Financial Statements for Fiscal
Years 1989 and 1988**

GAO/AFMD-91-6, Nov. 14 (88 pages).

This report presents the results of GAO's financial audit of the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal years 1989 and 1988. In GAO's opinion, except for property and equipment, VA's financial statements are fairly stated in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. The property and equipment accounts shown in the financial statements are inaccurate primarily because of missing or undocumented values of the assets and the inconsistent adherence to capitalization and depreciation policies by VA's field personnel. In addition to the audit reports, GAO discusses and analyzes VA's financial position and operations, including VA health care costs and veterans benefits costs. GAO also includes a statement analyzing VA's appropriation activity and a summary of VA's self-assessment of internal controls under the Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act. VA's self-assessment identifies eight

areas where its major accounting systems fail to conform with accounting principles and standards for government agencies. These areas include weaknesses in controls over property and equipment accounts, security controls at automatic data processing centers, and the inability to adequately control funds and effectively detect duplicate payments for the loan guaranty program. GAO believes that a financial statement that analyzes appropriation activity is a desirable addition to the standard set of financial statements, providing fuller reporting of the relationship between accrual-based statements and the status of appropriations used. GAO also believes that a summary of an agency's Financial Integrity Act report should be part of an agency's annual report and should be eventually included within the scope of the independent auditor's work and report.

Government Operations

Voting: Some Procedural Changes and Informational Activities Could Increase Turnout

GAO/PEMD-91-1, Nov. 2 (80 pages).

Voter turnout in the United States is low compared with other democracies and has been declining in virtually every election since 1960. While other nations report an average 80-percent turnout, only 50 percent of U.S. voters participated in the 1988 presidential election, and even fewer turn out for congressional elections—only 36 percent in 1986, for example. In this report, GAO analyzes the practices in other democracies that may encourage voter participation and efforts by state and local U.S. practices that may increase participation. GAO concludes that poor U.S. voter turnout is not, as commonly believed, due to political alienation. Rather, it appears that voters may see election outcomes as insignificant, and that voting procedures may be too cumbersome. In examining voter turnout rates among states, GAO found participation levels higher when (1) voter registration deadlines fell on or close to election day, (2) toll-free phone numbers are provided for absentee ballot requests, and (3) the option of mailing in ballots is available. GAO found also that voter information campaigns don't translate into higher turnout, except in the case of information about propositions and referendums. These findings form the basis of suggestions for Congress to consider in making voting more appealing to the public.

**State Department:
Need to Improve Maintenance Management of Overseas Property**

GAO/NSIAD-90-216, Sept. 24 (28 pages).

The Department of State manages about 7,500 properties overseas; about 2,100 of these—with an estimated value of \$10 billion—are government-owned. GAO found that State's Office of Foreign Buildings Operations lacks complete information on the condition of its overseas building and properties, the costs to maintain them, and the costs to repair and rehabilitate them. A number of buildings and properties are in various stages of disrepair, and it could cost as much as \$450 million to eliminate the backlog of maintenance and repair at overseas posts. None of the 14 posts GAO visited had managed maintenance operations in a systematic way, done annual property condition surveys, or developed annual work plans linking posts' resource needs to annual budgets. As a result of insufficient oversight, the Office of Foreign Buildings Operations does not know how maintenance resources are being used at overseas posts, and unauthorized and improper uses of funds have resulted. For example, about \$220,000 was diverted to improper uses in Santiago, Chile. GAO notes several projects the Office of Foreign Buildings Operations has begun to improve maintenance operations.

**Pay and Benefits:
Data on Energy Employees Who Retired or Resigned in Fiscal Year 1989**

GAO/GGD-91-14BR, Oct. 25 (20 pages).

Questions continue to be raised about the federal government's ability to hire and retain high-quality workers. Many studies by GAO and others have concluded that noncompetitive federal salaries contribute to federal recruitment and retention problems. This briefing report contains information on former Department of Energy employees at grade 13 and above who retired or resigned during fiscal year 1989. GAO found that 43 of 78 employees who left DOE that year took private sector jobs that paid more than the government did—up to \$15,000 more in some cases.

Health

Drug Treatment: Targeting Aid to States Using Urban Population as Indicator of Drug Use

GAO/HRD-91-17, Nov. 27 (48 pages).

Using a statutory mathematical formula, the federal government is allocating nearly \$1.2 billion each year in block grants to finance state treatment services for substance abusers and the mentally ill. GAO assessed two issues affecting the current formula's ability to target federal assistance to states with the greatest need: (1) the use of urban population as an indicator of the prevalence of drug abuse and (2) the 1984 hold-harmless provision. GAO concludes that while urban population is an appropriate indicator of the prevalence of drug abuse, its influence in the apportionment formula overstates the magnitude of drug abuse in urban as compared with rural areas. In addition, GAO believes that the hold-harmless provision prevents allocation of funds according to statutory indicators of state "need" for federal assistance.

Housing

Homelessness: Action Needed to Make Federal Surplus Property Program More Effective

GAO/RCED-91-33, Oct. 9 (44 pages).

GAO found that although there has been progress in making surplus federal property available for use by the homeless under title V of the McKinney Act, problems remain that hinder the effective implementation of title V. Specifically, properties are being listed in the Federal Register as suitable for homeless use before screening for federal need is completed. As a result, assistance providers are misled and may be applying for properties that are unavailable. In addition, many assistance providers are dissatisfied because they lack easy access to the Federal Register. In response, the General Services Administration and the Department of Housing and Urban Development have developed additional ways of publicizing federal properties, including sending notices directly to interested assistance providers. The McKinney Act authorizes only the leasing of federal properties and not transfers of property titles and donations. As a result, some assistance providers say that they cannot afford to renovate these properties or obtain loans to do so because leased property cannot be used as loan collateral. GAO believes that federal leases for facilities for the homeless may expose

the government to liability. Also, local jurisdictions may seek compensation for the additional costs incurred—like emergency services for shelter residents—associated with nongovernment use. Changes in the leases could minimize these potential costs.

Information Management

Trademark Automation: Information on System Problems and Planned Improvements

GAO/IMTEC-91-1, Oct. 9 (16 pages).

This report provides information on T-Search—an automated search and retrieval system in use at the Patent and Trademark Office since 1986. The system is designed to help determine whether trademarks submitted for registration are confusingly similar to pending or registered trademarks. GAO found that both Patent and Trademark Office examining attorneys and public users of T-Search are dissatisfied with the system's performance, particularly the slow search times. Patent and Trademark Office trademark and automation officials are working to improve the current system and eventually replace it with a system they maintain will better meet users' needs; however, both short-term and long-term plans were still in draft form when GAO finished its audit. Although Patent and Trademark Office officials intend to take some short-term actions that they expect will mitigate some problems with T-Search, they say that these actions are unlikely to result in substantially reduced search times.

International Affairs

International Trade: Iraq's Participation in U.S. Agricultural Export Programs

GAO/NSIAD-91-76, Nov. 14 (35 pages).

GAO examined Iraq's participation in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Export Credit Guarantee Programs (GSM-102/103), which promote U.S. agricultural exports. Under these programs, the Commodity Credit Corporation guarantees that U.S. exporters will be repaid for a credit sale made to a foreign buyer in an eligible country. If the buyer defaults, the exporter can file a claim with the Corporation for the loss. This report (1) provides information on the development of Iraq as a U.S. agricultural export market and the extent to which Iraq has benefitted from U.S. government agricultural export programs since its inclusion in

the GSM program since 1983; (2) examines agricultural, trade, and foreign policy considerations that influenced decisions to continue offering guarantees to Iraq under the GSM program despite growing concern about Iraq's creditworthiness; and (3) discusses GSM program irregularities recently uncovered by the Justice Department's investigation of a bank's unauthorized and unreported loans to Iraq and a subsequent administrative review by the Department of Agriculture.

**Foreign Investment:
Japanese-Affiliated Automakers' 1989 U.S. Production's Impact on Jobs**

GAO/NSIAD-91-52, Oct. 17 (eight pages).

This report provides estimates of the possible effects on U.S. employment in 1989 of automobile production by Japanese-affiliated automakers in the United States. GAO concludes that the production of Japanese-affiliated automakers in this country led to about 11,000 net job losses in 1989 compared to 25,000 in 1988. The 1989 estimate assumes that (1) 68 percent of the Japanese-affiliates' production in the United States displaced other U.S. produced cars and (2) the remaining 32 percent made up the difference between Japan's voluntary export restraint level and auto imports from Japan. A key factor in the net job loss estimates for 1989 was that the Japanese-affiliated automakers bought more parts from U.S. sources.

**Foreign Assistance:
International Resource Flows and Development Assistance to Developing Countries**

GAO/NSIAD-91-25FS, Oct. 23 (40 pages).

This fact sheet provides information on the amounts of international economic assistance provided to developing countries between 1980 and 1988. Specifically, GAO discusses the total value, composition, and distribution of development assistance and resource flows from all major donors. The data in this report is limited to economic development assistance and excludes grants, loans, and credits for military purposes, and loans and credits with maturities of less than one year.

**International Trade:
Comparison of U.S. and Foreign Antidumping Practices**

GAO/NSIAD-91-59, Nov. 7 (48 pages).

The 1979 Antidumping Code sets guidelines for countering the ill effects of "dumping," defined as the sale of exported products at a price lower than that charged for the same or similar product in the home market of the exporter. Some signatories to the Code are seeking to limit the use of antidumping measures and to get clarification on what constitutes dumping and its ill effects on domestic industries. This GAO report analyzes U.S. antidumping practices and those of its larger trading partners—Canada, the European Community, Australia, and Mexico. GAO focused on three issues: (1) how much evidence is needed to open an dumping investigation, (2) how open or "transparent" each country's antidumping practices are, and (3) what rights of appeal are available on antidumping decisions. GAO concludes that the Code does not fully define sufficiency of evidence, which means that signatories can exercise a great deal of discretion in determining the validity of an dumping charge. Industry and trade experts told GAO that the level of evidence required to initiate an investigation is low in the United States, the European Community, and Mexico. GAO found that the level of transparency varies widely, with the United States having the most open system; Mexico and the European Community seem the least open in providing information on their decision-making processes. All parties reviewed by GAO provide appeal rights through administrative and judicial review. The judicial review in the United States is broader than in the other countries.

**Central America:
Humanitarian Assistance to the Nicaraguan Resistance**

GAO/NSIAD-91-7, Nov. 14 (25 pages).

GAO examined the Agency for International Development's administration of \$49.75 million in humanitarian assistance to the Nicaraguan Resistance to determine whether the funds were spent according to legislative intent and whether procedures were adequate to procure and deliver goods, services, and payments. GAO found that AID and its contractors generally provided only authorized types of assistance and established controls for procurements and deliveries. These funds, used to provide assistance from April 18, 1989, to February 28, 1990, constituted the third phase of humanitarian aid for this group. During this

period, AID (1) adjusted assistance levels to reflect changes in Resistance population, (2) established a food reserve, and (3) contracted for additional air support services. Medical services and AID's training program were improved. GAO noted that a few ineligible people received food or medical treatment; AID's medical services contractor did not keep adequate records during a vaccination program, purchased inappropriate medicines, and failed to document a large purchase of medical supplies.

**Eastern Europe:
Donor Assistance and Reform Efforts**

GAO/NSIAD-91-21, Nov. 30 (40 pages).

The extraordinary political and economic changes in Eastern Europe have resulted in the United States, other industrialized nations, and several multilateral interests providing assistance—in grants, loans, credits, advice, and in-kind benefits—totaling about \$8.5 billion as of May 1990. In this report, GAO provides information about economic assistance to Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania. The United States, Germany, Japan, Italy, France, and the United Kingdom are providing about 75 percent of the \$8.5 billion. Because Poland and Hungary made the earliest commitments to political and economic reform, assistance as of May 1990 was targeted at them; donor nations and multilateral organizations have begun to assist other Eastern European countries. GAO concludes that despite major economic problems facing these countries—declining gross national products, large foreign debts, antiquated industrial bases, and over-reliance on the Soviet Union—all have economic growth potential. Growth, however, depends on substantial foreign investment.

**National Defense,
Security, and Military
Procurement**

**Information Security:
Disposition and Use of Classified Documents by Presidential
Appointees**

GAO/NSIAD-90-195, Sept. 28 (20 pages).

GAO looked at arrangements federal agencies have made to give former presidential appointees access to classified documents pertaining to their government service. In particular, GAO examined access arrangements for former Secretary of State George Schultz and former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger. While the arrangements for Mr. Schultz are now in compliance with the regulations governing access to

national security information, GAO is concerned about the arrangements made for Mr. Weinberger. Defense Department officials did not provide the required written statement declaring that it had determined that giving Mr. Weinberger access to classified information is consistent with the interest of national security. In addition, Mr. Weinberger's agreement with the Library of Congress allows him to control access to classified information and to remove documents at his discretion. GAO believes that in the future, language appearing to give control of classified information to a private individual should not be allowed in access arrangements.

**Naval Aviation:
The V-22 Osprey—Progress and Problems**

GAO/NSIAD-91-45, Oct. 12 (nine pages).

The V-22 is a tiltrotor aircraft designed to take off and land vertically like a helicopter and to fly like an airplane by tilting its wing-mounted rotors to function as propellers. The V-22 is being developed for various combat missions, including medium lift assault for the Marine Corps, combat search and rescue for the Navy, and long-range special operations for the Air Force. This report provides information on the status of the program testing of the V-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft, funding requirements to complete testing and development, and readiness of the V-22 program for production funding in fiscal year 1991. GAO concludes that even if Congress decides to continue the V-22 program, the program's status and high concurrency make it impossible to know at this point whether it will be ready for production in fiscal year 1992 as planned. As a result, GAO recommends that before obligating the fiscal year 1991 long-lead funds DOD certify that the risks of concurrency are being managed and that the V-22 program schedule is being met.

**Defense Reorganization:
DOD's Efforts to Streamline the Transportation Command**

GAO/NSIAD-91-36BR, Oct. 26 (eight pages).

This briefing report looks at the implementation of recommendations contained in a February 1988 DOD task force report that recommended the elimination of the separate component command headquarters. GAO discusses progress made in (1) eliminating the separate Army, Navy, and Air Force component command headquarters and (2) creating a single integrated headquarters for the U.S. Transportation Command. In

particular, GAO examines command staff reductions and other actions taken by the commands that would affect the organizational relationships between headquarters and components.

**Internal Controls:
Black Marketing of U.S. Commissary and Base Exchange Merchandise in South Korea**

GAO/NSIAD-91-38, Oct. 30 (40 pages).

Black marketing in Korea involves transferring duty-free goods to unauthorized individuals for profit or personal gain. A problem since the end of the Korean War, black marketing remains widespread in Korea today; GAO frequently found goods from U.S. military commissaries in Korean markets and stores, although GAO was unable to accurately estimate how much of the goods were making their way to the black market. GAO concludes that the ration control system established to prevent black marketing has been ineffective. Sales rates for selected items suggest that authorized consumers could not possibly be consuming the volume of items sold. For example, in fiscal year 1989 the commissaries in South Korea sold more than 16 pounds of ox meat for every man, woman, and child authorized to buy commissary items. Some ration control system procedures have not been consistently followed. Cashiers at commissaries and base exchanges did not always verify consumer identification or record sales data. GAO concludes that a renewed effort to work with the Korean government to deter black market activities is warranted.

**Army Budget:
Potential Reductions in Tracked Combat Vehicle Programs**

GAO/NSIAD-91-37BR, Nov. 7 (11 pages).

GAO reviewed the Army's fiscal year 1991 procurement budget for the Abrams Tank and the Bradley Fighting Vehicle programs, and also reviewed the Army's implementation of the fiscal year 1990 appropriations for these programs. GAO identified opportunities for rescissions and budget reductions totaling \$545.9 million in the amounts appropriated or requested for the programs: \$440.8 million in 1991 and \$105.1 million in 1990. These savings may be possible due to (1) reduced requirements, (2) lower cost estimates, and (3) current funding that is not needed until after fiscal year 1991.

**Air Force:
Potential Reductions to Fiscal Year 1991 Stock Fund Budget**

GAO/NSIAD-91-16BR, Nov. 15 (14 pages).

GAO examined aspects of the Air Force's fiscal year 1991 stock fund budget, particularly the portion of the budget pertaining to aircraft spare parts, to identify potential cost reductions. GAO identified \$1,088.2 million in possible savings: \$995.3 million in potential reductions to the 1991 stock fund budget and \$92.9 million in potential rescissions to fiscal year 1990 appropriated funds for aircraft spare parts.

**Strategic Missiles:
Uncertainties Persist in the Advanced Cruise Missile Program**

GAO/NSIAD-91-35, Nov. 16 (5 pages).

This report is an unclassified summary of a classified report issued in September 1990 on the Advanced Cruise Missile (ACM) program. The Air Force is acquiring the ACM to increase the deterrence value of U.S. nuclear forces and, if necessary, attack enemy targets. GAO reviewed the ACM program, which has suffered delays for several years due to various cost, schedule, and performance problems, and found that the Air Force is pursuing the ACM program before resolving several important issues. The most important of these is the number of ACMS to be acquired and whether current plans for competitive procurement are still valid. GAO is also concerned about the ACM's reliability, the continued delivery delays of missiles from the Air Force's contractors, and revisions being made to the program's \$7 billion cost estimate, which does not currently reflect potential changes in the number of missiles procured or the procurement strategy or include certain other costs.

**Army Logistics:
Authorized Levels of Repair Parts at the Divisions Are Overstated**

GAO/NSIAD-91-58, Nov. 20 (six pages).

GAO looked at efforts by the Army to improve the efficiencies of its logistics system. GAO found that incorrect programming of computer software used by the Army to determine repair parts stockage levels on its divisions' authorized stockage lists resulted in the authorized levels being overstated by 10 days of supply (as much as \$110 million). When this matter was brought to the attention of Army officials, they

reprogrammed the computer system to reduce the authorized stockage levels at its divisions by 10 days.

**Army Force Structure:
Lessons to Apply in Structuring Tomorrow's Army**

GAO/NSIAD-91-3, Nov. 29 (62 pages).

The collapse of the Warsaw Pact, reduced U.S.-Soviet tensions and a changing security environment should influence the Army as it restructures its forces to meet major force reductions—a cutback of 200,000 personnel over the next five years, from a current level of 720,000. This GAO report evaluates the status of implementing the Army of Excellence, a force structure begun in 1983, and identifies lessons the Army should apply in developing its future force structure. On the basis of strengths and weaknesses found in the planning and implementing of Army of Excellence changes, GAO recommends that the Army (1) fully document its decisions and rationale for future changes in its force designs, including risks entailed in reducing personnel requirements; (2) track major force design initiatives and progress toward their goals; and (3) resolve the current internal disagreement over how Manpower Requirements Criteria are set and applied. Due to budget constraints and other problems, only half of the Army of Excellence force structure is in place, and some problems that the Army sought to overcome remain. Current circumstances present the Army with a new opportunity to move toward its goals, including greater standardization of infantry forces, a more effective mix of active and reserve forces, adequate support forces, and an affordable force.

**Air Force Budget:
Potential Reductions to Aircraft Procurement Budgets**

GAO/NSIAD-91-17BR, Nov. 30 (19 pages).

GAO reviewed the Air Force's fiscal year 1991 budget request and 1988-1990 appropriations for the C-17, B-2, and F-16 aircraft programs and C/KC-135, B-52, and B-1B modification programs, to identify potential cost reductions. GAO identified \$3,094.9 million in potential reductions: \$2,864.3 million in the 1991 budget request; and \$186.8 million, \$19.5 million, and \$24.3 million in potential rescissions of appropriated funds from 1990, 1989, and 1988, respectively. Of the total, \$2,146 million is the potential cost reduction that could result from GAO's suggestion not to acquire C-17 aircraft; and \$622 million is the cost reduction that could

result from not acquiring initial spares for B-2 aircraft in fiscal year 1991.

**Navy Budget:
Potential Reductions for Research, Development, Test, and
Evaluation**

GAO/NSIAD-91-14BR, Nov. 30 (24 pages).

GAO reviewed the Navy's fiscal year 1991 funding request for Research, Development, Test and Evaluation and identified potential reductions of \$777.614 million: \$534.910 million for fiscal year 1991 and \$242.704 million for fiscal year 1990. Although the scope of GAO's work consisted mainly of projects and programs in Research, Development, Test and Evaluation, GAO also analyzed the effects of changes on systems funded in more than one appropriation account. GAO identified potential reductions in fiscal year 1991 funds of \$4.663 million in the Navy's Shipbuilding and Conversion budget and \$10.2 million in its Other Procurement budget account.

**Defense Inventory:
New York National Guard Weapons Parts**

GAO/NSIAD-91-28, Nov. 30 (37 pages).

Following two criminal cases involving theft of small arms parts from a National Guard repair shop in New York, GAO evaluated the New York Army National Guard's internal controls and physical security over small arms parts. GAO concludes that small arms parts thefts are fairly easy due to weak controls over the arms repair process, inspection of work, storage of parts, management of work flow, and inventory. Army regulations, the report says, do not require strict management of the repair process or tight control of repair parts. Also, physical security was found to be inadequate to protect against thefts. Following the arrest of several former guardsmen, the Guard made changes to prevent further thefts, but the changes have not resolved the problems associated with inadequate internal controls.

Testimony

Battleships: Issues Arising From the Explosion Aboard the U.S.S. Iowa,
by Frank C. Conahan, Assistant Comptroller General for National
Security and International Affairs Issues, before the Subcommittee on

Economic Stabilization, House Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs. GAO/T-NSIAD-91-2, Nov. 8 (26 pages).

GAO testified on its work relating to the April 1989 explosion aboard the U.S.S. Iowa. At GAO's request, Sandia National Laboratories investigated the incident and concluded that there was a plausible alternative scenario to the Navy's finding of an intentional act. Sandia investigated the Navy's theory of a deliberate act but could neither confirm nor deny the Navy's conclusion that foreign material residue in the rotating band of the projectile removed from the gun was evidence of a chemically activated detonator device. GAO looked at the four ships of the Iowa class, all of which were built during World War II and recommissioned during the defense buildup of the 1980s. While GAO did not find evidence of any systemic serviceability or safety problems aboard the battleships, GAO did find systemic problems with the adequacy of supervisory personnel levels, including gunners mates and fire controlmen, and problems with Navy training for 16-inch gun operations. In addition, as the world security environment changes, because ships other than battleships have an excellent strike warfare capability, and because of limits on the battleships' ability to support a large scale amphibious assault, the Navy's need to maintain the battleships is questionable. Budget constraints have already led to the decommissioning of two of the four battleships. GAO recommends that the Navy reevaluate the battleship's utility in light of known constraints and limitations and—unless current Middle East operations convincingly demonstrate their unique utility—decommission the Missouri and the Wisconsin.

Natural Resources

Water Resources: Corps' 1988 Missouri River Water Releases Met Guidelines

GAO/RCED-91-3, Nov. 7 (12 pages).

The 1988 drought in the Mississippi River Basin caused record low water levels at many river locations and unprecedented stress on navigation on the lower Mississippi. Normally, water flows from the upper Mississippi and the Missouri Rivers contribute 55 and 45 percent, respectively, of water flow at St. Louis. The reduced volume of water from the Upper Mississippi during the drought meant that flows from the Missouri River were even more important in maintaining streamflow on the Mississippi. GAO examined whether the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers released Missouri River water during 1988 specifically to aid navigation on the Mississippi and whether the Corps has legal authority to

take such action. GAO found that the Corps did not increase water releases from its system of dams and reservoirs on the Missouri in order to aid navigation on the Mississippi. During 1988, the Corps generally followed its Master Manual, which provides guidance on appropriate water releases, and operated the Missouri system to benefit Missouri River interests. GAO further found that the Corps does not have authority to operate the Missouri River system solely for the benefit of Mississippi River interests. Congressional authority would be required for the Corps to operate in this manner.

Social Services

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance: HHS Has Not Assured State Compliance With Administration Cost Restrictions

GAO/HRD-91-15, Nov. 13 (20 pages).

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides eligible households with assistance for home heating and cooling, home weatherization, and home energy crises. The Department of Health and Human Services distributes funds to states, which are responsible for administering the program. The legislation authorizing the program requested that states not use more than 10 percent of LIHEAP funds for administrative and planning costs. GAO reviewed the program in Georgia, and found that two local agencies administering LIHEAP on behalf of the states were planning to use other federal funds to supplement the available LIHEAP funds to meet administrative and planning costs. This practice could have resulted in more than 10 percent of administrative costs being paid with federal funds, which the law prohibits. Georgia state officials were advised of this possibility and said that the state would take steps to prevent this from happening in 1990 and future years. GAO also found that HHS does not now monitor for possible noncompliance, and recommended actions the HHS Secretary could take to ensure that administrative costs in excess of 10 percent are paid with nonfederal funds, which the law allows.

Transportation

Motor Vehicle Safety: Information on Recent Controversy Between NHTSA and Consumer Group

GAO/RCED-90-221, Sept. 27 (28 pages).

The Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is responsible for ensuring highway and vehicle safety. In September 1989, a newsletter published by the Center for Auto Safety—a private consumer group—alleged that NHTSA had allowed unsafe vehicles to remain on the road. The newsletter listed 25 defect investigations involving roughly 37 million vehicles that NHTSA's Office of Defect Investigation had asked manufacturers to recall voluntarily. Later, NHTSA closed these investigations without ordering a recall. This report looks at (1) the reasons for the controversy between NHTSA and the Center over the 25 closed safety defect investigations, (2) the issues surrounding proposed judicial review of NHTSA's decisions to deny petitions to open safety defect investigations or close investigations without a recall, (3) whether the Center's activities hindered the Office of Defect Investigation's work or damaged public confidence in NHTSA, and (4) whether the Center's sale of data obtained from NHTSA is legal, and whether the Center received preferential treatment in obtaining those data.

Motor Vehicle Safety: Information on Accidental Fires in Manufacturing Air Bag Propellant

GAO/RCED-90-230, Sept. 28 (23 pages).

This report discusses recent accidental fires at the U.S. and Canadian facilities that make gas generant (propellant) for car air bags and at the Canadian facility that makes sodium azide, which is a main propellant ingredient. GAO examines (1) general hazards associated with manufacturing propellant, (2) causes of the fires and resulting injuries, (3) safety and health investigations conducted at the U.S. facilities, and (4) the impact of the fires on suppliers' ability to meet the automotive industry's air bag needs.

**Aircraft Maintenance:
Potential Shortage in National Aircraft Repair Capacity**

GAO/RCED-91-14, Oct. 31 (37 pages).

The Federal Aviation Administration recently mandated repairs and modifications to aging aircraft. Because about one-third of the U.S. fleet could need major repairs within four years, GAO is concerned that demand for aircraft maintenance could exceed the aircraft repair industry's short-term capacity. This demand could mean that some carriers would be taking aircraft in need of maintenance out of service until maintenance could be scheduled, thereby adversely affecting air fares and schedules. As part of GAO's review of the U.S. aircraft repair station industry, this interim report discusses (1) reasons for recent increases in demand for maintenance, (2) the extent to which the industry's capacity is being used, and (3) the factors affecting future demand for and supply of airline and independent repair station services.

**Highway Safety:
Fatalities in Light Trucks and Vans**

GAO/PEMD-91-8, Nov. 14 (44 pages).

This report analyzes the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Fatal Accident Reporting System and compares passenger-car fatality rates to those for pickup trucks, vans, and multipurpose vehicles like all-terrain and 4-wheel-drive vehicles. GAO also compares fatalities for these vehicle types in two, more policy-relevant ways: (1) after statistically controlling (adjusting) for non-vehicle related factors like driver characteristics and roadway conditions and (2) when only those accidents involving rollovers or side-impact collisions are considered. While GAO was unable to demonstrate conclusively that changes in specifications for certain vehicles would result in fewer highway fatalities, GAO believes that rollover fatalities are more likely, and side-impact fatalities less likely, to occur in nonpassenger-car vehicles, and that these tendencies are vehicle-specific and cannot be attributed simply to driver, roadway, or accident characteristics.

Veterans Affairs

VA Health Care: Actions in Response to VA's 1989 Mortality Study

GAO/HRD-91-26, Nov. 27 (20 pages).

GAO reviewed follow-up actions taken by the Department of Veterans Affairs to address quality-of-care problems documented in a June 1989 report about VA medical centers. In that report, the VA said that 44 of its 172 medical centers had higher-than-normal mortality rates in 1986, and that "likely" quality-of-care problems were found in 90 cases in which deaths occurred. GAO found that most of the actions the VA planned to take to assess the significance of the mortality study findings had been completed. VA is still analyzing deaths that occurred in psychiatric centers to determine quality of care in those centers compared with that provided in other VA facilities. Preliminary data on 1989 deaths in psychiatric centers suggest that quality of care problems may still exist. GAO notes that the VA has not used information obtained from individual medical centers to make systemwide improvements and concludes that doing so could help ensure more uniform care for all VA patients.



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