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Testimony

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The U.S. Customs Service's Command, Control,
Communications, and Intelligence Center Program

Statement of
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Before the
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations
Committee on Governmental Affairs
United States Senate



NCJRS

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ACQUISITIONS

Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Subcommittee:

We are pleased to participate in these hearings on the Customs Service's command, control, communication, and intelligence (C3I) center program. On January 5, 1987, your Subcommittee and the Senate Committee on the Budget requested that we review the C3I center program. As requested in your letter, we have divided our review into two phases. First, we have obtained information on the objectives, current status, and interagency coordination of the Customs' C3I center program. This information and a discussion of determinations Customs must make regarding the program will be the subject of our testimony today. Second, we are presently conducting an in-depth evaluation of the rationale for establishing C3I centers and an evaluation of how the C3I program fits into the federal government's overall drug interdiction strategy. We expect to complete this phase of the review and issue a report to you in the summer of 1987 on our findings.

CUSTOMS' DRUG INTERDICTION RESPONSIBILITIES
AND ITS C3I CENTER PROGRAM

The Customs Service is responsible for enforcing U.S. trade laws and numerous other federal laws applicable to persons and cargo entering the United States from foreign countries. Among Customs' many law enforcement responsibilities is preventing illegal goods of all kinds--including illegal drugs--from being smuggled into the United States.

Customs' efforts to control drug smuggling can be divided

into three main areas, two of which are exclusively dedicated to drug interdiction. First, Customs operates an air interdiction program the objective of which is to detect and apprehend illegal drug smuggling via private airplanes. Second, Customs operates a marine interdiction program aimed at detecting and apprehending illegal drug smuggling via marine vessels operating within the 12-mile coastal water boundary of the United States. Third, Customs' attempts to detect illegal drug smuggling in the course of or in conjunction with its multi-purpose inspection of persons and cargo entering the United States from foreign countries at airports, seaports, and land border crossings.

C3I stands for command, control, communication, and intelligence. In general terms, Customs C3I center program will enable it to integrate multiple sensor and other data sources into centralized facilities to (1) provide detection and identification of suspect smugglers, (2) control and coordinate intercept operations, (3) establish intra-systems communications, and (4) enhance anti-drug smuggling intelligence. Customs' plans involve establishing two sector centers (one for the east and one for the west) and a national command center which will allow it to manage all Customs' and other enforcement assets in an integrated fashion. The C3I center program was initiated by Customs in order to provide better support for its air interdiction program but was redesigned to include marine interdiction activities in the east sector. A number of studies commissioned by Customs, which I will elaborate on shortly,

discussed the centralization of drug interdiction command, control, communication, and intelligence capabilities. Congress has also supported the C3I center concept by providing funds for Customs to initiate development of C3I centers.

The Director of Customs' Office of Enforcement Support told us that command, control, and communications capabilities along the southern border have not kept pace with recent and planned increases in detection capabilities. These capabilities, he said, do not adequately provide for using intelligence to enhance drug interdiction efforts. He added that the increased resources provided by the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 will further increase Customs' need for integrated and centralized command, control, communications, and intelligence capabilities.

Studies prepared by private firms under government contracts recommended the establishment of C3I centers and described alternative approaches for establishing a C3I center program. In 1983, a report entitled Report on the U.S. Customs Service Air Program Assessment, also known as the Siler study, concluded that the interdiction of drug trafficking must be a unified and coordinated national effort. It recommended that C3I centers be established at the Air Force's Sectoral Operation Control Centers (SOCC) at Tyndall Air Force Base and at March Air Force Base. These SOCCs are part of our nation's North American Air Defense Command System (NORAD) and are the focal point for netting the extensive radar information for defensive purposes. The report also urged that the help of C3I experts from the military and

aerospace industry be sought for the design of the two state-of-the-art C3I centers.

A January 1985 MITRE Corporation report outlined the operational concepts and performance requirements of a C3I system needed as part of Customs' overall air interdiction efforts. This report did not discuss possible locations for the centers.

A May 1985 MITRE Corporation report identified design alternatives for C3I centers to be used in Customs' air interdiction program. This MITRE study described three basic configurations for a C3I center program. One configuration would consolidate radar feeds from surveillance aircraft, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) radar, and the North American Air Defense Command System at two Air Force Sectoral Operational Control Centers at Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida and March Air Force Base in California. The second configuration locates the C3I centers at FAA facilities in Jacksonville, Florida, and Albuquerque, New Mexico, to take advantage of FAA radars and flight plan information. The third configuration calls for a single C3I center located in San Antonio, Texas, because it is centrally located and a Customs' air support branch is located there. The study estimated a range of costs for the alternatives depending on their equipment, staffing, and overall capabilities of between \$52.3 million and \$94.1 million.

According to an October 1985 MITRE Corporation report, the Commissioner of Customs made a decision, dated July 3, 1985, on the alternative to be pursued. The alternative selected involved

the acquisition of two C3I centers. The location for the west center was to be March Air Force Base near the southwest SOCC. According to the report, the eastern site determination had not been made but the site "may be at Tyndall Air Force Base." The purpose of the study was to provide a detailed description of the selected alternative.

On June 24, 1986, Customs held a C3I systems workshop which was attended by Customs officials from around the country. Those present identified a need for a national command center to fill several gaps in the planned two C3I center program. These gaps included (1) how the two centers could control and assign Customs' national assets, (2) how classified intelligence would be accepted, sanitized, and distributed in a timely manner, and (3) how national special operations would be planned, directed, and monitored.

Congress has supported implementation of the C3I concept, appropriating \$6 million for Customs to initiate development of the C3I program in 1986. (This amount, however, was later reduced to \$3.5 million as a result of Gramm-Rudman-Hollings reductions.) The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 authorized \$25 million for Customs "to establish command, control, communications, and intelligence centers, in locations within the United States." In the 1987 Continuing Resolution covering Customs activities, dated October 15, 1986, Congress appropriated \$41 million for the establishment of C3I centers. Senate Report Number 99-406 supporting the legislation states that the

Committee on Appropriations directs the Commissioner of Customs to "establish three sector command and control centers to be located at Miami, FL, Houston, TX, and March Air Force Base, CA." In addition, the Committee directed that "a national command and control center be established in Oklahoma City, OK." The report specified that this command and control system will be responsible for the direction of all air drug interdiction efforts by the U.S. federal government.

CURRENT STATUS OF C3I PROGRAM

Customs has taken several steps toward establishing C3I centers. In May 1986, Customs awarded a contract for about \$109,000 to the Institute for Systems Analysis for technical support services for the C3I project. The contract was increased by about \$186,000 to \$295,000 in October 1986. This contract requires the Institute to (1) assist Customs in all design reviews, technical meetings, and demonstrations conducted by contractors and (2) assist in the evaluation of systems designs, master plans, program plans, and costs.

On June 20, 1986, Customs issued a request for proposals to acquire the services of one or more contractors who would enter into the first step of a two-step procurement intended to lead to the acquisition of an integrated C3I system. According to the Director of Customs' Office of Enforcement Support, 23 firms responded. On September 30, 1986, Customs awarded contracts to each of three of the firms for about \$500,000 for performance of the first phase, which is currently underway. Work under the

contracts involves the design of and specification for the system's initial operating capabilities and requires preparation of a detailed plan for developing these capabilities into a complete C3I system. According to the request for proposals these contracts were necessary because Customs recognized that it would be impractical for it to attempt to fully specify the systems that will ultimately be required in the C3I centers.

The Director of Customs' Office of Enforcement Support told us that, as of March 5, 1987, the systems being designed will involve two sector operations centers located at March Air Force Base, California, and Richmond Heights, Florida, which is south of Miami. The Director told us that, in addition, a national C3I facility will be located in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. At the present time there are no plans to include a C3I facility in Houston, Texas, for air drug interdiction activities.

In the Southeast, the Richmond Heights, Florida, center will be a joint C3I facility for air and marine interdiction activities. Customs' marine C3I activities will be limited to those activities which are part of the Blue Lighting Operations Center presently located in Miami, Florida, with the addition of some detection capabilities provided in the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986.

Customs has contracted for the services of an Architectural Engineer/Construction Manager to design and oversee the construction of the buildings that will house the C3I facilities at March Air Force Base, Richmond Heights, and Oklahoma City. As

of March 11, 1987, \$392,000 has been obligated for the Architecture/Engineering portion of the contract at March Air Force Base. In addition, Customs is preparing to exercise the construction management portion of the contract at March Air Force Base for \$287,610. The Director of Enforcement Support told us on March 4, 1986, that a construction contract for the March Air Force Base facility should be awarded and construction begun by the end of March 1987. He said that construction contracts for the other facilities at Richmond Heights and Oklahoma City should be awarded in the near future.

COORDINATION OF THE C3I SYSTEM AMONG
AGENCIES INVOLVED IN DRUG INTERDICTION

Pursuant to your request, we examined the coordination of Customs' development of the C3I centers with other federal agencies involved in drug interdiction. The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, dated October 27, 1986, states that coordination of the establishment and location of C3I centers shall be conducted by the Commissioner of Customs; together with the Commandant of the Coast Guard; the Attorney General of the United States; and the National Narcotics Border Interdiction System.

Even before passage of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act, the Coast Guard became involved in the design and location of C3I centers. The Coast Guard conducted a study of the contributions it could make to the air interdiction program and provided the results to the National Drug Enforcement Policy Board in July 1986. Among other things, the Coast Guard study concluded that C3I centers

should be co-located with the Air Force at the SOCC's at March and Tyndall Air Force bases in order to facilitate information sharing between the military and the C3I centers, as well as to make efficient use of facilities and equipment located at the SOCCs. The Coast Guard study concluded that the command centers should be responsible for gathering intelligence and detection information from all available sources, sorting radar contacts, scrambling interceptors, vectoring intercept and tracker resources, and coordinating apprehension. Finally, it recommended that the centers should be manned by Coast Guard, Customs Service, and possibly Air Force personnel.

Through a negotiation process, Customs and Coast Guard have agreed, as of March 6, 1987, to co-locate eastern U.S. air and marine C3I activities at Richmond Heights, Florida. As I will discuss shortly, the negotiation process is continuing with respect to such matters as the command structure at the center.

Customs officials told us that Customs has kept other agencies informed about its plans and has solicited the help of the Department of Defense. An interagency agreement between Customs and the Secretary of the Air Force was signed on July 13, 1984. The Air Force agreed to provide the necessary services to develop and implement a Customs C3I systems acquisition plan. The MITRE studies that I referred to earlier were performed in support of this commitment. In addition, in November 1986, Customs asked for input from the Department of Defense on the contractors' design proposals, briefings on C3I operational

concepts, and possibly training for personnel to be assigned to C3I centers.

We have seen minutes of several coordinating meetings that were held among officials representing Customs, the Coast Guard, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the National Narcotics Border Interdiction System, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the Department of Defense. In addition, officials of the National Drug Enforcement Policy Board told us that they are monitoring the establishment of the C3I centers to ensure proper coordination of roles and missions.

DECISIONS TO BE MADE

ON THE C3I PROGRAM

Customs is about to begin construction of the buildings to house the C3I centers, but several matters need to be decided: (1) What will the command structure be at the Richmond Heights, Florida, C3I center considering that both Customs and Coast Guard will be at the facility? (2) Will there be a national C3I center in Oklahoma City? and (3) What will be the cost of the program?

The first matter to be decided by Customs relates to the command structure of the Southeast center. The facility, as originally conceived, was to be limited to Customs air interdiction program operations and earlier studies indicated that the SOCC at Tyndall Air Force Base would be a suitable site. Customs decided in November 1985 that the C3I center should include both air and marine interdiction activities. It decided in the summer of 1986 that the center should be located in or

near Miami, Florida. While there was no formal study which considered these decisions in view of other alternatives, the Director of Customs' Office of Enforcement Support told us that by locating near Miami, Customs could take advantage of the strong working relationships Customs had developed with state and local law enforcement agencies involved in marine drug interdiction.

During the development of the plans for the center, the Coast Guard initiated efforts to become directly involved in air interdiction activities in the southeast and sought direct involvement in the southeast C3I. In addition, because both air and marine activities would be involved, the question arose as to whether Coast Guard's marine interdiction activities should be part of the C3I center. As I stated earlier, Customs and Coast Guard agreed to co-locate at a center to be constructed at Richmond Heights. The matter of the appropriate command role for each agency, however, has not been decided.

The second matter to be decided relates to the need for the national center in Oklahoma City. While there appears to be no formal study either justifying the need for a national center or its location in Oklahoma City, Customs is continuing with its plans to establish the center primarily because of the language contained in Senate Report Number 99-406.

Earlier, I mentioned the Siler study and several MITRE Corporation studies which discussed the need for the C3I center program. None of these studies, however, mentioned the need for

a national command center.

The National Narcotics Border Interdiction System staff has questioned the need for the Oklahoma City facility. According to the NNBIS Staff Director, no resources exist in Oklahoma City which would justify locating a center there. The NNBIS Staff Director told us that it would take a substantial amount of money to establish a C3I center in Oklahoma City because each component of the C3I center (command, control, communications, and intelligence) would have to be built from the ground up.

The National Drug Enforcement Policy Board has considered the need for and location of the national C3I center. According to the Assistant to the Chairman of the Board, the Policy Board agreed on December 18, 1986, that the national C3I center not be established. The Assistant to the Director stated that this decision was transmitted to Congress in supplemental appropriations language. No action has been taken on this request.

Because the need for and location of a national center is still being discussed, it is unclear whether three contractors should, and realistically can, be designing a C3I system that includes a national command center at the present time. According to the Director of Customs' Office of Enforcement Support, the designs now being prepared could be modified to include the functions of a national C3I center in the two sector centers.

The third matter to be decided relates to the cost of the

C3I program. The Director of Customs' Office of Enforcement Support told us that the program is expected to cost about \$41 million, which includes the establishment of a core system at the three locations and the construction of the buildings. This estimate is not based on any formal cost studies, but rather on the amount appropriated by Congress for commanding and controlling all air interdiction efforts. Because of the lack of formal cost studies, it is not clear whether the \$41 million Congress has appropriated is too little or too much for the C3I center program.

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This concludes my prepared statement. We will be happy to answer any questions you may have.