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United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

June 7, 2006

Congressional Requesters:

Subject: Implementation of Detention Standards for Aliens in Custody

Concerning your letter to the Comptroller General requesting a GAO study of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) implementation of detention standards for aliens in its custody pending civil administrative immigration removal proceedings, we met with your staff on May 26, 2006, to gain a further understanding of your needs. Please see enclosure I for the list of requesters with whom we will be coordinating this assignment.

In order to develop an appropriate methodological approach, we need to proceed with a separate design phase. The purpose of this letter is to set forth the study objectives and provide you with a completion date for the design phase. The overall objectives of our work will be to evaluate: 1) DHS staffing levels devoted to ensuring compliance with alien detention standards and associated staff guidance and training provided to personnel to oversee compliance with the standards; 2) DHS efforts and methodologies used to evaluate and oversee compliance with the standards; 3) any reports on the status of compliance with standards compiled by DHS and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) within DHS, the American Bar Association (ABA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Division of Immigration Health Services, or other available sources; 4) any pertinent complaints filed with DHS and ICE, the Department of Justice (DOJ), ABA, UNHCR, and HHS' Division of Immigration Health Services by detainees; and 5) any DHS efforts to terminate or modify contracts of facilities that fail to comply with the standards.

The design phase will be completed by August 25, 2006. We will remain in contact with your staff, and at the end of the design phase, we will provide you with a projected completion date for the total study. Should you have any questions, please contact me on (202) 512-8777 or StanaR@GAO.GOV or, Charles Michael Johnson, Assistant Director, on (202) 512-7331 or JohnsonCM@GAO.GOV.

Sincerely yours,

Richard M. Stana
Director, Homeland Security and Justice Team

Enclosure

LIST OF REQUESTERS

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Homeland Security
House of Representatives
(Staff Member: Sue Ramanathan)

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing,
and Terrorism Risk Assessment
Committee on Homeland Security
House of Representative
(Staff Member: Ur M. Jaddou)

The Honorable Kendrick B. Meek
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Management, Integration, and Oversight
Committee on Homeland Security
House of Representatives
(Staff Member: Preeti Chaudhari)

The Honorable Edward J. Markey
Member
House of Representatives
(Staff Member: Mark Bayer)

The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member
House of Representatives
(Staff Member: Courtney Christian)

The Honorable Sheila Jackson Lee
Member
House of Representatives
(Staff Member: Greg Berry)