



**PREPARED STATEMENT OF
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Census in Peril: Getting the 2010 Decennial Back on Track, Part II

**Before the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
U.S. Senate**

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Thank you for the opportunity to come before you again to discuss our ongoing efforts to address the problems associated with the Field Data Collection Automation Program.

Secretary Gutierrez has just outlined our plans for going forward with the Field Data Collection Automation (FDCA) program. Since the Secretary last spoke to you, all of the options regarding the FDCA program were thoroughly examined. We have considered feasibility, timing, and, of course, costs, while placing our greatest emphasis on ensuring the most accurate possible census in 2010.

I fully support his decision. Our contractor will continue developing the Address Canvassing operation utilizing the handheld computers and develop the Operations Control System, and the Census Bureau will implement a paper-based Nonresponse Follow-up (NRFU) operation and provide the RCC infrastructure. We will work with our contractor to ensure that the other components of the FDCA program are successfully completed. This option maximizes our control of 2010 Census operations. The Census Bureau knows how to develop and implement a paper-based NRFU, and our decision to do so again gives us flexibility and minimizes the risks we identified in the FDCA program. At the same time, the plan allows us to leverage Global Positioning System technologies by using handheld computers in the Address Canvassing

operation. This will improve the accuracy of our address list, which is fundamental to an accurate census.

This is not a decision any of us are taking lightly. The Risk Reduction Task Force, chaired by former Deputy Director William Barron and made up of key Census Bureau officials from each office involved with decennial census operations, personnel from the Department of Commerce, and Mitre Corporation, carefully assessed every aspect of the FDCA program. Their work was then reviewed by the expert panel established by the Secretary. Nearly all of us involved with this effort reached the same conclusion: Moving to a paper-based NRFU operation significantly reduces risk.

There are four reasons for this:

- 1) We experienced a series of problems with the handheld computers (HHC) during the Dress Rehearsal Address Canvassing Operation.
 - The HHCs often took far longer than expected to move between screens, and they occasionally froze up resulting in enumerator downtime.
 - There were difficulties in obtaining efficient transmission to and from the handheld computer. This, too, led to delays for the enumerators.
 - The HHCs could not handle assignment areas that contained more than 700 addresses, and our contractor does not believe that this flaw can be corrected. The result is that we now have to develop an alternative outside of the FDCA system for situations where we cannot reduce the size of large assignment areas.
- 2) We determined that if we had similar problems in the NRFU Dress Rehearsal, it could be too late to correct them and too late for us to pursue any alternative.
- 3) Given our efforts to mitigate elements of risk to decennial operations, the automated NRFU operation provides less flexibility than a paper-based

operation because of the lead time required for ordering and equipping additional HHCs.

- 4) We know we can successfully complete a paper NRFU since we have done so in past censuses. By taking this work back, the Census Bureau can focus the work of the contractor on completing work on Address Canvassing and the operational control system.

We recognize that the option we chose is not without risk and has cost implications. However, we believe it is the best way to ensure a successful 2010 Census. We are taking actions that mitigate risk, particularly the ultimate risk of an incomplete or inaccurate census.

As we move forward I am taking a number of steps to ensure that we address the organizational weaknesses that caused the problems with the FDCA program. This begins with a new management approach.

Arnold Jackson, a seasoned Census manager with extensive experience directing information technology projects, has taken over as Associate Director for the Decennial Census. He is establishing a schedule for daily assessment meetings with Census Bureau and contractor personnel; weekly status assessment and resolution meetings with the Deputy Director and me; and regular meetings with the Department of Commerce. We will continue to keep Congress informed of our progress, and any problems that arise.

We will move quickly to strengthen management planning and oversight relative to key areas such as:

- Risk Management
- Issue Identification
- Product Testing
- Communications
- Budgeting and Cost Management.

We are also instituting an embedding process of Census Bureau personnel with the contractor at the worksite, and contractor personnel at Census Bureau Headquarters. This will help alleviate the communications problems that led to the breakdown in the requirements-definition process.

We will institute periodic, unscheduled reviews by MITRE and departmental specialists in IT, project management, and contracting.

Within the next 30 days we will produce a detailed operating plan for the FDCA re-plan that includes deadlines for key milestones. In 45 days we will develop an integrated project schedule for the 2010 Census. And in 60 days we will produce a testing program for the automated Address Canvassing operation.

All of this will strengthen implementation of the Decennial Census as we move forward.

I want to stress again that since becoming Director in January, addressing the problems associated with the FDCA program has been my highest priority. My colleagues and I share the concerns of the Congress about the increased costs we are now facing. Nonetheless, we must find a way to move forward. With the steps I have outlined today, I am confident we can put the 2010 Census back on track.

Thank you for this opportunity to be with you today. I am happy to answer any of your questions.