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NINETY-EIGHTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

July 11, 1984

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MAJORITY—228-6081
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JUL 16 1984

Ans'd.....

The Honorable Charles A. Bowsher
 Comptroller General of the United States
 General Accounting Office
 Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear General:

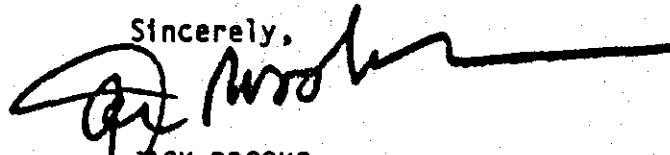
The Committee on Government Operations has long been concerned over the inability of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) to effectively automate its operations. A 1978 Committee investigation into PTO's management and use of computer resources revealed that the Office had failed to apply modern technology to its operations and that serious technical and operating problems were plaguing the agency. Subsequently, the Congress directed the PTO to undertake a two-year planning effort to identify and, if necessary, develop computerized data and retrieval systems which could be applied to all aspects of the Office's operations. In response to that direction, an Automation Master Plan was delivered to Congress in December 1982.

In accordance with that plan, the PTO has initiated an eight-year project, estimated to cost over \$300 million, which is intended to greatly increase the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations through full automation. The first phase of this project, which involves the development and implementation of a computerized trademark search system, is scheduled for completion in December of this year. It has recently come to my attention, however, that serious concerns have been raised about both the manner in which this phase was undertaken and the effects of the resultant system's limitations on the future use of trademark data. Specific concerns raised include (1) the propriety of certain contracts entered into by PTO, (2) the cost effectiveness of the automated trademark system, (3) restrictions on the public's access to trademark data processed by the system, and (4) the ability of the acquired hardware to handle PTO's current and future workload.

In view of these concerns, I am requesting that GAO undertake a comprehensive review of PTO's management of its automation program and report the results to the Committee by March 15, 1985. Since the trademark system is to become operational at year end, I would appreciate receiving your findings, conclusions and recommendations on that portion of the review no later than October 31, 1984.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,



JACK BROOKS
 Chairman