

## GRILLED ... MCNARY GETS SKEPTICISM

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### **Body**

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WASHINGTON - Immigration Commissioner Gene McNary's plea for a steep budget increase spurred hot-tempered House members to grill him Monday over investigative reports that roast the immigration agency. Calling McNary's \$1 billion budget request "a whopping increase," Rep. Harold Rogers, R-Ky., complained: "We should be getting a streamlined agency with no bugs." But plenty of "bugs" were cited by Rogers and other members of the House Appropriations subcommittee that oversees the budget for McNary's Immigration and Naturalization Service. During Monday's hearing, House members sparred with McNary over critical reports on his agency by the General Accounting Office and other investigators. For his part, McNary, former executive of St. Louis County, said he was doing all he could to improve an agency that was plagued by management problems when he took over as commissioner 16 months ago. "It's like a big, dirty-faced kid. Nobody had been willing to touch it," McNary said of the agency. He said "many of the criticisms that the GAO made were accurate and have been corrected." But members of the House panel weren't so sure. They peppered McNary with pointed questions about: Duplication of responsibilities involving the Border Patrol and other immigration agency investigators. Congressmen questioned why about 150 Border Patrol officers were working more than 100 miles from a U.S. border. McNary said agency officials had submitted a new plan "to concentrate Border Patrol resources at the border." Those officials include G.H. Kleinknecht, former head of the St. Louis County Police Department, who now holds the immigration agency's top law enforcement job.

The agency's "chaotic budget process," which came under severe criticism from the General Accounting Office. "It seems to me that . . . some people should have been fired by this time" because of the agency's budget problems, said Rep. Jim Kolbe, R-Ariz. McNary and the immigration agency's comptroller responded by outlining steps that they have taken to tighten and centralize the agency's budget process, which they contended was being brought under control. "Excessive overtime" costs. McNary said this year's projection of \$12.5 million in overtime costs was a reduction from last year's. But House members said the agency's estimates for next year showed an increase to \$14 million. Rep. Joseph D. Early, D-Maine, demanded: "With the cutbacks in international air traffic (due to the Persian Gulf War, why do we get an increase in overtime costs" for the immigration agency inspectors who interview passengers on those flights. McNary is asking Congress to increase his agency's budget by \$121 million - an increase of nearly 14 percent - for the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1. He argued that the money would pay for 733 new employees (up from the current 12,221) and help "address the severely needed law enforcement and infrastructure requirements" of the agency. "The INS is on the road to a full and complete recovery," asserted McNary. But Early and other members of the appropriations panel appeared to be skeptical - especially in light of recent reports that Justice Department officials have demanded changes in the service's management. "I'm having a few problems," said Early, who compared the immigration agency's management unfavorably to that of other agencies under his panel's jurisdiction - including the FBI and the Bureau of Prisons. Early contended that McNary's efforts to "centralize" the agency's management by giving its headquarters office more power appeared to run contrary to the management trends at the FBI, prisons bureau and some other agencies under the U.S. Justice Department.

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