

report is obtained on the bidder, and a plant facilities inspection is made on the manufacturing source, whether foreign or domestic. Usually, more time is required for such inspection in foreign countries. The additional time varies from a few days to several weeks, depending on the circumstances and whether qualified Government personnel are available in such countries, or commercial firms must be employed to perform the inspection.

2. *Question:* It is understood that GSA buys approximately 15 million dollars worth of tool kits annually for military users and that growing numbers of foreign made tools are supplied as components of those needs. As components of a kit such tools are excluded from provisions of the Buy-America Act. Does GSA have means for determining the dollar value of such foreign components?

*Answer:* Procurement of tool kits by GSA is subject to the Buy American Act. Substantially all kits purchased have been certified as domestic products. Under the Buy American Act, as implemented by Executive Order 10582, the kit is considered of foreign origin, if the cost of foreign products used constitutes 50 percent or more the cost of all the products used in such kits. We do not have any valid measure of the value of components of foreign origin within this limit.

3. *Question:* Does GSA have the necessary qualified people to understand both software and hardware in a total computer system to be able to write the technical specifications which will be used for requests for quota when seeking bids from computer manufacturers and peripheral manufacturers? (If the answer is "yes") : Then is there any reason or justification for having to ask a computer manufacturer to write the specification for the government?

*Answer:* GSA does not have qualified specialists who understand both software and hardware to the extent necessary to permit the development of technical specifications which, strictly speaking, would relate to the development and preparation of finite equipment system specifications. Generally, requests for proposals contain data system specifications which are required to be developed by using agencies in such a manner so that they ensure free competition among equipment manufacturers. In accordance with BOB policy guidance as contained in their Circular No. A-54, these specifications delineate the objectives which the system is intended to accomplish; indicate the data processing requirements in terms of data input and output, volumes of data, frequencies, and timing.

4. *Question:* Can you break apart a computer system in order to put individual pieces out for bid? In other words, can you put out for bid, for example, an IBM system which would include the break out of the main frame, the central processor memory, the line printers, the card reader, the card punch, the high capacity storage memories and the other peripheral equipment? If not, why not? If yes, has the Government done this; and is it standard practice to do so?

*Answer:* It is possible to break apart a computer system in order to put individual pieces out for bid provided adequate resources are available. However, at this time, neither the practicality nor the economic advantages that may obtain as a result of such a technique have been determined. Further study and evaluation to determine the relative efficiency and economy, including a careful study of alternative courses of action, is required. It is not a standard practice to segregate the various elements of a computer system and to put out individual pieces for bid, although we understand that in certain limited cases involving research and development, this technique has been used.

5. (a) *Question:* Do you have the necessary qualified people to assemble a total system?

*Answer:* No. GSA does not have the engineering staff necessary to assemble individual components, make modifications, and perform other work required to do this. GSA does not have an inventory of such qualified personnel within the Federal Government to be able to form a judgment on this as it relates to other agencies.

(b) *Question:* Is the government assembling its own computers or do we buy an entire system from one manufacturer?

*Answer:* As indicated in the answer to Question 5(a) above, we generally do not assemble a total system, but buy an entire system.

6. *Question:* Do you know whether any independent peripheral equipment is in any system purchased by the government from a major computer manufacturer?