2.7.3 PRIORITY THREE: HEADQUARTERS SECURE SYSTEM

Following on from the current pilots, studies should begin of a prototype of a secure office automation system to assist managers and desk officers in the substantive area of the Department's activities. For their tasks there exists technology which may enable them to be more efficient, leaving more time for analytical and creative work. The common features of their work include drafting and re-drafting correspondence, and consulting others. Electronic drafting tools and electronic means of communication would make these tasks easier to perform. In addition, new technology will provide them with quicker access to both Departmental and outside data bases.

Experience with the present projects has been encouraging. The equipment used can only process unclassified data and it has been recognized that the Department will have to introduce automated office equipment that is secure to meet its longer term needs. Preparatory work should begin without delay in the form of a feasibility study in FY 1985-86, building on the results of the pilots as they become available, to define the requirements of managers and desk officers for automated equipment and the kinds of equipment that could meet them. A subsequent step would be general design of the system. In addition, it will be necessary to continue preparation for the installation of the necessary network cabling.

Assuming the successful completion of the preliminary studies in FY 1985/86, detailed design and installation of the first terminals is projected for FY 1986/87, with additional terminals being acquired in following FYs. The figures are estimates which will be refined once the initial studies have been completed and evaluated.

2.7.4 PRIORITY FOUR: USA POSTS

Several projects have been put forward to provide systems to Posts in the USA. These Posts already have word processors and, in the past year, improvements have been introduced so that Posts and Headquarters are linked in a communicating word processing network. Some posts have micro-computers and Washington has access to a computer service bureau. However, if the full benefits are to be obtained from the introduction of Informatics systems to the Posts in the United States then there should be a comprehensive examination of their activities to determine the most effective way of introducing systems to support the range of programs at all of them, and of linking these systems with Headquarters.

The proximity of the United States to Canada and the very level of technical expertise available in the cities where Canadian Posts are located should mean wider introduction of Informatics could be more easily accomplished there than elsewhere in the world and at lower cost. Moreover the high priority in the Department's objectives of managing relations with the United States and the complexity of Departmental operations there underline the urgency of this project.

As a first step, it is suggested that a study be undertaken of existing plans and proposals for use of Informatics in the operations of Posts in the USA. Among the study's objectives should be a precise definition of requirements across the full range of Post activities and possible integrated approaches to support them. The study should also endeavour to identify the concrete benefits that would result from the wider use of Informatics at Posts in the United States and also to identify the operational and support resources needed at individual Posts and at Headquarters.

A possible scenario thereafter would involve introducing equipment to one Post in 1986-87 and focussing on expanding use of the computer planned for installation at the Embassy in Washington to support other Post programs. In FY 1987-88, three additional Posts would be equipped, with three more following in FY 1988-89, another three in FY 1989-90 and the final Posts being equipped in FY