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G.A.O. Says Heroin Smuggling Is Too Sweeping to Halt at Borders

WASHINGTON, Dec. 12 (Reuters) — Government auditors ended today a year-long investigation into heroin smuggling by concluding that traffic in the drug was too big to stop at United States borders.

The General Accounting Office said in a report to Congress that customs inspectors trying to intercept the 10 to 12 tons of heroin entering the country each year were attempting to find a needle in a haystack.

The main conclusion of the 80-page report was: "The nature and magnitude of heroin smuggling and the customs mission, workload and manpower make it unrealistic to expect

customs inspections to prevent most heroin from entering the United States."

The investigators said customs officials, the front-line defense against smugglers, seized only 6 1/2 per cent of the estimated traffic in 1971.

Customs inspectors provide some deterrent against low-level smugglers, they said, but they criticized detection methods as relatively haphazard.

The auditors said that customs officials depended heavily on judgment, chance and advance information to detect heroin.

"Although these efforts may deter amateurs and small-scale

smugglers, they have not had, and probably cannot have, any real impact on the organized groups which engage in large-scale heroin smuggling," the report said.

A spokesman at the Customs Bureau had no immediate comment on the report.

It reported "incredible" profits in the heroin trade, resulting from sales of \$17-million a day in the United States.

The investigation centered in the port areas of New York because of the belief that most of the heroin either enters or passes through New York on its way to addicts.

"Should a heroin smuggler

choose New York City as a point of entry, he has available to him a choice of smuggling techniques limited only by his imagination," it said.

Aside from the complex job of detecting heroin in tons of merchandise shipped into the city, the problem is further compounded by the ease with which millions of dollars' worth of the powder can be concealed in small places, it explained.

The auditors said heroin had been found in wine bottles, dead animals, diplomatic pouches, ski poles and in the clothing of women pretending to be pregnant.

Another serious problem

hampering investigation, the G.A.O. said, was conflict and lack of coordination among various Government enforcement agencies dealing with the heroin problem.

The office recommended steps to aid investigations, including a mobile strike force to make intensive searches of cargo.