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Sent: Wednesday, May 27, 2009 2:18 PM
To: Comments
Subject: SAR 3064-0077

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Suspicious Activity Report by Depository Institutions. Our financial institution recognizes the importance of this form in combating terrorism, investigating money laundering and other financial crime and is continuously striving to ensure that the forms completed by our institution are accurate and are as complete and thorough as possible.

Specifically, we would like to comment on the following:

1) The accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the collection of information

We estimate that the average amount of time spent on the completion of each SAR is 2 hours and 15 minutes. This includes the time that our institution spends in keying data into the case management system used to file the electronic SAR, time spent by management in reviewing the data to be submitted and the time spent in revising any of the data prior to submission based on management recommendations.

2) Ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected

FinCEN should consider redesigning the form so that Part V of the form (the "narrative") can be eliminated and replaced by specific fields that request the type of information that is most useful to law enforcement. For example, the form could include a specific field that is titled "type of suspicious activity" and include various checkboxes with different types of suspicious activity (e.g., structuring, foreign corruption, wire transfers sent in large, round dollar amounts). According to the February 2009 GAO report, it seems that in spite of FinCEN's and law enforcement's various efforts aimed at improving the quality of SAR narratives, this section of the form remains highly subjective and many of the narratives do not sufficiently describe why a transaction is suspicious and include repeat information from other sections of the form.

If Part V cannot be redesigned, it would seem that it would be more useful to law enforcement if item #35 on Part III of the form (summary characterization of suspicious activity) were expanded to include the most common types of activity that can be defined as "transactions aggregating \$5,000 or more that involve potential money laundering or violations of the BSA" rather than asking depository institutions to lump all of these items into one of the three checkboxes; Bank Secrecy Act/Structuring/Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing or Other.

3) Ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents

Consideration should be given to substituting the requirement that financial institutions continue to file SARs at least every 90 days on continuing SAR activity with a requirement to file SARs on continuing activity every 6 months. According to the GAO study, it typically takes law enforcement years to use the information from SARs in their investigations. In addition, the instructions to the form should be revised to be as specific as possible to the various fields on the form and provide detailed guidance related to what law enforcement finds useful.

4) Estimates of capital or start-up costs and costs of operation, maintenance, and purchase of services to provide information

Our financial institution uses a combination of monitoring systems to detect suspicious activities; employee referrals, manual systems and automated systems. We filed a total of 267 SARs in 2008 due to Bank Secrecy Act/Structuring/Money Laundering type suspicious activity. The cost per SAR was approximately \$1,691 based on the salaries of the employees who research and investigate the suspicious activity, the annual license fees of the automated system used to detect the suspicious activity and automated system used to track the cases. This cost does not include other operational expenses such as the required IT support of these systems.

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