

House members complain of 'obsolete' FBI computer systems

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From Ted Barrett
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WASHINGTON (CNN) -- The congressional committee with oversight over the FBI sent a letter last month to Director Louis Freeh saying it is "concerned that the FBI has information technology systems that are slow, unreliable and obsolete -- systems that are unable to address the Bureau's critical needs."

graphic

The House Judiciary Committee letter, which was provided to CNN, asks Freeh to give an evaluation of the problems "plaguing" the bureau's computer system and an assessment of what can be done to fix them.

Freeh, who announced recently he would retire from the bureau next month, has not responded to the congressional request.

Law enforcement officials have blamed the lapse in collecting and turning over documents in the Timothy McVeigh case, in part, on the bureau's antiquated computer system.

The letter, sent April 25, notes that the FBI had taken steps to "address the deficiencies in the Bureau's IT (information technology) systems; however, more needs to be done."

"Your response should contain an explanation of the steps already taken to address these deficiencies and needs, and it should also detail the Bureau's future plans to address these critical IT issues," the letter says.

Finally, the letter encourages Freeh to utilize the expertise of the General Accounting Office -- a congressional agency -- as it decides how to upgrade its computer system.

"The GAO is prepared to assist the Bureau throughout the process to ensure that this technology upgrade becomes a model program instead of another government IT failure like those which GAO found at other agencies," the letter said.

The letter was signed by Committee Chairman James Sensenbrenner, R-Wisconsin, ranking minority member John Conyers, D-Michigan, Crime Subcommittee Chairman Lamar Smith, R-Texas, and subcommittee ranking member Barney Frank, D-Massachusetts.

VIDEO

CNN's Kelli Arena reports on an outdated computer system that the FBI blames for the missing McVeigh evidence (May 12)

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