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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**USPTO Will Begin Study of Patent Examiners' Production Goals**

*Study complements recommendation from GAO*

The Commerce Department's United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) today announced that, as part of its quality initiatives, it will review assumptions the agency uses to establish production goals for patent examiners. This announcement coincides with the release of the Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, "Hiring Efforts are not Sufficient to Reduce Patent Application Backlog." The report recommends that the USPTO "undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the assumptions that the agency uses to establish its production goals." In its review, the USPTO will work with its examiners and user communities.

USPTO Director Jon Dudas praised the GAO report, stating "I am pleased that, after careful study, the GAO agrees with our assessment that hiring alone will not reduce the backlog of patent applications. By far, our most valuable resource is our employees. We believe that our 5-year strategic plan identifies initiatives that effectively protect innovation while promoting a quality workplace that attracts and retains employees. That is why many of our most current initiatives incentivize applicants and the public to provide the best information to patent examiners early in the examination process."

Focusing attention on the rapid changes the USPTO has faced, Director Dudas noted that "over the past decade, the USPTO workload has increased in size and complexity. In response, we have also implemented a long list of successful internal initiatives, from automating examiner search tools to hiring over 3,600 new examiners in the past three years. As a result, we have seen improvements in quality and production. A next logical step in bringing the USPTO fully into the 21st century is to reevaluate how these initiatives impact our goals."

The USPTO's review of assumptions underlying the current production standards will encourage a completely fresh look at production in a manner that will motivate employees, improve its work environment, and enhance the quality and efficiency of the patent examination process.

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