About OTA's organization and operations

Created by the Technology Assessment Act of 1972 [86 Stat. 797], OTA is an agency of the legislative branch of the Federal Government (a copy of the Act is found on p. 52). OTA's primary function is to provide congressional committees with studies that identify the positive and negative consequences of policy alternatives affecting the uses of technology.

OTA assists Congress by identifying existing or probable impacts of technology; alternative technological methods and management programs for implementing specific actions (estimating and comparing the impacts of alternatives); and areas where additional research or data collection is required to provide support for assessments. OTA presents its completed analyses to the appropriate legislative authorities and, whenever possible, undertakes whatever additional related activities are necessary.

The Act provides for a bipartisan Technology Assessment Board, a director, and other employees and consultants necessary for the Office to conduct its work. The congressional board is made up of six Senators, appointed by the President pro tempore of the Senate, and six Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House, evenly divided by party. In 1993, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Massachusetts) and Rep. Don Sundquist (R-Tennessee) served as the Chairman and Vice Chairman, respectively, of the board. The two posts alternate between the Senate and the House with each Congress. The board members from each Chamber select their respective officer.

The congressional board sets the policies of the Office and is the sole and exclusive body governing OTA. The board appoints the director, who is OTA's chief executive officer and a nonvoting member of the board.

The Act also calls for a Technology Assessment Advisory

Council composed of 10 public members eminent in scientific and technological fields, the Comptroller General of the United States, and the Director of the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress. The advisory council advises the board and the director on such matters as the balance, comprehensiveness, and quality of OTA's work, and OTA's non-governmental resources.

Requests for OTA assessments may be initiated by:

- the chairman of any standing, special, select or joint committee of Congress, acting alone, at the request of the ranking minority member, or at the request of a majority of the committee members;
- the OTA board; or
- the OTA director, in consultation with the board.

The authorization of specific assessment projects and the allocation of funds for their performance are the responsibilities of the OTA board.

Toward the end of January 1993, new senior management had begun to be put in place at OTA. By the end of FY 1993, an entirely new top management team was confirmed, consisting of a new director and two new assistant directors. This reorganization was initiated with the departure of former director John H. Gibbons to assume the position of President Clinton's Science Advisor.

The analytical work of the Office is now organized into two divisions, each headed by an assistant director. They encompass assessments grouped in the areas of energy and materials; industry, technology, and employment; international security and commerce; science, education, and transportation; telecommunication and computing technologies; biological applications; food and renewable resources; health; and oceans and environment.

Administrative offices support the analytical work of the Office. These offices handle budget and finance, contracts, information services, personnel, telecommunications and information systems, building services, and publishing.

The Congressional and Public Affairs Office assists in coordinating OTA's work with various committees of the House and Senate, by initiating communications between OTA management and staff, and the Technology Assessment Board and the Technology Assessment Advisory Council. OTA publications are widely disseminated on Capitol Hill and are publicly available. The Information Center provides public access to the full collection of OTA publications, including an online index, and the Publications Distribution Office within information Marketing handles public dissemination of OTA publications. (General Information on OTA and availability of OTA publications is listed on the inside back cover.)

FY 1993 Activities

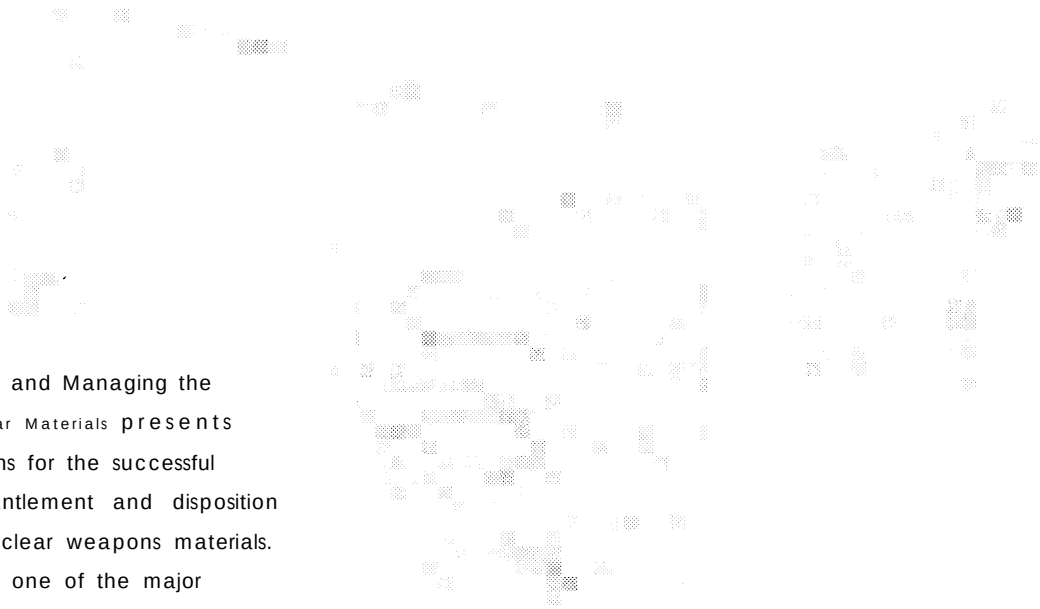
The prosperity and security of the Nation depend in no small part on how the U.S. Congress and others anticipate and respond to complex issues involving science and technology. OTA has an unequal led record in providing Congress with facts, figures, and nonpartisan analyses it can rely on in dealing with critical national issues involving science and technology. As we approach the 2 1st century, the United States and the world are undergoing momentous political, economic, socia1, and technological transformations that pose both new problems and new opportunities

for the nation's lawmakers. U.S. lawmakers seeking to cope with these transformations are likely to find that the guidance OTA can provide is more valuable than ever.

During FY 1993, OTA completed 50 reports spanning the full range of science and technology issues facing the Congress. The following are examples of OTA projects that had a significant impact in areas that are of vital interest to the Congress:

- Getting the U.S. economy on o sound footing for the years ahead is clearly a high priority of the Congress. One of the challenges will be to find productive civilian uses for the resources that were formerly devoted to the Nation's defense. OTA's assessment of U.S. Technology and the Defense Conversion, which includes Defense Conversion; Redirecting R&D, concentrates on new opportunities in this area. Another OTA report, Adult Literacy and New Technologies: Tools for a Lifetime, focuses on how information technologies can help equip U.S. citizens with the skills needed to participate fully in the workplace. Multinationals and the National Interest discusses how to help ensure that multinational corporations such as IBM and AT&T work to support economic growth and high standards of living in the United States.
- Health care reform increasingly is coming to dominate the domestic policy agenda, and OTA can help U.S. lawmakers sort out some of the dilemmas that arise in the debate. An Inconsistent Picture: A Compilation of Analyses of Economic Impacts of Competing Approaches to Health Care Reform by Experts and Stakeholders, for example, points to some of the reasons for the wide range of differences in estimated economic impacts of approaches to health care reform. OTA's report Pharmaceutical R&D: Costs, Risks, and Rewards can help inform the development of sound Federal policies related to payment for prescription drugs.

  Another item high on the domestic policy agenda is "reinventing govern merit." At a time when demand is growing and budgets ore tighter, Federal, State and local governments face the challenge of delivering better services faster and at less cost. OTA's report Making Government Work: Electronic Delivery of Federal Services provides Congress with alternative strategies for improving the performance of government by using modern computer and telecommunication technologies.
- Dealing with environmental problems will be a continuing challenge for U.S. policymakers for the foreseeable future. Many scientists believe that as a result of $C0_2$ emissions from cars and other factors, the Earth's climate is likely to warm by several degrees during the next few decades. OTA's report Preporing for an Uncertain Climate discusses how U.S. policymakers can begin to plan for the possibility of global worming in the light of considerable uncertainties about when, where, and how much change will occur. Another OTA report, Dismantling the



Bomb and Managing the Nuclear Materials presents options for the successful dismantlement and disposition of nuclear weapons materials. This is one of the major environmental and public health challenges the country faces.

- Energy Efficiency Technologies for Central and Eastern Europe, part of OTA's assessment of Energy and Environmental Technology Transfer to Central and Eastern Europe, notes that transferring technology to improve the efficiency of energy use is one highly cost-effective way for the United States to encourage economic reform, democratization, and stability in the former communist countries of the Soviet bloc. Energy is used very wastefully in formerly centrally planned economies, and the **waste** limits economic development and contributes to local and global environmental degradation.
- The proliferation of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons of mass destruction—especially in unstable regions of the world such as the Middle East, S. Asia, and Korea—is likely to pose a major security threat to the United States and other countries for many years to come. OTA's report Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction: Assessing the Risks identifies a range of measures from which a coherent nonproliferation treaty might be constructed.

OTA's work in FY 1994 will continue to reflect the explicit needs of the committees of jurisdiction. OTA serves as a shared resource for Congress, providing nonpartisan analysis of scientific and technological issues—issues intrinsic to all important policy issues—in a cost-effective way.