

B-115392

SEP 20 1978

The Honorable  
The Attorney General

Dear Mr. Bell:

The House Select Committee on Congressional Operations released their report on the assessment of the General Accounting Office's services to the Congress. One finding the Committee report expressed was the concern about the frequent lack of timeliness in the delivery of services requested by the Congress. In this regard, the Committee recommended that GAO should make every effort to reduce substantially the time required to complete the preparation and review of reports, including the time allowed executive agencies to submit comments.

I have taken a personal interest in improving the timeliness of our reports. I have instituted many internal improvements to speed up our reporting. One item which I have little direct control over is the receipt of agency comments. My position has always been to solicit agency comments and include them in our final reports.

It has been brought to my attention that the Justice Department has been lax in providing timely comments. Our office has provided 27 draft reports since July 1976 to your Department for comments and your Department has taken, on the average, 89 days to respond. (See enclosure.) In addition, 12 of these reports required over 100 days before GAO received your comments. I know some of our reports are extremely controversial and require extensive analysis; however, I believe that 89 days on the average is too extreme. For example, a report sent to your Department on April 19, 1978, required 132 days until we received your response. While at the same time, seven other departments and agencies responded on the same report within 50 days.

I would appreciate any action that you could initiate that would insure a more timely response to our draft reports. If you have any questions, I would be more than happy to discuss them with you at your convenience.

Sincerely yours,

(SIGNED) ELMER B. STAATS

Comptroller General  
of the United States

Enclosure