

Mr. WEITZEL. This is not a new policy for GAO.

Representative RUMSFELD. I was asking Mr. Staats if it is his testimony whether or not that he really doesn't know this is different from say 5 years ago.

Mr. STAATS. I do not believe that there is any change, if my understanding is correct, in the announced policy. I do know that there was a great deal of feeling among contractors that they were not always given a full opportunity to present their views on draft reports.

Representative RUMSFELD. If they now are given full opportunity, isn't that a change of policy?

Mr. STAATS. Let's put it this way. It is my policy, and I really don't feel that I can comment with respect to the practices that prevailed prior to the time I became Comptroller General, but to the best of my knowledge, this is not a change of policy.

But I do know, from my visits with many contractors and many contract organizations, that they felt they had not always had a full opportunity to present their views, and that sometimes the reports were issued without their being given advance notice, which we do now.

They have our report by the time that it reaches the press, so they may make additional comments if they wish to do so. But I would like to emphasize that we do not tolerate a situation where a contractor just asks for delays and delays. We have had this experience also.

We feel that if the contractor has a reasonable time—if it is a simple report—we will try to get his reply within a matter of a few weeks. We do not, unless there are very special circumstances, extend this beyond 60 days.

Mr. WEITZEL. Mr. Chairman, it might be helpful if I could clarify the record slightly on that point.

Chairman PROXMIRE. Fine, Mr. Weitzel, go right ahead.

Mr. WEITZEL. We have long had the policy of sending our draft reports to agencies, or to contractors where the material in the report could be construed as being critical of the contractor's operations.

At the hearings before the House Subcommittee on Military Operations of the House Government Operations Committee back in 1965, criticisms were leveled at the General Accounting Office for its alleged failure to completely check these reports with contractors.

For example, it was charged that sometimes we sent the reports in draft form to contractors, got their comments, and then substantially changed the reports before issuance to the Congress. So after the Holifield hearings, we did say that we would emphasize our policy of checking with the agencies and with the contractors any draft reports in which they were concerned.

Now, this was partly for the benefit of the auditors but also for the benefit of the Congress and for the General Accounting Office, to insure that our facts were on line and to insure that our reports were in proper perspective. It is not only a matter of fairness and objectivity, it is a matter of accuracy and completeness in the reports. We follow the practice now of sending our drafts to contractors when they are mentioned in the reports, and we will be glad to furnish the names of the contractors after we have had a chance to do this.

When we are making reports, we do not feel that it is necessary to send the draft to the contractor, if his name is not mentioned in the report. Eliminating this step speeds up sending the report to Congress.