

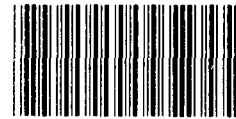
GAO

Briefing Report to the Chairman
Committee on Armed Services,
House of Representatives

February 1986

**LEGISLATIVE
OVERSIGHT**

**Congressional Requests
for Information on
Defense Activities**



129271

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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

NATIONAL SECURITY AND
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

B-221971

February 14, 1986

The Honorable Les Aspin
Chairman, Committee on
Armed Services
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On January 7, 1986, you advised us that, during hearings before various congressional committees and subcommittees, Department of Defense (DOD) officials stated that an immense burden was being placed on DOD as a result of congressional requests to provide testimony and briefings and to respond to written and telephone inquiries. You also told us that DOD officials said the ever-increasing number of committees and subcommittees with which DOD must deal is a major cause of this burden. You asked us to review and analyze data from DOD on the number of congressional requests for testimony, briefings, written inquiries, telephone inquiries, and other data and to develop trend information. On February 5, 1986, we briefed your staff on the preliminary results of our work, and have since updated the information presented in that briefing.

Our analysis is discussed in detail in appendix I. In summary, our analysis of the information provided by DOD showed, when comparing the 10-year period 1965 to 1974 with the 10-year period 1975 to 1984, that during the latest 10-year period:

- The average number of committees/subcommittees requesting hearings nearly tripled, but the number of hearings increased by only 5 percent.
- The average number of testimonies per year by the Secretary of Defense decreased from 24 to 19 (21 percent).
- The average number of written inquiries per year decreased from 164,388 to 108,772 (34 percent).
- The average number of telephone inquiries decreased from 616,385 to 505,911 (18 percent).

Our analysis also showed a significant increase in the number of pages in budget justification books and in the number of directions to DOD (reports/studies, provisions of law, and other actions) contained in reports of the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, on Armed Services, and on Budget. There were particularly significant increases beginning in fiscal year 1983.

The information provided by DOD suggests that the increase in reporting requirements comes primarily from committees and subcommittees which have had jurisdiction over DOD's budget for many years, rather than from an increase in the number of committees and subcommittees requesting information from DOD.

In conducting our review, we interviewed officials and examined information from the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the legislative liaison offices of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. We did not verify the accuracy of the information provided by DOD. To develop the trend information, we used various time periods between 1965 and 1986.

The report was discussed with responsible DOD officials and their views are incorporated in the report where appropriate.

Unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 30 days from the date of the report. At that time, we will send copies to the Chairmen, Senate and House Committees on Appropriations and on Budget and the Senate Committee on Armed Services and the Secretaries of Defense, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. Copies will also be provided to interested parties.

Sincerely yours,



Frank C. Conahan
Director

CONGRESSIONAL REQUESTS FOR TESTIMONY
AND INFORMATION FROM DOD

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY DOD

We reviewed DOD information on the number of (1) hearings at which DOD officials presented testimony, (2) committees and subcommittees requesting DOD officials to present testimony, (3) appearances by the Secretary of Defense at hearings, (4) hours spent by the Secretary at hearings, (5) DOD witnesses presenting testimony, (6) hours spent by DOD witnesses at hearings, (7) congressional briefings, (8) hours spent at congressional briefings, (9) written inquiries from congressional offices, (10) telephone inquiries from congressional offices, (11) directions, including reporting requirements, in provisions of law and reports of the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, on Armed Services, and on Budget, and (12) pages in budget justification books. The information for items 1 through 10 covered the years 1963 through 1984. For items 11 and 12, the information covered the years 1970 through 1986. Information was not available for all categories and for all of the years.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) (Comptroller) and the legislative liaison offices of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force generally provide information for items 1 through 9 weekly to OSD (Legislative Affairs), which consolidates the information. Information provided on hearings and written inquiries is supported by witness logs and correspondence control files. Telephone inquiries are estimated periodically because of the time involved in documenting each individual call. Information on briefings was compiled for a 7-year period 1976 to 1982, but this is no longer done.

The information in items 1 through 10 relates to contacts involving the legislative liaison offices and does not necessarily include congressional inquiries that go directly to commands. In those instances where copies of written responses to congressional requests are provided by commands to the liaison offices, they are included in the information.

The information in item 11 is developed from reports of the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, on Armed Services, and on Budget. OSD (Comptroller) staff reviews all of these committee reports and identifies reports and studies and other information needed to respond to issues raised. These requirements are assigned to the responsible DOD organizations for action and their status is monitored monthly. Progress reports are submitted to the OSD (Comptroller) monthly by the responsible organizations. In addition to this information, DOD is also required by various provisions of law to provide reports to the Congress.

According to a DOD official, the information provided to us does not include information requested for the record at budget hearings or questions submitted for information following hearings. The information provided on item 11 was compiled during fiscal years 1976 through 1986. DOD began maintaining this information in 1976. At that time the 1970 committee reports were reviewed to develop numerical data as a benchmark; this information was also provided. DOD also provided us information on the number of pages in budget justification books (item 12) for various budgets from 1963 through 1985.

DOD officials advised us that none of the information includes congressional requests for testimony and information concerning DOD's civil functions.

Information provided by DOD for items 1 through 10 is shown in appendix II, and information for items 11 and 12 is in appendix III. It should be noted that the information relates to the numbers of actions; no distinction is made concerning the level of effort required for responding to different requests for information.

HEARINGS, TESTIMONIES, WRITTEN INQUIRIES, TELEPHONE INQUIRIES, AND BRIEFINGS

For comparison purposes, we developed annual averages for 4-year periods from 1965 to 1984 (periods of presidential administrations), 10-year periods, and for the entire 20-year period. We totaled the numbers for years within these time periods and divided by the number of years for which information was available to obtain an average for each of the periods. Although information is shown for the various periods discussed above, our discussion generally addresses the 10-year periods because of expressed concerns that the level of information requirements has increased significantly over the last 10 years. The results of our analysis are discussed in the following sections.

Hearings

The average number of hearings increased from 434 a year during the 1965 to 1974 period to 456 during the 1975 to 1984 time period, a 5 percent increase. However, the average number of committees and subcommittees requesting DOD testimony nearly tripled, increasing from an annual average of 27 during the first 10-year period to 79 during the second time period. The average number of requests annually for testimony by each committee/subcommittee decreased from 16 in the earlier 10-year time period to 6 in the latter period. Table I.1 summarizes the data.

Table I.1: Information on Hearings

	Annual average							
	4-year periods					10-year periods		20-year period
	1965-1968	1969-1972	1973-1976	1977-1980	1981-1984	1965-1974	1975-1984	1965-1984
Hearings	363	513	407	496 ^a	456	434	456 ^b	444 ^c
Committees/ subcommittees requesting hearings	30	25	47	79	84	27	79	53
Requests per committee/ subcommittee	12	21	9	6	5	16	6	8

- a Based on 3 years.
- b Based on 9 years.
- c Based on 19 years.

Secretary of Defense testimonies

The average number of testimonies a year by the Secretary of Defense has decreased in three of the last four 4-year periods. When comparing the last 10 years with the previous 10 years, the average number of testimonies a year has decreased from 24 to 19. The average number of hours of testimony a year has also decreased during the last four 4-year periods and, comparing the 10-year periods, has decreased from 84 to 56. It should be noted that this time represents only the time of the hearings and does not include the time required to prepare for the hearings. Table I.2 summarizes the data.

Table I.2: Information on Secretary of Defense Appearances at Hearings

	Annual average							
	4-year periods					10-year periods		20-year period
	1965-1968	1969-1972	1973-1976	1977-1980	1981-1984	1965-1974	1975-1984	1965-1984
Testimonies	25	22	19	25	17	24	19	21
Hours	90	82	67	67	46	84	56	70

DOD officials' testimonies

The average number of DOD officials testifying annually, including the Secretary of Defense, rose from 1,261 during the 10-year period 1965 to 1974 to 1,509 during the 1975 to 1984 time period. The average number of witnesses per hearing increased from 2.9 to 3.3. However, the annual average number of hours at hearings decreased during recent years. Table I.3 summarizes the data.

Table I.3: Information on DOD Officials' Appearances at Hearings

	Annual average								
	4-year periods					10-year periods		20-year period	
	1965- 1968	1969- 1972	1973- 1976	1977- 1980	1981- 1984	1965- 1974	1975- 1984	1965- 1984	
Witnesses	720	1,983	1,171	1,744	1,306	1,261	1,509	1,384	
Witnesses per hearing	2.0	3.9	2.9	3.5	2.9	2.9	3.3	3.1	
Hours	3,770 ^a	2,107 ^b	2,515 ^b	1,443	1,420	2,740 ^c	1,642	2,054 ^d	

a Based on 2 years.

b Based on 3 years.

c Based on 6 years.

d Based on 16 years.

Written inquiries

The annual average number of reported written inquiries from the Congress went from 164,388 during the 10-year period 1965 to 1974 to 108,772 during the 1975 to 1984 period, a 34 percent decrease. During the 5-year period from 1978 to 1982, the number of inquiries reported fell below 100,000, ranging from 84,148 to 91,815 annually. The number of inquiries reported increased to 110,844 in 1983 and 123,130 in 1984. Table I.4 summarizes data on written inquiries.

Table I.4: Information on Written Inquiries

	Annual average								
	4-year periods					10-year periods		20-year period	
	1965- 1968	1969- 1972	1973- 1976	1977- 1980	1981- 1984	1965- 1974	1975- 1984	1965- 1984	
	156,629 ^a	187,739 ^a	145,940	95,185	101,305	164,388 ^b	108,772	133,490 ^c	

a Based on 3 years.

b Based on 8 years.

c Based on 18 years.

Telephone inquiries

The average number of telephone inquiries per year reported during the period 1965 to 1974 was 616,385 compared to 505,911 during the 1975 to 1984 time period, an 18 percent decrease. Inquiries reported during the latest 4-year period (1981 to 1984) have been relatively stable, ranging from 586,200 to 599,000. DOD estimated the phone inquiries on the basis of periodic monitoring of calls. Table I.5 summarizes the data.

Table I.5: Information on Telephone Inquiries

Annual average								
4-year periods					10-year periods		20-year period	
1965- 1968	1969- 1972	1973- 1976	1977- 1980	1981- 1984	1965- 1974	1975- 1984	1965- 1984	
402,589 ^a	698,103 ^a	660,385	389,336 ^a	593,163	616,385 ^b	505,911 ^c	557,898 ^d	

^a Based on 3 years.

^b Based on 8 years.

^c Based on 9 years.

^d Based on 17 years.

Briefings

Information was compiled on the number of briefings and hours involved only for the years 1976 to 1982. This information is summarized in Table I.6.

Table I.6: Information on Briefings

	Annual average							
	4-year periods					10-year periods		20-year period
	1965- 1968	1969- 1972	1973- 1976	1977- 1980	1981- 1984	1965- 1974	1975- 1984	1965- 1984
Briefings	a	a	972 ^b	971	1,333 ^c	a	1,074 ^d	1,074 ^d
Hours	a	a	1,696 ^b	1,409	1,432 ^c	a	1,456 ^d	1,456 ^d

^a Information not available.

^b Based on 1 year.

^c Based on 2 years.

^d Based on 7 years.

CONGRESSIONAL DIRECTIONS TO DOD

There has been a significant increase in the total number of directions to DOD, including reporting requirements, contained in reports of the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, on Armed Services, and on Budget. Total directions (reports/ studies, provisions of law, and other actions) have increased at an accelerated rate from 118 in fiscal year 1970 to 1,087 in fiscal year 1986. The total number of directions increased at an average rate of 36 directions a year during the 13-year period 1970 to 1982, but increased at an average rate of 115 directions a year during the 4-year period 1983 to 1986. Most of the increase was in the category "reports/studies." The number of reports/studies rose at an average rate of 14 annually during the 13-year period mentioned above and at a rate of 88 annually during the following 4-year period. Table I.7 summarizes the data.

Table I.7: Summary of Increases in Directions

<u>Fiscal year</u>	<u>Number of years</u>	<u>Annual average increase in reports/studies</u>	<u>Annual average increase in directions^a</u>
1970-1982	13	14	36
1983-1986	4	88	115

^a Includes provisions in law and reports/studies and other directions identified in committee reports.

The number of provisions in law has risen at a fairly consistent rate from 64 in 1970 to 227 in 1986. The number of "other actions" required in committee reports has fluctuated over the years between 113 and 229, with the exception of the 1970 benchmark year which showed 18.

PAGES IN BUDGET JUSTIFICATION BOOKS

The number of pages in DOD budget justification books has risen significantly during recent years. During the 9 years 1974 to 1982, the number of pages in the budget justification books increased from 11,927 to 21,143, an annual rate of 1,024 pages. During the next 3 years, however, the number of pages increased from 21,753 to 26,757, an annual rate of 1,668 pages. We were advised by a DOD official that these increases in information requirements were due primarily to the budget increases and congressional requests for more information to support the uses being made of the funds. Table I.8 summarizes the increases in the pages in budget justifications.

Table I.8: Summary of Increases in Pages in Budget Justification Books

<u>Fiscal year</u>	<u>Number of years</u>	<u>Average annual increases in pages</u>
1974-1982	9	1,024
1983-1985	3	1,668

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY DOD ON
HEARINGS, WRITTEN INQUIRIES, TELEPHONE
INQUIRIES, AND BRIEFINGS

Table II.1: Secretary of Defense Testimonies

<u>Calendar year</u>	<u>Number of testimonies</u>	<u>Number of testimony hours^a</u>
1965	26	90
1966	29	102
1967	29	97
1968	17	70
1969	25	95
1970	19	76
1971	18	68
1972	24	89
1973	28	94
1974	21	64
1975	17	70
1976	9	40
1977	27	76
1978	24	70
1979	28	69
1980	19	51
1981	24	63
1982	16	41
1983	20	56
1984	8	26

^a Rounded to the nearest hour.

Table II.2: DOD Officials' Testimonies, Including the Secretary of Defense

<u>Calendar year</u>	<u>Number of hearings</u>	<u>Number of committees/ subcommittees requesting hearings</u>	<u>Number of witnesses</u>	<u>Number of testimony hours</u>
1964	260	24	630	650
1965	341	29	632	a
1966	369	27	753	a
1967	411	27	805	3,800 ^b
1968	330	35	688	3,660
1969	840	29	3,361	2,671 ^b
1970	448	21	2,567	1,274 ^b
1971	394	25	1,045	a
1972	370	23	960	2,376
1973	432	27	927	a
1974	402	26	870	2,582
1975	389	60	1,165	3,538
1976	404	75	1,721	1,425
1977	a	75	1,789	1,427
1978	465	86	1,429	1,590
1979	556	59	2,268	1,459
1980	466	96	1,491	1,296
1981	497	85	1,372	1,378
1982	425	91	1,266	1,453
1983	461	88	1,288	1,415
1984	441	70	1,297	1,434

a Information not available.

b GAO converted staff-hours provided by DOD to testimony hours.

Table II.3: Written Inquiries, Telephone Inquiries, and Briefings

<u>Calendar year</u>	<u>Number of written inquiries</u>	<u>Number of telephone inquiries</u>	<u>Number of briefings</u>	<u>Number of briefing hours</u>
1965	a	a	a	a
1966	140,000	375,000	a	a
1967	155,649	360,771	a	a
1968	174,238	471,996	a	a
1969	178,000	759,000	a	a
1970	206,000	752,000	a	a
1971	179,218	583,310	a	a
1972	a	a	a	a
1973	130,000	774,000	a	a
1974	152,000	855,000	a	a
1975	175,000	900,000	a	a
1976	126,762	112,539	972	1,696
1977	112,136	229,089	651	970
1978	91,815	532,818	597	1,024
1979	90,872	406,100	1,496	2,125
1980	85,916	a	1,139	1,515
1981	87,096	586,200	1,317	1,401
1982	84,148	592,150	1,349	1,463
1983	110,844	595,300	a	a
1984	123,130	599,000	a	a

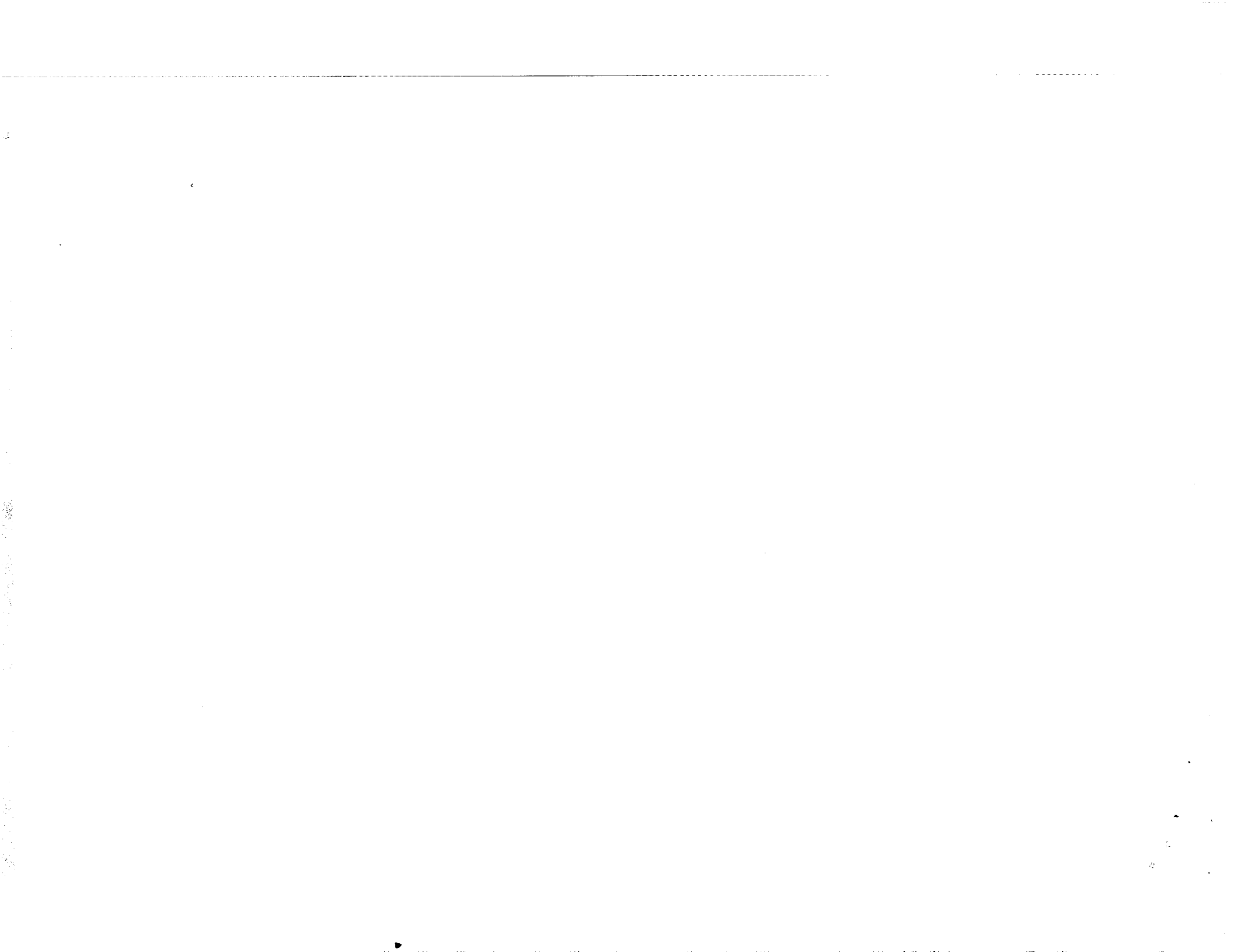
a Information not available.

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY DOD ON
CONGRESSIONAL DIRECTIONS TO DOD AND PAGES
IN BUDGET JUSTIFICATION BOOKS

<u>Fiscal year</u>	<u>Required by committee reports</u>		<u>Required by law</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Pages in justification books</u>
	<u>Reports/studies</u>	<u>Other actions</u>			
1970	36	18	64	118	a
1974	a	a	a	a	11,927
1975	a	a	a	a	a
1976	114	208	96	418	12,350
1977	129	184	87	400	a
1978	153	229	101	483	15,815
1979	177	213	109	499	a
1980	231	166	125	522	17,457
1981	223	180	138	541	a
1982	221	210	158	589	21,143
1983	325	120	183	628	21,753
1984	422	202	217	841	25,306
1985	458	113	213	784	26,757
1986	676	184	227	1,087	a

a Information not available.

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