



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D C. 20548

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ENERGY AND MINERALS
DIVISION

November 18, 1981

B-205446

The Honorable Don Fuqua
Chairman, Committee on Science
and Technology
House of Representatives



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Dear Mr. Chairman:

Subject: Status Report on Executive Branch Implementation of the "National Materials and Minerals Policy, Research and Development Act of 1980" (EMD-82-27)

As you know, [the "National Materials and Minerals Policy, Research and Development Act of 1980" (P.L. 96-479) requires, in part, that the Executive Branch submit reports and a program plan to the Congress on October 21, 1981. Since that date has now passed, we think it appropriate to provide you a status report on compliance with the act's reporting provisions.]

[The administration has not yet met the October 21, 1981, reporting requirements of P.L. 96-479. The agencies that have specific reporting responsibilities under the act have now largely completed work on their requirements, but the release of the reports is being further delayed while the Cabinet Council on Natural Resources and the Environment reviews them and prepares the administration's materials policy program plan, also required by the act. An official of the White House's Office of Policy Development told us that [the administration hopes to release the plan and the agency reports under one cover, but could not give us a precise date when this will occur. He indicated only that they should be completed and released in 2 to 6 weeks.]

BACKGROUND

P.L. 96-479 was enacted to provide a national policy for materials and to strengthen materials research and production capability. Section 5(a) of the act requires the Executive Office of the President to submit a program plan to the Congress by October 21, 1981. According to the act, this plan should include budget proposals and organizational structures to provide materials policy analysis, interagency coordination, and recommendations for information collection and program legislation.

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In addition, the act requires under Sections 5(c),(d), and (e) that the Departments of Commerce, Defense, and the Interior make available to the Congress, also by October 21, 1981, individual reports on specific materials issues. Further, Section 5(b) requires the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) to prepare an assessment of national materials needs relative to scientific and technological changes over the next five years and to review such an assessment annually.

STATUS

The Cabinet Council on Natural Resources and the Environment, under the chairmanship of the Secretary of the Interior, has been instrumental in both preparing the Executive Office's program plan and reviewing individual agency reports. The President's Office of Policy Development is coordinating the overall effort and, according to an official of this office, the administration hopes to issue the agency reports and the program plan simultaneously under one cover.

The Departments of Defense and Commerce have largely completed their work and have forwarded their reports to the Cabinet Council for review. We were unable to determine the precise status of the Department of the Interior's report. Further, we could not determine whether the contents of the program plan will meet the specific requirements of P.L. 96-479.

OSTP indicated to us that it has taken no new initiatives in response to the act, but continues to perform several functions relevant to the act. These functions include

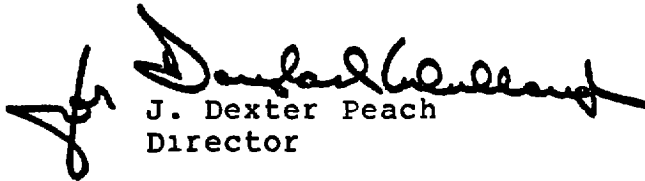
- reviewing, along with the Office of Management and Budget, individual agency budgets in minerals and materials research and development, and
- participating in policy discussions on minerals and materials issues as part of the Cabinet Council working group on strategic minerals.

OSTP has taken the position that a formal assessment of materials needs, as called for under Section 5(b), is not appropriate until the President has (1) issued a minerals and materials policy statement and (2) has commented on individual agency reports. Moreover, OSTP has indicated that it is bound by no specific timeframe under the act.

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As you requested, we will continue to monitor implementation of the act and evaluate the required Executive Branch responses after they are submitted.

Sincerely yours,



J. Dexter Peach
Director