

LAMAR S. SMITH, Texas
CHAIRMAN

F. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, JR., Wisconsin
HOWARD COBLE, North Carolina
ELTON GALLEGLY, California
BOB GOODLATTE, Virginia
DANIEL E. LUNGREN, California
STEVE CHABOT, Ohio
DARRELL E. ISSA, California
MIKE PENCE, Indiana
J. RANDY FORBES, Virginia
STEVE KING, Iowa
TRENT FRANKS, Arizona
LOUIE GOHMERT, Texas
JIM JORDAN, Ohio
TED POE, Texas
JASON CHAFFETZ, Utah
TOM REED, New York
TIM GRIFFIN, Arkansas
TOM MARINO, Pennsylvania
TREY GOWDY, South Carolina
DENNIS ROSS, Florida
SANDY ADAMS, Florida
BEN QUAYLE, Arizona

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

2138 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6216

(202) 225-3951

<http://www.house.gov/judiciary>

June 6, 2011

JOHN CONYERS, JR., Michigan
RANKING MEMBER

HOWARD L. BERMAN, California
JERROLD NADLER, New York
ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT, Virginia
MELVIN L. WATT, North Carolina
ZOE LOFGREN, California
SHEILA JACKSON LEE, Texas
MAXINE WATERS, California
STEVE COHEN, Tennessee
HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON, JR., Georgia
PEDRO R. PIERLUISI, Puerto Rico
MIKE QUIGLEY, Illinois
JUDY CHU, California
TED DEUTCH, Florida
LINDA T. SANCHEZ, California
DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Florida

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W., Room 7100
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

The Department of Justice's Bureau of Prisons (BOP) uses two types of special housing units—disciplinary and administrative—to segregate federal inmates from the general population for purposes of deterrence, punishment, or enhanced institutional safety. Disciplinary segregation may be warranted when inmates commit serious violations of BOP rules, while administrative detention may be used, for example, to segregate inmates seeking protective custody, awaiting transfer to another institution, or whose discipline hearing is pending. Confinement in these units may or may not be solitary, and according to BOP's special housing unit guidelines, institutions' Wardens and their designees have considerable discretion as to inmate cell occupancy, length of stay, procedures for visits from correctional program staff, and other conditions of segregation.

Given the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) recent report on correctional officer safety, and other publications by GAO and others that have highlighted the potential dangers of inmate overcrowding, the Subcommittee is interested in learning more about how BOP manages its inmate population in a time of constrained federal resources. In particular, we are interested in a GAO review of special housing unit practices, particularly with regard to how BOP ensures institutional consistency in the application of its standards, the reasons for segregation and the trends in use of this practice, and how BOP assesses the benefits and costs of this management tool. In addition, we are interested in knowing how BOP monitors the possible long term affects that segregation may have on inmates.

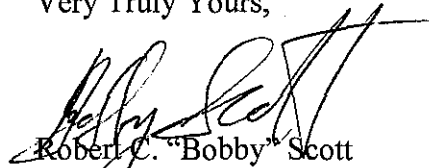
Therefore, the Subcommittee requests that GAO collect information and report on the following:

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
June 6, 2011
Page 2

1. What are BOP's policies and practices governing the placement of inmates in special housing units and to what extent does BOP centrally track how individual institutions apply these policies?
2. What have the trends been in BOP's special housing unit capacity and utilization and to what extent does inmate overcrowding affect the usage and effectiveness of these units?
3. What are the system-wide costs to operate and maintain special housing units, how do the costs to confine an inmate in a special housing unit compare to the costs of regular housing, and does the extent of limited resources utilized in special housing units affect the level of overcrowding in regular housing?
4. How, if at all, does BOP measure the cost effectiveness of these placements in deterring prohibited behavior and improving institutional safety and to what extent has BOP assessed the possible effects of long-term segregation (more than 30 days) on inmates, including those with mental illness?

Thank you for your help in addressing these issues. We would appreciate ongoing briefings as you conduct your work. If you have any questions concerning this request, please contact Bobby Vassar at (202) 225-8351 with the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security.

Very Truly Yours,



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Ranking Democratic Member
Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism
and Homeland Security