

More Time Is Asked for the F.B.I. For Answering Requests for Data

WASHINGTON, April 10 (UPI)—So many people have asked the Federal Bureau of Investigation for files under the Freedom of Information Act that Congressional auditors suggested today the agency be given more time to answer requests.

In the last three years, the bureau got more than 48,000 requests from individuals seeking information that the Government had accumulated on them, the General Accounting Office told the House Information and Individual Rights subcommittee.

The G.A.O. estimated that 20,000 to

23,000 more would be filed by 1979.

Victor Lowe, director of the office's general government division, said that the F.B.I. spent \$2.8 million last year on a special project to eliminate the backlog. It reduced the level from 7,566 in May 1977 to 4,910 by September 1977.

The G.A.O. said the law's 10-day limit for answering requests was "unrealistic," and that the bureau would fall further behind unless response time was increased. Mr. Lowe said that the law should make the bureau acknowledge a request in 10 working days and provide a full response in 30 more working days.

In unusual cases, he said, Congress should make the bureau provide a fixed date for responding, with the individual having the right to go to court to compel greater speed.