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Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section



Asset Forfeiture Policy Manual

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Foreword

This is the *Asset Forfeiture Policy Manual*, published by the Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section of the United States Department of Justice. It replaces and supersedes all previous versions of the *Policy Manual* and all Policy Directives and Interim Legal Advice Memoranda issued prior to December 31, 2004.

Beginning in January 2005, the *Asset Forfeiture Policy Manual* will be available in two formats: the hardcopy format set forth in this publication, and an electronic format available to the federal law enforcement community on the Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section's intranet website. As of January 2005, the contents of the two versions of the *Manual* are identical. As changes are made to the *Manual*, however, they will appear first in the electronic version, as the costs of production make it impractical to revise and republish the hardcopy version more often than once a year even if substantial changes have been made to the text. Accordingly, users of the *Manual* in the federal law enforcement community are encouraged to check the electronic version for the current text of all policies. Changes from the hardcopy version will be flagged on the website to make them easy to identify.

The 2005 edition of the *Policy Manual* contains several chapters that are substantially revised from the earlier version—*see, e.g.*, Chapter 1 (Seizure/Restraint) and Chapter 2 (Administrative and Judicial Forfeiture)—and others that are substantially the same as they were in the previous edition. The Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section anticipates publishing substantially revised versions of all chapters of the *Manual* during 2005 and 2006.

Some topics that require extended treatment are not addressed in this *Manual* because they are addressed at length in stand-alone publications. *See, e.g.*, *A Guide to Interlocutory Sales and Expedited Settlements* (2003), *Financial Investigations Guide* (1998), *A Guide to Equitable Sharing* (1994) and *Guide to the Forfeiture of Firearms* (2005). This *Manual* supplements but does not supersede the policies set forth in those publications.

The *Asset Forfeiture Policy Manual* sets forth the policies of the Department of Justice. It does not, however, create or confer any legal rights, privileges or benefits that may be enforced in any way by private parties. *See United States v. Caceres*, 440 U.S. 741 (1979).

We recommend that the following format be used for citing this *Manual*: *Asset Forfeiture Policy Manual* (2005), Sec. ___-___.

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Chapter 1

Seizure/Restraint

I. Guidelines for Preseizure/Restraint Planning

A. Background

These guidelines are intended to encourage practices that will minimize or avoid the possibility that the Government will assume unnecessarily difficult or insurmountable problems in the management and disposition of seized/restrained assets.¹ In particular, they are meant to ensure that the U.S. Marshals Service and its headquarters Asset Forfeiture Office (AFO) and other agencies with responsibility for managing seized and restrained assets are consulted prior to the seizure/restraint and forfeiture of assets in order that the U.S. Marshals Service is afforded (1) sufficient time to plan for the care of the assets and (2) the opportunity to assess the level of difficulty in handling the assets and any special requirements needed to preserve the assets.

These guidelines direct the U.S. Attorney's Office (or in administrative forfeitures, the agents in charge of a field office) to establish specific procedures to be followed in their respective districts or offices to ensure that critical financial and property management issues are addressed prior to seizing/restraining real property, commercial enterprises, or other types of property that may pose potential problems of maintenance and/or disposition (e.g., animals and aircraft.) These guidelines are intended to be flexible enough to enable each U.S. Attorney's Office (or in administrative matters, the agent in charge of a field office) to establish and utilize procedures which clearly define and assign local preseizure/restraint planning responsibilities.

As discussed *infra*, in order to afford the U.S. Marshals Service sufficient time to obtain all resources necessary to effectuate significant seizures it should be advised promptly prior to all significant seizures/restraints, the filing of civil forfeiture complaints, or the return of indictments containing forfeiture allegations.

¹ References to seizure in this chapter include criminal or civil restraint unless plainly not applicable or appropriate. References to U.S. Marshals Service includes other departments responsible for managing restrained and seized assets (e.g., the Department of the Treasury and the Department of Homeland Security.)

B. Scope of assets covered by guidelines

These guidelines cover all assets considered for federal forfeiture, including those assets that have been seized by a state or local agency and adopted by a federal agency for purposes of federal forfeiture. The degree and nature of preseizure planning will depend directly upon the circumstances and complexity of each case.

In order for the U.S. Marshals Service to best assist the U.S. Attorneys' Offices and seizing agencies in a thorough and prompt manner, the U.S. Marshals Service should be involved in the investigation as soon as the U.S. Attorney's Office is aware assets will be targeted for forfeiture. Formal preseizure planning should occur well in advance of filing a civil forfeiture complaint or the return of an indictment containing forfeiture allegations. Specifically, formal preseizure planning requires detailed discussion of the seizure, custody, and disposal arrangements specific to an asset targeted for forfeiture. This discussion may take place either in person, by telephone, or electronically, and may be ongoing depending on the nature of the asset and stage of the case. These preseizure discussions should result in a strategy to take possession of or manage each asset category listed below:

- (1) residential real property and vacant land;
- (2) businesses and commercial real property;²
- (3) large quantities of assets involving potential inventory and storage or security problems (e.g., multiple vehicles, drug paraphernalia to be seized from multiple "headshops" on the same day, and the inventory of ongoing businesses such as jewelry stores);
- (4) assets that create difficult or unusual problems (e.g., animals, perishable items, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, leasehold agreements, intellectual property, valuable art and antiques); and
- (5) assets located in foreign countries.

Depending upon the complexity and scope of the case, formal preseizure planning may continue after this initial discussion as required by either the U.S. Attorney's Office or the U.S. Marshals Service. In many instances, the U.S. Marshals Service will be required to procure the professional assistance of commercial vendors during the covert stage of an investigation so that services such as inventories, appraisals, transportation, and storage will

² For the purposes of this manual, *commercial real property* means residential real property comprised of five or more units and other real property held for commercial purposes.

coincide with a scheduled takedown date. The U.S. Marshals Service will take appropriate measures to protect sensitive law enforcement information while consultation occurs with the involved components. No information will be released to third party contractors without prior U.S. Attorney's Office approval. In addition, the information provided to such contractors can be limited to that necessary to preposition contractor assets (e.g., towing services and storage space for 50 vehicles required in a particular location by a certain date).

Examples of the types of services the U.S. Marshals Service may provide upon a request by either the U.S. Attorney's Office or seizing agency (as well as the usual time it takes to obtain the requested service) include the following:

Lien search and appraisal information ³	3–4 weeks from date of request to return information (additional time necessary for full, non-“drive-by” appraisals)	The U.S. Marshals Service offers these services to provide U.S. Attorneys' Offices and investigative agencies information during the preindictment preseizure planning stage of a criminal or civil investigation.
Animals	1 month prior to seizure	Proper arrangements must be made to ensure health and daily care.
Logistics services	3–6 months prior to take-down date	Federal contracting regulations and the time necessary to coordinate with commercial vendors make it imperative to involve the U.S. Marshals Service's AFO as soon as such services are contemplated.
Business review ⁴	2–4 months	Forfeiture decisions by the U.S. Attorney's Office and the seizing agency should be made only after the U.S. Marshals Service's AFO conducts a documentary review of the targeted business's assets and financial status.

³ See U.S. Marshals Service Policy Memorandum dated October 9, 2003, in Appendix A at A-1.

⁴ See section I.D.4 at page 9, for a discussion of the information provided by the business review, as well as the considerations involved in seizing or restraining a business and/or its assets.

C. General policy guidelines

Broad preseizure planning policy guidelines for all agencies participating in the DOJ's Asset Forfeiture Program are defined below. Variations to these guidelines may be made following discussions with Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section (AFMLS).

1. Lead responsibility

The U.S. Attorney (or in administrative forfeiture cases, the agent in charge of a field office) is responsible for ensuring that proper and timely preseizure planning occurs in asset forfeiture cases within that federal judicial district. All preseizure planning meetings will include, at a minimum, as applicable, the AUSA or investigative agent in charge of the forfeiture matter (and, if applicable, the AUSA in charge of the related criminal matter), investigative agents, and the appropriate U.S. Marshals Service representative (which should include a representative from the district where the property is to be seized if different from the district where the action is to be filed). A federal regulatory agency representative may also attend in forfeiture cases involving federal regulatory matters as appropriate. Assets in cases where a DOJ investigative agency is not the lead agency may be handled by independent contractors employed by non-DOJ agencies rather than the U.S. Marshals Service (e.g., the Department of the Treasury or the Department of Homeland Security), and those independent contractors should participate in preseizure planning as appropriate.

For asset forfeiture cases involving more than one federal judicial district, the U.S. Attorney's Office instituting the forfeiture action has the primary responsibility, in coordination with the investigative agency, to ensure that all asset forfeiture program participants are notified and that proper and timely preseizure planning occurs in those districts where assets will be seized.

2. Preseizure planning defined

Preseizure planning consists of anticipating and making informed decisions about what property is going to be seized or restrained, how and when it is going to be seized or restrained, and, most important, whether it should be seized or restrained.

- (1) *What is being seized?* Determine the full scope of the seizure to the extent possible. For example, if a house is being seized, are the contents also to be seized? If a business is being seized, is the building in which it operates, the property upon which it is located, the inventory of the business, and the operating

or other bank accounts, accounts receivable, accounts payable, etc., also being seized? All ownership interests must be identified to the extent possible.

- (2) *Should the asset be seized?* If the asset has a negative or marginal net equity at the time of seizure, should it be seized? Over time, what is the likelihood that the asset will depreciate to a negative or marginal value? What law enforcement benefits are to be derived from seizure? Is a restraining or protective order an adequate alternative under the circumstances? Can any losses be mitigated by careful planning on the part of the participants? Will the asset require a significant amount of U.S. Marshals Service or U.S. Attorney's Office resources or oversight?
- (3) *How and when is the asset going to be seized?* Determine whether immediate seizure is necessary or if restraint of the asset is sufficient to preserve and protect the Government's interest. The type and content of the seizing instrument and authority to enter or cross private property must be communicated or provided, in advance, to both the investigative agency and the U.S. Marshals Service to ensure that each has the necessary information and legal authority to carry out its respective seizure and post-seizure responsibilities.
- (4) *What management and disposition problems are anticipated, and how will they be resolved?* Any expected logistical issues involved in the maintenance, management, or disposition of the asset should be discussed and resolved as early as possible in the investigation.
- (5) *Is publicity anticipated?* If publicity or public relations concerns are anticipated, appropriate public affairs personnel should be advised and consulted. How will negative publicity be handled?

D. Preseizure planning questionnaires and net equity worksheets

The considerations which bear on whether a property should be seized must be documented during the preseizure process.

1. Asset-specific net equity thresholds

These guidelines set minimum net equity levels that generally must be met before federal forfeiture actions are instituted. The net equity values are intended to decrease the number of federal seizures, thereby enhancing case quality and expediting processing of the cases we do initiate. The thresholds are also intended to encourage state and local law enforcement

agencies to use state forfeiture laws. These thresholds are to be applied in direct federal and adoptive cases. In general, the minimum net equity requirements are:

- (1) Residential real property and vacant land—minimum net equity must be at least 20 percent of the appraised value, or \$20,000, whichever is greater.⁵
- (2) Vehicles—minimum net equity must be at least \$5,000. The value of multiple vehicles seized at the same time may be aggregated for purposes of meeting the minimum net equity. If the person from whom the vehicle is taken was or is being criminally prosecuted by state or federal authorities for criminal activities related to the vehicle and there is justification for a low value seizure, the minimum net equity is \$2,000.⁶
- (3) Cash—minimum amount must be at least \$5,000, unless the person from whom the cash was taken was criminally prosecuted or is being prosecuted by state or federal authorities for criminal activities related to the property, in which case, the amount must be at least \$1,000.
- (4) Aircraft—minimum net equity must be at least \$10,000. Note that failure to obtain the log books for the aircraft will reduce the aircraft's value significantly.
- (5) Vessels—minimum net equity must be at least \$10,000.
- (6) All other personal property—minimum net equity must be at least \$1,000 in the aggregate. Exceptions from the minimum net equity requirements should not be made for any individual item if it has a value of less than \$1,000. Such exceptions can be made if practical considerations support the seizure (e.g., 20 items of jewelry, each valued at \$500, might be seized, as the total value of the items is \$10,000 and the cost of storing 20 small items of jewelry is not excessive).

Heads of investigative agencies may continue to establish higher thresholds for seizures made by their agencies. If an investigative agency head establishes higher monetary thresholds than those described above, AFMLS must be advised in writing of the change.

⁵ As a general rule, the DOJ does not seize or adopt contaminated real properties. *See* discussion of contaminated real property in section IV at page 21.

⁶ The arrest of the person from whom the property is taken for an offense related to the illegal use or acquisition of the property for which a forfeiture action may be brought satisfies the condition of criminal prosecution. This restriction does not apply in the case of seizures by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security, of vehicles used in the smuggling of aliens or in the case of vehicles modified or customized to facilitate illegal activity.

Each U.S. Attorney's Office may institute higher district-wide thresholds for judicial forfeiture cases. In doing so, U.S. Attorneys' Offices should confer with the seizing agencies affected by the change and develop, in concert with those agencies, written district-wide guidelines for implementation. Written notice of such higher thresholds must be provided to AFMLS. Any threshold higher than those described above must not be the basis for failing to assist in seizing property when requested to do so by another district with lower monetary thresholds if the requesting district intends to file the judicial action.

It is understood that in some circumstances the overriding law enforcement benefit will require the seizure of an asset that does not meet these criteria. In individual cases, these thresholds may be waived where forfeiture will serve a compelling law enforcement interest, (e.g., forfeiture of a crack house, a conveyance with hidden compartments, a computer or Internet domain name seized to disrupt a major fraud scheme, or assets connected to a child pornography ring or a terrorist organization.) Any downward variation from the above thresholds must be approved in writing by a supervisory-level official and an explanation of the reason for the variation noted in the case file. A copy of this approval, in either a written memorandum or an e-mail, must be provided to the U.S. Marshals Service district office that will take custody of the asset(s).

2. Preseizure planning questionnaires

The U.S. Marshals Service's AFO has compiled preseizure planning questionnaires for each asset type in a publication entitled the *Preseizure Planning Guide*.⁷ Obtaining the information required to complete the forms for each targeted asset will identify the concerns which must be addressed during the preseizure planning phase of a case to reduce the chance of a seizure that will cost more than the asset is worth (a "liability seizure"). Consult with the custodial U.S. Marshals Service district office to calculate the storage and maintenance costs particular to each asset (e.g., the monthly rate for indoor automobile storage, or the transportation fee incurred when ferrying a seized aircraft or yacht to a U.S. Marshals Service storage yard.) Copies of the guide may also be ordered from the U.S. Marshals Service at 202-307-9221.

Individual offices may supplement these forms as they see fit. However, the basic information called for in these forms is required for adequate planning.

⁷ See Appendix A at A-5.

3. Net equity worksheet

When certain assets, especially residential and commercial real property and businesses, are targeted for forfeiture, the potential net equity must be calculated.⁸ A written financial analysis facilitates and documents preseizure planning decisions. The last page of every preseizure questionnaire sets forth a step-by-step formula for computing net equity—the estimated total amount of money the Government will recoup from the asset once the aggregate of all liens, mortgages, and management and disposal costs has been subtracted from the proceeds of the sale of the asset—and documents the results of this analysis. In cases where information relating to titles and liens cannot be acquired without compromising the investigation, the financial analysis may be completed post-seizure.⁹ The U.S. Attorney's Office or the seizing agency may adopt these forms, supplement them as it sees fit, or develop its own.

a. Ownership and encumbrances

The investigative agency is responsible for ensuring that current and accurate information on the ownership of, and any encumbrances against, personal property targeted for forfeiture is compiled prior to the seizure of the property and is made available to the U.S. Marshals Service and the U.S. Attorney's Office whenever practicable prior to seizure. In instances where real property and businesses are targeted for seizure, the U.S. Marshals Service will have primary responsibility for conducting a title search prior to seizure unless otherwise agreed in individual cases.¹⁰ The U.S. Marshals Service cannot conduct a complete ownership analysis for a business unless the U.S. Attorney's Office obtains, by subpoena or otherwise, appropriate ownership documents (e.g., stock record books, stock certificates, partnership agreements, etc.)

b. Financial analysis: avoiding liability seizures

(1) Preseizure

If the financial analysis indicates that the aggregate of all liens (including judgment liens), mortgages, and management and disposal costs approaches or exceeds the anticipated

⁸ See examples of the net equity worksheet contained within the preseizure planning questionnaires in Appendix A at A-5.

⁹ See discussion of post-seizure in section I.D.3.b at page 9. See also sample preseizure planning questionnaires in Appendix A at A-5.

¹⁰ See U.S. Marshals Service Policy Memorandum dated October 9, 2003, in Appendix A at A-1.

proceeds from the sale of the property, the U.S. Attorney's Office, or in administrative forfeiture actions, the seizing agency, must either (1) determine not to go forward with the seizure,¹¹ or (2) acknowledge the potential financial loss and document the circumstances that warrant the seizure and institution of the forfeiture action.

(2) Post-seizure

In rare instances where preseizure planning is not possible, the seizing agency may be responsible for custody and maintenance of the property until the U.S. Marshals Service has had an opportunity to conduct an analysis of the assets. The U.S. Marshals Service must complete a preseizure planning questionnaire within 5 business days after the seizure or as soon as practicable given the nature of the information required. If the financial assessment indicates that the aggregate of all liens, mortgages, and management and disposal costs approaches or exceeds the anticipated proceeds from the sale of the property, the U.S. Attorney's Office must either (1) take action to dismiss the forfeiture action and to void any expedited settlement agreements (if any have been entered into), or (2) acknowledge the potential loss and document the circumstances that warrant the continuation of the forfeiture action.

In deciding how to proceed with the seizure and forfeiture of potential liability seizures during the preseizure phase in judicial forfeitures, the U.S. Attorney's Office in consultation with the seizing agency and the U.S. Marshals Service (and in administrative forfeitures, the agent in charge of the field office responsible for the administrative forfeiture, or designee, in consultation with the U.S. Marshals Service) must evaluate and consider the forfeitable net equity and the law enforcement purposes to be served in light of the potential liability issues and estimated costs of post-seizure management and disposition.

4. Business seizures¹²

The complexities of seizing an ongoing business and the potential for substantial losses and possible other liabilities from such a seizure require that a U.S. Attorney's Office consult with AFMLS prior to initiating a forfeiture action against, seeking the seizure of, or moving to restrain an ongoing business.¹³

¹¹ The U.S. Attorney's Office may consider alternatives to seizure such as a *lis pendens* or restraint of certain assets.

¹² See Briskman, Leonard, "Preseizure Planning with the U.S. Marshals Recommended to Avoid Disruption of Business," *Asset Forfeiture News*, July/August 2004, at page 3.

¹³ See also USAM 9-105.00 (the U.S. Attorney is required to obtain the *concurrence* of AFMLS before initiating a forfeiture action against an ongoing business under a money laundering facilitating theory).

Deciding whether and how to restrain or seize an ongoing business is a complex and time consuming process. A comprehensive analysis of the scope of the illegal activity and what is to be achieved through seizure/restraint is necessary. AFMLS and the U.S. Marshals Service recommend restraining a business in the least restrictive manner that preserves the Government's interest. Seizure of a business, and operation or closure of the business by the Government, should only be carried out where all other options have been considered and rejected.

As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, the first question is, What is being seized or restrained? How is the business owned? Is it a corporation, partnership, or sole proprietorship? Will the business be indicted? Are there innocent shareholders or other third party interests to take into consideration?

In case of an ongoing business that has been targeted for forfeiture, it is generally desirable to utilize the least intrusive means to gain control over the business during the pendency of litigation. See *Unites States v. All Assets Statewide Autoparts*, 971 F.2d 896 (2d Cir. 1992) (hearing and consideration of less drastic alternatives required). AFMLS recommends restraining orders for ongoing businesses if at all possible.

There are instances in which it may be necessary to close down a seized business prior to forfeiture, particularly if an ongoing business is engaged in substantially illegal activity and/or there are exigent circumstances, such as ongoing health and safety issues that cannot be satisfactorily addressed by other means.

Seizure of business accounts, necessary equipment, and licenses can also cause an ongoing business to fail even if the business itself is not seized. If the Government fails to achieve forfeiture and the business asset must be returned to the owner, the Government may be subject to substantial financial and adverse legal ramifications for failure to return the asset to its owner in substantially the same condition in which it was seized.

The U.S. Attorney's Office may consider simply naming the business as an asset for forfeiture; often businesses shut down of their own accord once key defendants are arrested or indicted, making final forfeiture unnecessary and saving Government resources. This is frequently the result where the assets of the business consist primarily of inventory and goodwill. A *lis pendens* placed on the real property or restraining order on valuable equipment, with monitoring, inspection, or reporting requirements, may secure the targeted assets sufficiently without taking possession of them. Alternatively, the U.S. Attorney's Office may require, as a condition of release, that a defendant/owner maintain appropriate licenses or comply with regulatory or insurance requirements.

AFMLS recommends restraining ongoing businesses, rather than seizing them before forfeiture, wherever possible. If direct government oversight is required, the U.S. Marshals Service has contractors available to run ongoing businesses. In rare cases, a court-appointed trustee or monitor is required. *See* section I.E at page 12. Taking over a business before forfeiture is a last resort and should occur only after the U.S. Marshals Service has completed a thorough business review. A business review will help a U.S. Attorney's Office answer the following questions:

- Who owns the building in which the business operates?
- Who owns the land?
- What is the cash flow of the business?
- What are the monetary values of accounts receivable and payable?
- What other valuable assets does the business own?
- Are there significant liabilities?
- Are there environmental concerns?
- Is the business highly regulated? Is the business currently in compliance with its regulatory obligations?
- Will the business require capital contributions to stay viable?
- What law enforcement or regulatory methods other than forfeiture may be effective?
- Is the business being seized as facilitating property or as proceeds of crime? Once the source of illegal funding and the illicit customers are gone, the business may no longer be profitable. If the business is facilitating illegal activity and also engaged in legal but unseemly activity, is the Government in a position to prevent or monitor the activity (e.g., Government operation of a strip club which attracts illegal drugs and prostitution)? The public may have an expectation that if the Government is operating the business, it will be able to prevent all illegal activity. *See* section I.E.7 at page 14, for a discussion of security measures.

- What would it cost to hire either a business monitor or trustee and necessary staff?
- How will the business be disposed of, and how long will that process take?

AFMLS and the U.S. Marshals Service's AFO are available to organize a "business evaluation and seizure team" to conduct a business review at the request of either a U.S. Attorney's Office or a seizing agency. Business reviews take time, so the U.S. Attorney's Office or seizing agency should request a business review as early in the investigative process as possible.

The AUSA (or the agent in charge of the field office responsible for an administrative forfeiture case) is responsible for ensuring that all preseizure planning, questionnaires, and net equity worksheets (including those prepared by the U.S. Marshals Service) are complete and placed in the case file.

If the net equity worksheet indicates that the property targeted for forfeiture has marginal or negative anticipated net sale proceeds, the U.S. Attorney's Office (or agency field office conducting an administrative forfeiture) must document a plan to protect innocent lienholders and to dispose of the property in a manner that will minimize potential loss to the Government (e.g., an immediate motion of interlocutory sale or stipulated sale of the property, thereby minimizing asset management costs.) A copy of this plan, along with the net equity worksheet, is to be sent to AFMLS.

E. Trustees and monitors in forfeiture cases¹⁴

1. Purpose

The purpose of the trustee and monitor policy is to provide guidance for the appointment of trustees and monitors in DOJ federal forfeiture cases involving complex assets or business enterprises.

2. Responsibilities of trustees and monitors

The key distinction between a monitor and a trustee is that only a *trustee* has the authority to manage an enterprise. A *monitor* observes and reports. A *receiver* is a fiduciary who is responsible only to the court, and a custodian takes actual custody of the assets and may be recommended where a number of assets are located in a foreign country.

¹⁴ See DOJ's policy on trustees and monitors in forfeiture cases, in Appendix A at A-27.

3. When should a trustee or monitor be engaged

A trustee or monitor should be appointed only when absolutely necessary, all other alternatives have been considered and rejected, and there is clearly sufficient net equity in the asset to cover the total estimated cost of the trustee or monitor and necessary staff. The Government generally should not seize or forfeit businesses which require such aggressive action, capital investment to remain competitive, or the assumption of considerable risk. In some cases, compelling law enforcement or policy considerations may warrant appointing a trustee or monitor even though there is not sufficient equity in the enterprise to cover the cost.

4. Preseizure planning

In cases involving the appointment of trustees and monitors, comprehensive preseizure planning with the U.S. Marshals Service is mandatory; absent unusual circumstances, no less than 3 months before the services of a trustee or monitor are required. Trustees and monitors are subject to federal acquisition regulations. The procurement process to select and contract with a trustee or monitor may require a minimum of several months.

5. Selection and appointment of a trustee or monitor

The selection and appointment of a trustee or monitor is a joint decision of the U.S. Attorney's Office and U.S. Marshals Service, regardless of the stage of the case. *Prior* to entry of a final order of forfeiture, the U.S. Attorney's Office has final decisionmaking authority as to the selection and scope of appointment of a trustee or monitor. *Following* entry of a final order of forfeiture, the U.S. Marshals Service has final decisionmaking authority on these matters.

6. Payment of monitor and trustee fees and expenses

Prior to entry of a final order of forfeiture, the DOJ Assets Forfeiture Fund (AFF) is authorized under certain circumstances to pay trustee and monitor fees in cases where a DOJ agency is the lead law enforcement agency. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 524(c). After entry of an order of forfeiture, fees charged by a trustee or monitor ordinarily will be paid from the proceeds of the business unless compelling law enforcement or policy considerations warrant payment from the AFF. Charges to the AFF for trustees and monitors must be recovered, as a cost, from the proceeds of sale before payment of restitution and equitable sharing.

7. Goals, duties, and powers of the trustee or monitor

The order appointing a trustee or monitor and a related statement of work should define the goals of the trustee or monitor. The essential purpose of the trusteeship or monitorship is usually to prevent dissipation of the asset, or to prevent the enterprise from continuing to engage in illegal activity, or both. Upon appointment or selection, the trustee or monitor should receive written guidance from the U.S. Attorney's Office or U.S. Marshals Service identifying key AUSAs, U.S. Marshals Service officials, and other individuals from whom the trustee or monitor will receive direction. Note that while measures such as alarm systems, video surveillance, and security guards are *intended* to prevent illegal activity, they are not a guarantee. More important, such measures may overlap with local police responsibilities, thus exceeding the U.S. Marshals Service's custodial capabilities and responsibilities. Full time security services are rarely warranted, and extremely expensive.

8. Reporting requirements of the trustee or monitor

A trustee is responsible to the district court and to either the U.S. Attorney's Office or U.S. Marshals Service, depending on whether a final order of forfeiture has been entered. The U.S. Attorney's Office (*before* final order) and the U.S. Marshals Service (*after* final order) must oversee, manage, review, and approve trustee fees, expenses, activities, and operations. The U.S. Attorney's Office and U.S. Marshals Service must consult regularly and may modify their respective roles in this process upon mutual agreement. The office directing the work is responsible for approving payment of fees and costs, although the U.S. Marshals Service will arrange for payment.

A monitor is responsible to the U.S. Attorney's Office and to the district court unless the U.S. Attorney's Office and U.S. Marshals Service agree that the monitor should instead report to the U.S. Marshals Service, or to both the U.S. Marshals Service and U.S. Attorney's Office.

9. Dispute resolution

The U.S. Attorney's Office and U.S. Marshals Service should consult and work closely together when determining whether to hire a trustee or monitor, as well as on issues related to the use, duties, and supervision of a trustee or monitor. AFMLS can help to resolve any disputes. Timely resolution of disputes is critical.

10. Consultation/notification requirements

- (1) The U.S. Attorney's Office must consult with AFMLS before seeking the appointment of a trustee or monitor.
- (2) The U.S. Marshals Service field office must notify the U.S. Marshals Service headquarters when it becomes aware that a trustee or monitor may be appointed.
- (3) The U.S. Attorney's Office or the U.S. Marshals Service must notify AFMLS when either learns that a business is losing money, has insufficient equity, or will be sold at a loss.

II. General Procedures for Seizing Property

A. Notification by seizing agency

Most U.S. Attorneys' Offices can access reports of seizures in their districts from the Consolidated Asset Tracking System (CATS) database. An individual U.S. Attorney's Office may elect to receive copies of all seizure forms directly from the DOJ seizing agencies, but should recognize that this defeats the purpose of the CATS centralized database. All non-DOJ agencies must forward copies of seizure forms or a report of seizures to the pertinent U.S. Attorney's Office within 25 days of seizure unless an individual U.S. Attorney's Office chooses to not receive seizure notices.

B. Preseizure judicial review

1. Preseizure judicial authorization of property seizures

Preseizure judicial authorization of property seizures serves multiple purposes, including the following:

- (1) allows neutral and detached judicial officers to review the basis for seizures before they occur;
- (2) enhances protection for DOJ officers against potential civil suits claiming wrongful seizures; and

- (3) reduces the potential that the public will perceive property seizures to be arbitrary and capricious.

2. Preseizure judicial review favored for seizure of personal property

Whenever practicable, DOJ officials should obtain ex parte judicial approval prior to seizing personal property.¹⁵

C. Forms of process to be used

1. Warrant of arrest in rem

The historic form of process used to initiate the civil judicial forfeiture of property is the verified complaint. The warrant of arrest in rem, normally requested with or after the filing of a verified complaint and executed on the property, gives the court jurisdiction over the property. In most districts, the warrant of arrest in rem has not historically included a judicial finding of probable cause. *See* Supplemental Rule C(3), providing that the warrant of arrest in rem be issued by the clerk of the court.

In civil forfeiture cases, however, it is generally advisable to seek a judicial finding of probable cause before any arrest warrant in rem is issued and served on property that is not already in Government custody at the time the civil forfeiture complaint is filed.

2. Seizure warrant

A second form of process for seizing forfeitable property is the warrant of seizure authorized by 21 U.S.C. § 881(b) and 18 U.S.C. § 981(b)(2). This form of process requires a judicial determination of probable cause.

3. Seizure of real property

In general, real property is not seized prior to forfeiture; nor is it served with an arrest warrant in rem. Typically, a *lis pendens* is filed in the property records of the local jurisdiction. The procedures for commencing a civil forfeiture action against real property are set forth in 18 U.S.C. § 985.

¹⁵ This policy does not apply in circumstances where the owner of the property has consented to forfeiture of the property (e.g., if the owner has agreed to the forfeiture in connection with a plea agreement). Neither does it apply to the adoption for federal forfeiture of property previously seized by state or local law enforcement agencies.

D. Responsibility for execution of process

Generally, the U.S. Marshals Service has primary responsibility for execution of warrants of arrest in rem. Generally, the pertinent DOJ investigative agency has primary responsibility for execution of seizure warrants. It is recommended that the U.S. Marshals Service and investigative agencies coordinate execution of process.

III. Seizures for Criminal Forfeiture

A. When is a seizure warrant or restraining order required?

Property subject to criminal forfeiture is occasionally seized pursuant to a criminal seizure warrant issued under 21 U.S.C. § 853(f). More often, property named in a criminal indictment or information is in the custody of the Government because it was seized pursuant to a civil seizure warrant issued under section 981(b) or because it was seized as evidence in the underlying criminal investigation. The question that arises is whether it is proper for the Government to maintain possession of property subject to criminal forfeiture without obtaining a section 853(f) seizure warrant in the following situations where the property was originally seized for some other purpose:

- (1) Where the initial seizure was pursuant to a civil seizure warrant, and the U.S. Attorney elects to pursue criminal forfeiture after someone files a claim in the administrative forfeiture proceeding.
- (2) Where the initial seizure was without any warrant, but was based on probable cause to believe the property was subject to forfeiture when observed in plain view in a public place or pursuant to a lawful search.
- (3) Where the initial seizure was for evidence, but the evidentiary basis for the continued possession of the property has evaporated.
- (4) Where the property is lawfully handed over to the federal agency for criminal forfeiture by a state court or state law enforcement agency.

B. Summary

The Government does not need to have possession of property subject to criminal forfeiture during the pendency of the criminal case, but it is perfectly appropriate for the Government to maintain possession of such property prior to the entry of a preliminary order

of forfeiture as long as it has a valid basis for holding the property. The criminal forfeiture action itself is a valid basis for maintaining possession of the property only if the Government has obtained a seizure warrant pursuant to section 853(f) or a restraining order (mandating transfer of the property to Government control) pursuant to section 853(e). Absent such authority, the Government may not continue to possess property subject to criminal forfeiture unless there is an independent basis for such possession.

A seizure warrant issued in a parallel civil forfeiture case provides such independent basis as long as the civil action is pending. Similarly, an administrative forfeiture action is also an independent basis for maintaining custody of an asset. Likewise, property seized for evidence may remain in Government custody as long as the evidentiary basis remains. In such cases, the Government does not need to obtain a criminal seizure warrant or restraining order to maintain possession of the property. In the absence of an administrative forfeiture action or if the civil forfeiture action ends, or if the evidentiary basis for the property evaporates, then the Government must obtain either a criminal seizure warrant or a restraining order under section 853(f) or (e), respectively, to maintain custody of the property pending the outcome of the criminal case.

C. Discussion

It is not necessary for the Government to have the property subject to criminal forfeiture in its possession during the pendency of a criminal forfeiture proceeding. To the contrary, the criminal forfeiture statutes contemplate that the property will, in most cases, remain in the possession of the defendant—albeit pursuant to a pretrial restraining order—until the court enters a preliminary order of forfeiture. *See* section 853(g) (upon entry of an order of forfeiture under this section, the court shall authorize the Attorney General to seize all property ordered forfeited....) Cases where the Government takes physical possession of property subject to criminal forfeiture with a criminal seizure warrant prior to the entry of a preliminary order of forfeiture are relatively rare.

But the Government frequently does have physical possession of the property subject to criminal forfeiture before any preliminary order of forfeiture is entered in the criminal case. Such possession may be the result of a seizure pursuant to a civil seizure warrant issued pursuant to section 981(b), or a seizure for the purpose of civil forfeiture that was based on probable cause. It also could be the consequence of the seizure of the property for evidence—with or without a warrant—or the adoption of the property for the purpose of forfeiture from a state or local law enforcement agency. The question is whether such possession during the pendency of criminal forfeiture proceedings is proper absent the

issuance of a criminal seizure warrant under section 853(f) or a pretrial restraining order under section 853(e).

Because the Government need not have possession of the property subject to forfeiture at all during the pendency of the criminal case, the absence of a criminal seizure warrant or pretrial restraining order is of no moment as long as the Government's possession of the property pending trial has an independent basis. The following discussion focuses on four possible independent bases for maintaining physical possession of the property pending trial.

1. Property seized pursuant to a civil seizure warrant

The seizure of property pursuant to a civil seizure warrant issued under section 981(b) provides a valid basis for the Government's physical possession of property pending the outcome of a criminal forfeiture proceeding. But this is so only as long as the civil forfeiture matter is pending. In the Civil Asset Forfeiture Reform Act (CAFRA) of 2000, Congress provided that if someone files a claim in an administrative forfeiture proceeding, the Government has 90 days in which to (1) commence a civil forfeiture action, (2) commence a criminal forfeiture action, or (3) return the property. *See* 18 U.S.C. § 983(a)(3)(B). It is perfectly appropriate for the Government to file both a civil action and a criminal action within the 90-day period, or to file a civil action within such period and file a criminal action later. In such cases, the civil seizure warrant provides a valid basis for the Government's continued possession of the property.

But section 983(a)(3)(C) provides that if "criminal forfeiture is the only forfeiture proceeding commenced by the Government, the Government's right to continued possession of the property shall be governed by the applicable criminal forfeiture statute." In other words, if there are parallel civil and criminal proceedings, or if the property has been identified for forfeiture but the Government's time for commencing a civil action has expired, the civil seizure warrant will provide a sufficient basis for holding the property, but if there is only a criminal case. The Government must take steps to retain possession of the property either with a criminal seizure warrant issued pursuant to section 853(f), or with an order issued pursuant to section 853(e).¹⁶

¹⁶ One court has held that if property is already in Government custody, the proper procedure under section 983(a)(3)(C) is not to issue a criminal seizure warrant under section 853(f), but to issue an order under section 853(e). The order need not be a restraining order or an injunction, however. Rather, the court pointed out, section 853(e) authorizes the court to issue any order that will "assure the availability of the property." *See In Re: 2000 White Mercedes ML320*, 220 F. Supp. 2d 1322, 1326 n.5 (M.D. Fla. 2001). AFMLS recommends that AUSAs use Form CRM1001 available on AFML Online, <http://10.173.2.12/criminal/afoml/pleadings/criminal/crm1001.htm>, to apply for a section 853(e) order in this situation. *See* Katz, James V., "Criminal Forfeiture of Property Already in Government Custody," *Asset Forfeiture News*, November/December 2002, at 11.

The 90-day deadline provision in CAFRA, of course, only applies to cases where the property was initially seized for the purpose of “non-judicial” (i.e., administrative) forfeiture. See section 981(a)(1)(A). If the property was seized pursuant to a civil forfeiture seizure warrant under section 981(b), but it was not seized for the purpose of administrative forfeiture, the prescriptions found in section 983(a)(3) regarding the 90-day deadline and the need to re seize property already in Government possession do not apply. Nevertheless, even in such cases, if the Government does not file a civil forfeiture complaint and proceeds only with a criminal forfeiture action, it may not lawfully maintain possession of the property pursuant to the civil seizure warrant alone, but must obtain either a criminal seizure warrant or a pretrial restraining order. See *United States v. Schmitz*, 153 F.R.D. 136 (E.D. Wis. 1994) (pre-CAFRA case; once the Government filed criminal forfeiture action, it no longer had authority to retain property seized under section 881 unless it obtained a restraining order under section 853(e) or a seizure warrant under section 853(f); property ordered returned).

2. Property seized without a warrant based on probable cause

Under section 981(b), property may be seized for civil or administrative forfeiture without a warrant if there is probable cause for the seizure and an exception to the warrant requirement applies. If those conditions are satisfied, the Government may maintain physical possession of the property pursuant to the section 981(b) seizure during the pendency of a criminal forfeiture case to the same extent as it could if the property had been seized with a warrant. That is, as long as the civil or administrative forfeiture case is ongoing, the continued possession may be based on the civil seizure. But if the civil case is terminated or not filed within the statutory deadline, the Government will have to maintain physical possession pursuant to a criminal seizure warrant or pretrial restraining order.

3. Property seized for evidence

The seizure of property for evidence provides an independent basis for the continued physical possession of property during the pendency of a criminal forfeiture proceeding as long as the evidentiary value of the property persists. Thus, if property is seized for evidence, it may be named in a criminal forfeiture proceeding and held by the Government without the need to obtain a criminal seizure warrant or pretrial restraining order. However, if the evidentiary value of the property evaporates, the Government must obtain a seizure warrant or restraining order to maintain custody of the property for the purpose of forfeiture.¹⁷ The

¹⁷ If an AUSA declines to seek a criminal seizure warrant or a section 853(e) order on the ground that this exception applies (i.e., on the ground that the property has evidentiary value but the seizing agency feels that the evidentiary value of the property is in doubt) the agency may request that the USAO provide the agency with a letter that it may use to protect itself from liability should someone later question whether there was a lawful basis for the agency’s retention of the property.

U.S. Marshals Service does not store property held as evidence, even when it is subject to forfeiture. Such property is retained in the custody of the seizing agency until such time as it is no longer needed for evidence.

4. Property obtained from the state for adoptive forfeiture

A federal seizing agency may take custody of property from a state or local law enforcement agency for the purpose of administrative forfeiture. If, in such a case, someone files a claim contesting the forfeiture, the 90-day deadline provision in section 983(a)(3)(B) comes into play. Thus, the Government's obligations regarding the continued physical possession of the property during the pendency of a criminal forfeiture proceeding are the same as they would be if the property had been seized for the purpose of civil forfeiture by a federal agency in the first instance.

Alternatively, the Government may take possession of property from a state agency without any intention of proceeding with administrative or civil judicial forfeiture, but rather with the intent to seek the forfeiture of the property in a criminal case. In that instance, CAFRA does not apply, but neither does the provision in section 981(b)(2)(C) creating an exemption from the warrant requirement in adoption cases. That provision applies only to civil forfeiture proceedings. Therefore, the Government may maintain custody of the property only if it has evidentiary value, or if it obtains a criminal seizure warrant or pretrial restraining order. In such matters, the U.S. Attorney's Office must not agree to the request by a state or local agency to institute a criminal forfeiture action until a federal agency has consented to process the asset for federal seizure.

IV. Contaminated Real Property

A. Background

Certain statutory provisions may impose liability on the United States in connection with contaminated real property that it owns—including ownership obtained through forfeiture. Moreover, even when liability is not imposed on the United States under these statutory provisions, there may be practical impediments to the sale or transfer of such properties by the United States after forfeiture. Consequentially, caution must be exercised in targeting real property for forfeiture when there are indications that the real property may be contaminated.

The most prominent of these statutory provisions include the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), 42 U.S.C. § 9601 *et seq.* The liability provisions of 42 U.S.C. § 9607 are imposed upon the United States by 42

U.S.C. § 9620(a). Section 9620(h) sets forth notice and warranting requirements that apply whenever any agency, department, or instrumentality of the United States enters into a contract for the sale or other transfer of real property that is owned by the United States and on which any hazardous substance¹⁸ either¹⁹ (1) has been stored for more than 1 year, (2) is known to have been released, or (3) is known to have been disposed of.

The Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act of 1992 includes provisions at 42 U.S.C. § 4852(d) which require disclosure of information concerning potential lead-based paint contamination upon the transfer of residential property.²⁰ Further, the United States may be required to undertake certain abatement actions of lead-based paint contamination for forfeited pre-1960 property.²¹ Forfeited property constructed during or after 1960 but before 1978²² may be marketed and sold after complying with certain risk assessment and lead-based paint inspection. If the sale is completed within 270 days of the final order of forfeiture, the Government is exempted from these abatement, risk assessment, and inspection requirements.²³

In addition to federal statutory provisions, state environmental laws must be considered when targeting contaminated real property for forfeiture.²⁴ Even when federal statutes may allow the United States to transfer contaminated real property without continuing federal liability for cleanup, applicable state law may continue to impose liability or may make the real property unmarketable in practical terms.

¹⁸ The term *hazardous substance* means that group of substances defined as hazardous under CERCLA (42 U.S.C. § 9601(14)) and that appear at 40 C.F.R. § 302.4. *See also* 40 C.F.R. §§ 261 and 373. The requirements for reporting hazardous substances in connection with the sale or transfer of federal property are in part 373.

¹⁹ The Land and Natural Resources Division, now the Environmental and Natural Resources Division, issued a Memorandum dated May 16, 1990, providing guidance to federal agencies involved in forfeitures regarding notice and liability under the statute. This memorandum is reprinted in Appendix A at A-51.

²⁰ The regulations implementing these disclosure requirement are found at 24 C.F.R. § 35.88. Certification and acknowledgment of disclosure requirements are found at 24 C.F.R. § 35.92.

²¹ 24 C.F.R. § 35.210.

²² 24 C.F.R. § 35.215. In the case of jurisdictions that banned the sale or residential use of lead-based paint prior to 1978, an earlier date may be applicable. 24 C.F.R. § 35.115(a)(1).

²³ 24 C.F.R. § 35.115(a)(10).

²⁴ Section 9620(a)(4) provides that state law concerning removal and remedial action shall apply to such actions facilities owned by the United States, including property transferred by federal agencies. Section 9620(h)(3)(C).

B. Policy

It is the policy of the DOJ that real property that is contaminated or potentially contaminated with hazardous substances may in the exercise of discretion be subject to forfeiture only upon determination by the U.S. Attorney, in the district where the property is located, in consultation with the seizing agency and the U.S. Marshals Service that such action is fiscally sound or necessary to advance a law enforcement purpose. If the U.S. Attorney chooses to delegate this authority to an AUSA, provision must be made for review by a supervisor. As part of the consultation with the seizing agency and the U.S. Marshals Service, due consideration must be given to the disposal alternatives that may be available after forfeiture, and the impact of any cleanup costs to the AFF. Furthermore, such real property that is forfeited will only be transferred or sold with notice of the potential or actual contamination. Notice must be based on information that is available on the basis of a complete search of agency files.²⁵ This notice will be included in the contract of sale and the deed.²⁶

This policy is applicable regardless of the type or source of the hazardous substance(s). This policy is applicable to all cases referred to the DOJ by any agency of the United States.

Forfeited real property that is marketable but is contaminated, or potentially contaminated, with hazardous substances due to activities of a prior owner may be transferred or sold as is and an environmental assessment and/or remediation of the contamination need not be undertaken.²⁷ Whenever possible, the U.S. Marshals Service will obtain a commitment from the buyer to clean up the property as a part of the contract of sale.

However, the United States may bear additional responsibility and liability if the real property becomes contaminated with a hazardous substance after the United States becomes the owner. This situation normally will arise when the United States operates a business or activity on the property that results in the storage, release, or disposal of hazardous substances (e.g., gasoline stations, metal plating shops, dry cleaners, printers, etc.) Under this circumstance, the United States is responsible for (1) all costs of hazardous substances

²⁵ 42 U.S.C. § 9620(h)(3); 40 C.F.R. § 373.1. It is envisioned that this search will involve the investigative agency's case files(s) relating to the real property. Additionally, the search must include any documentation generated from an environmental assessment or the removal of hazardous substances from the real property.

²⁶ A proposed notice is in Appendix A at A-59.

²⁷ In cases involving illegal drug laboratories, the laboratories must be dismantled and all chemicals and equipment must be seized and removed in accordance with the *DEA Agents Manual*, Section 6674.0 *et seq.* In cases involving lead-based paint contamination, abatement is not required only if the property is sold within 270 days of the date of forfeiture.

removal and/or remedial action,²⁸ (2) providing notice of the hazardous substance to a subsequent transferee or purchaser, (3) a warranting covenant to a subsequent transferee or purchaser.²⁹ Because of the potential resulting liability and expense, the U.S. Marshals Service AFO shall approve the operation of such a business or activity only in unusual circumstances.

This policy envisions U.S. Attorneys exercising discretion in undertaking forfeiture action against real property that is contaminated where the use of the property indicates contamination or where there is the potential of contamination with hazardous substances. If such circumstances are disclosed within the period of time that the forfeiture action is being pursued, the U.S. Attorney must reevaluate the decision to continue the forfeiture. Such properties must not be forfeited unless the defendant's net equity in the property clearly exceeds the estimated cost of cleanup. *Furthermore, such properties are not to be forfeited when there is reason to believe that the property is substantially contaminated with hazardous substances and that such contamination will render the property unmarketable.* Cleanup costs can be considerable, particularly when the water table is involved. In making this determination, the U.S. Marshals Service may order an environmental assessment³⁰ that will be paid from the AFF.

If, at any point, the U.S. Attorney elects, in the exercise of discretion, not to proceed because significant contamination renders the property unmarketable, the U.S. Attorney must consider the following alternatives:

- (1) the filing of a release of *lis pendens* (assuming a *lis pendens* had been filed) containing notice of the reason (significant contamination) for dismissal of the forfeiture action;
- (2) the filing of some other document in the country deed records containing notice of the significant contamination (if such filing is permitted under the law);
- (3) notification of a federal, state, or local environmental agency of the significant

²⁸ The Environmental Protection Agency's funds, to include the Superfund, are generally not available for remedial actions on federally owned property. See 42 U.S.C. § 9111(e)(3).

²⁹ The covenant must warrant that (1) all remedial action necessary to protect human health and the environment with respect to any such substance remaining on the property has been taken before the date of such transfer and (2) any additional remedial action found to be necessary after the date of such transfer shall be conducted by the United States. See section 9620(h)(3)(B).

³⁰ The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has agreed to conduct environmental assessments for the DOJ on a cost basis. All contacts with the corps are to be made through the U.S. Marshals Service.

contamination for purposes of appropriate enforcement action (federal, state, or local law may require mandatory notification);

- (4) notification of any lienholders of the significant contamination for such action as they may want to take; and
- (5) consideration of prosecution, civilly or criminally, for violations of the environmental laws by the private owner—the U.S. Attorney's Office should contact the Environmental Division (Environmental Crimes Section or Environmental Enforcement Section).

Not all of these alternatives are mandatory. Ultimately, it is within the discretion of the U.S. Attorney to decide how best to proceed when an election not to proceed with forfeiture is made.

V. Financial Instruments

The following describes procedures and responsibilities for handling financial instruments seized for forfeiture. Consultation with the U.S. Attorney's Office is recommended.

A. Postal money orders

1. Seizing agency

Immediately following seizure, the seizing agency should send (1) the serial numbers, (2) the amount of each money order, and (3) a statement that the Government has received the money orders and is entitled to them under forfeiture laws to the following address:

National Money Order Coordinator
St. Louis Postal Data Center
P.O. Box 388
St. Louis, MO 63166-0388

The seizing agency should also provide the U.S. Marshals Service with a copy of this letter at the time the money orders are transferred to the U.S. Marshals Service for custody.

2. U.S. Marshals Service

Upon forfeiture of the money orders, the U.S. Marshals Service will

- (1) complete a domestic money order inquiry, PS Form 6401, for each money order; and
- (2) return the form, via registered mail, with the original money order to the national money order coordinator, along with the appropriate legal documentation showing that the Government is entitled to receive the proceeds.

B. Personal and cashier's checks

1. Seizing agency

Immediately following seizure, the seizing agency, following consultation with the U.S. Attorney's Office if appropriate, should

- (1) notify the bank upon which the check is drawn that the check has been seized for forfeiture;
- (2) direct the financial institution to take necessary steps to prevent the withdrawal which may require a seizure warrant or a restraining order directed to the bank (*see Valderrama v. United States*, 326 F. Supp. 2d 1333 (S.D. Fla. 2004)); and
- (3) provide a copy of this notice to the U.S. Marshals Service at the time the check is transferred for custody.

2. U.S. Marshals Service

The U.S. Marshals Service will accept custody of all checks as to which the investigative agency has contacted the bank on which they were drawn and negotiate the checks after receipt of a declaration or order of forfeiture in accordance with established procedures.

C. Certificates of deposit

1. Seizing agency

Immediately following seizure or restraint, the seizing agency should (1) notify the bank that issued the certificate of deposit that it has been seized or restrained for forfeiture and

(2) instruct the bank officials to take whatever steps are necessary to freeze the funds covered by the certificate so the certificate of deposit will be negotiable by the U.S. Marshals Service after forfeiture.

2. U.S. Marshals Service

The U.S. Marshals Service will take appropriate action, in accordance with established procedures, to liquidate the certificate of deposit after forfeiture.

D. Traveler's checks

1. Seizing agency

Immediately following seizure, the seizing agency should (1) notify the company issuing the checks that they have been seized for forfeiture and (2) determine what procedures will be required in order to redeem the checks.

If they can be redeemed prior to forfeiture, (1) take appropriate steps to liquidate the checks and (2) have the issuing company issue a cashier's check to the U.S. Marshals Service.

If liquidation cannot occur until after forfeiture, turn the checks over to the U.S. Marshals Service with verification that the issuing company has been notified.

2. U.S. Marshals Service

The U.S. Marshals Service will accept custody of all traveler's checks that cannot be liquidated until after forfeiture. Upon receipt of a declaration of forfeiture, the U.S. Marshals Service will liquidate the asset in accordance with established procedures.

E. Stocks, bonds, and brokerage accounts

1. Seizing agency

Immediately following seizure or restraint, the seizing agency should contact a certified stock broker (state and national) to establish the fair market value of the asset and determine how the instrument is traded.

Securities targeted for forfeiture that are in a brokerage account will usually be seized or restrained in place. Upon receipt of a final forfeiture order, the U.S. Marshals Service will instruct the broker to liquidate the account. The net proceeds after commission are deposited in the AFF. Pursuant to court order, brokerage accounts may be held in a different manner in order to preserve the value of the account.

When stocks or bond certificates are seized, the U.S. Marshals Service AFO sends them to a U.S. Marshals Service brokerage account at an established securities firm. Upon receipt of a final forfeiture order, the certificates are submitted to a transfer agent to change ownership to the U.S. Marshals Service and the certificates are liquidated and deposited into the AFF.

The U.S. Marshals Service will not accept custody of any financial instrument with a fair market value equal to \$0, or any stocks or bonds that are privately or closely held, or were issued by a "shell corporation" and are not traded on the open market. Stocks and bonds of privately or closely held corporations should not be seized unless the seizing agency can document that they have a significant value.

2. U.S. Marshals Service

The U.S. Marshals Service will accept custody of all stocks and bonds for which the seizing agency can document a significant worth. As a general rule, the U.S. Marshals Service will try to liquidate stocks and bonds through interlocutory sale whenever possible.

F. U.S. savings bonds

1. Seizing agency

Immediately following seizure, the seizing agency should notify the Department of the Treasury, by certified letter, listing the following:

- (1) serial numbers;
- (2) bond denominations;
- (3) to whom payable; and
- (4) the reason for which they were seized.

The seizing agency should send the above information to the following address:

Bureau of Public Debt
Savings Bond Division
Parkersburg, WV 26106

The seizing agency should provide the U.S. Marshals Service with a copy of this letter at the time the savings bonds are transferred for custody.

2. U.S. Marshals Service

The U.S. Marshals Service will accept custody of all savings bonds, maintain such bonds until forfeiture, and dispose of such bonds in accordance with established procedures.

VI. Seized Cash Management

The security, budgetary, and accounting problems caused by retention of large amounts of cash historically has caused great concern within the DOJ and Congress. In the past, agencies participating in the DOJ's asset forfeiture program have held tens of thousands of dollars in office safes and other locations throughout the country. This raises both financial management and internal control issues. The DOJ must report annually to Congress on the amount of seized cash not on deposit.

The Attorney General has established the following policy on the handling of seized cash³¹:

Seized cash, except where it is to be used as evidence, is to be deposited promptly in the Seized Asset Deposit Fund pending forfeiture. The Chief, AFMLS, may grant exceptions to this policy in extraordinary circumstances. Transfer of cash to the U.S. [m]arshal should occur within 60 days of seizure or 10 days of indictment.

This policy applies to all cash seized for purposes of forfeiture. Therefore, all currency seized that is subject to criminal or civil forfeiture must be delivered to the U.S. Marshals Service for deposit in the U.S. Marshals Service Seized Asset Deposit Fund either within 60

³¹ *The Attorney General's Guidelines on Seized and Forfeited Property* (July 1990), paragraph VII (1). The guidelines are currently under review. The revised guidelines and any new policies or procedures designed to implement the guidelines will be attached as an appendix at a later date.

days after seizure or 10 days after indictment, whichever occurs first.³² Where appropriate, photographs or videotapes of the seized cash should be taken for later use in court as evidence.

If the amount of seized cash to be retained for evidentiary purposes is less than \$5,000, permission need not be sought from AFMLS for an exception; but any exception granted must be granted at a supervisory level within a U.S. Attorney's Office using the criteria below.

If the amount of seized cash to be retained for evidentiary purposes is \$5,000 or greater, the request for an exemption must be forwarded to AFMLS.³³ The request should include a brief statement of the factors warranting its retention and the name, position, and phone number of the individual to contact regarding the request.

Limited exceptions to this directive, including extensions of applicable time limits, will be granted, on an interim basis, only with the express written permission of the chief of AFMLS.³⁴ Retention of currency will be permitted when it serves a significant independent, tangible, evidentiary purpose due to, for example, the presence of fingerprints, packaging in an incriminating fashion, or the existence of a traceable amount of narcotic residue on the bills.³⁵ If only a portion of the seized cash has evidentiary value, only that portion with evidentiary value should be retained. The balance should be deposited in accordance with DOJ policy.

The commingling of cash seized by the Government under section 881(a)(6) will not deprive the court of jurisdiction over the res. Unlike other assets seized by the Government (e.g., real property, conveyances), cash is a fungible item. Its character is not changed merely by depositing it with other cash. While it is true that the jurisdiction of the court is derived entirely from its control over the defendant res, court jurisdiction does not depend upon control over specific cash. As stated in *United States v. \$57,480.05 United States Currency*

³² This policy does not apply to the recovery of buy money advanced from appropriated funds. To the extent practical, negotiable instruments and foreign currency should be converted and deposited.

³³ The criteria and procedure for obtaining exemptions remains the same for cash retained by other agencies participating in the asset forfeiture program.

³⁴ Requests for an exemption should be filed by the U.S. Attorney's Office or Criminal Division section responsible for prosecuting, or reviewing for prosecution, a particular case.

³⁵ The authority to approve exceptions to the DOJ cash management policy requiring that all seized cash, except where it is to be used as evidence, is to be deposited promptly into the Seized Asset Deposit Fund as set forth in section VII(1) of *The Attorney General's Guidelines on Seized and Forfeited Property* (July 1990) was delegated by the Assistant Attorney General, Criminal Division, to the chief, AFMLS, Criminal Division, on December 13, 1991.

and Other Coins and \$10,575.00 United States Currency, 722 F.2d 1457 (9th Cir. 1984), “Jurisdiction did not depend upon control over specific bits of currency. The bank credit of fungible dollars constituted an appropriate substitute for the original res.”

It has never been a requirement that the Government segregate specific cash seized for forfeiture in one case from that seized for forfeiture in another. Commingling of such assets has been the rule and not the exception.³⁶

³⁶ See *American Bank of Wage Claims v. Registry of the District Court of Guam*, 431 F.2d 1215 (9th Cir. 1970).

Chapter 2

Administrative and Judicial Forfeiture

I. Interplay of Administrative and Civil Judicial Forfeiture

A. Preference for administrative forfeiture

Before 1990, virtually all forfeitures of properties valued at more than \$100,000 were conducted judicially. In 1990, however, the law was amended to permit the administrative forfeiture of cash and monetary instruments, without regard to value, and of other property up to a value of \$500,000. *See* 19 U.S.C. § 1607.

The legislative history of this law makes clear that Congress sought to increase the speed and efficiency of uncontested forfeiture actions and has confidence in the notice and other safeguards built into administrative forfeiture laws. Moreover, the due process protections enacted as part of the Civil Asset Forfeiture Reform Act (CAFRA) of 2000 ensure that the administrative forfeiture laws operate fairly. Accordingly, there is a preference for doing forfeitures administratively where it is possible to do so.

In general, properties subject to administrative forfeiture³⁷ must be forfeited administratively, unless one of the following exceptions applies.

- (1) Where several items of personal property (other than monetary instruments) are subject to civil forfeiture under the same statutory authority and on the same factual basis, and they have a common owner and a combined appraised value in excess of \$500,000, the property should be forfeited judicially in a single action.
- (2) Where the items subject to forfeiture include some that can be forfeited administratively and others that must be forfeited judicially, the forfeitures may be combined in a single judicial action.

³⁷ In general, all property subject to forfeiture may be forfeited administratively except (1) real property (*see* 18 U.S.C. § 985); (2) personal property having a value of more than \$500,000, except as noted in 19 U.S.C. § 1607(a); and (3) property forfeitable under a statute that does not incorporate the Customs laws (*see, e.g.,* 18 U.S.C. § 492, relating to counterfeiting).

- (3) When pursuing administrative forfeiture might create the appearance that the Government is circumventing the time limits on administrative forfeiture set forth in 18 U.S.C. § 983(a), the forfeiture should be done judicially as explained in section I.D at page 39, *infra*.
- (4) When the U.S. Attorney and the seizing agency agree that the forfeiture should proceed judicially in the first instance, administrative forfeiture is unnecessary.
- (5) When, as explained in section II.B at page 49, the U.S. Attorney requests that the seizing agency suspend the administrative forfeiture to allow the forfeiture to be handled criminally, and the seizing agency agrees to do so, the forfeitures may be pursued exclusively as part of the criminal case.

B. Administrative forfeiture of bank accounts

Section 1607(a)(4) states that “monetary instruments” may be administratively forfeited without regard to dollar value, but this exception does not apply to bank accounts.

The term *monetary instrument* is defined in 31 U.S.C. § 5312(a)(3) to mean currency, traveler’s checks, various forms of bearer paper, and “similar material.” Neither this statutory definition nor the parallel definition in the applicable regulations encompasses the funds in a bank account.³⁹ Moreover, the legislative history of section 5312(a)(3) indicates that Congress intended the term *monetary instrument* to apply only to highly liquid assets.⁴⁰ Consequently, bank accounts may not be considered monetary instruments for the purposes of the exception to the cap on administrative forfeitures in 19 U.S.C. § 1607(a)(4). Bank accounts of a value of \$500,000 or less, however, may be administratively forfeited pursuant to 19 U.S.C. § 1607(a)(1), subject to the policy on handling forfeitures judicially if the aggregate value of two or more assets exceeds \$500,000, as discussed in section I.A at page 33.

³⁹ See also 31 C.F.R. § 103.11(m) (defining monetary instruments).

⁴⁰ H. Rep. No. 91-975, 91st Cong. 1, 2d Sess. (1970), *reprinted in* 1970 U.S. Code Cong. & Admin. News 4407. “It is not the intention of your committee, however, that this broadened authority be expanded any further than necessary to cover those types of bearer instruments which may substitute for currency.”

C. Conversion of administrative forfeitures covered by the Customs carve-out to judicial forfeitures covered by CAFRA⁴¹

There are times when an administrative forfeiture is commenced under Title 19,⁴² but the ensuing judicial forfeiture is brought under another statute. Title 19 forfeitures, of course, are exempt from the provisions of CAFRA, whereas most other forfeitures are not. This section discusses what action the United States should take when it converts an administrative forfeiture action under Title 19 to a civil judicial action brought under a non-Title 19 statute that is not exempt from the CAFRA requirements.

1. Summary

The reforms enacted by CAFRA are applicable to all civil forfeitures taken under any provision of federal law except for those specifically exempted by 18 U.S.C. § 983(i). Forfeitures to which the provisions of CAFRA are not applicable include, inter alia, forfeitures under Title 19 that are enforced by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) (formerly components of the U.S. Customs Service). In instances where CBP (on its own, or on behalf of ICE) commences an administrative forfeiture action under Title 19, but the U.S. Attorney subsequently files a civil judicial forfeiture action under a non-Title 19 statute (e.g., 21 U.S.C. § 881, which is not CAFRA-exempt) the U.S. Attorney should comply with all CAFRA deadlines, including the 90-day filing deadline under section 983(a)(3), and CBP should return the cost bond.

2. Discussion

CAFRA, which took effect on August 23, 2000, enacted a set of procedural provisions in section 983 that governs administrative and judicial forfeitures under all civil forfeiture provisions of federal law, except for those explicitly exempted by section 983(i). Thus, the procedures governing administrative and civil judicial forfeiture in section 983 apply to even the most obscure federal civil forfeiture statutes. The only forfeitures to which section 983 does not apply are those specified in section 983(i), which include, inter alia, all forfeitures under Title 19, all forfeitures under Title 26 (including forfeitures of firearms under the National Firearms Act), and certain forfeitures under other statutes enforced by CBP and

⁴¹ Section I.C was previously circulated as Interim Legal Advice Memo (ILAM) 03-3 in 2003.

⁴² The reference to forfeitures commenced under Title 19 is to cases in which Title 19 provides the substantive basis for the forfeiture, not cases in which the procedures in Title 19 are incorporated into other forfeiture statutes. *See*, e.g., 18 U.S.C. § 981(d).

ICE.⁴³ In those cases, the Customs laws remain in effect as if CAFRA had not been enacted. Because section 983(i) exempts many forfeiture provisions enforced by CBP and ICE from the application of the CAFRA reforms, it is generally referred to as the “Customs carve-out” provision.⁴⁴

Given the Customs carve-out in CAFRA, a potential problem arises when a CBP or ICE officer seizes property pursuant to Title 19 authority, initiates an administrative forfeiture action, and—as CBP is required to do—refers the case to the U.S. Attorney following the filing of a claim and cost bond, but the U.S. Attorney subsequently decides to commence a civil forfeiture action under another statute that is not exempt from CAFRA. For example, CBP or ICE may seize property in a drug case under Title 19, but the U.S. Attorney may believe it advantageous to the Government for strategic reasons to pursue the forfeiture under section 881.

Because the Government has chosen to pursue forfeiture under a CAFRA statute (i.e., one not designated under the Customs carve-out provision) all of the CAFRA-mandated procedures and deadlines would become applicable to the Government’s forfeiture case. For example, CAFRA changed the deadlines for filing administrative and civil judicial forfeiture actions from those required under pre-CAFRA law and abolished the cost bond.⁴⁵ In “exempted cases,” such as those filed pursuant to Title 19 under the Customs carve-out provision, the Customs laws and supplemental rules require only that forfeiture proceedings be commenced “forthwith” and be prosecuted “without delay.” Under CAFRA, however, notice of administrative forfeiture generally must be sent within 60 days of the seizure, and

⁴³ Section 983(i)(2) also exempts from the requirements of CAFRA the following provisions of law which allow for forfeiture: section 983(i)(2)(B) exempts the Internal Revenue Code of 1986; section 983(i)(2)(C) exempts the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. § 301 *et seq.*); section 983(i)(2)(D) exempts the Trading with the Enemy Act (50 U.S.C. App. § 1 *et seq.*) and the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) (50 U.S.C. § 1701 *et seq.*) (IEEPA provision added by the USA Patriot Act of 2001, Pub. L. 107-56, Title III, § 316(d), Oct. 26, 2001, 115 Stat. 272, 310); and section 983(i)(2)(E) exempts section 1 of Title VI of the Embargo Act of June 15, 1917 (40 Stat. 233; 22 U.S.C. § 401).

⁴⁴ Section 983(i) does not exempt all statutes enforced by CBP and ICE. The currency and monetary instrument report (CMIR) offenses in Title 31, smuggling offenses under 18 U.S.C. § 545, and other provisions are not exempted from the requirements of CAFRA.

⁴⁵ 18 U.S.C. § 983(a)(2)(E) provides that “any person may make a claim under subparagraph (A) [of section 983(a)(2)] without posting bond with respect to the property which is the subject of the claim.”

the civil judicial complaint must be filed within 90 days of the filing of a claim contesting the administrative forfeiture. *See* section 983(a).⁴⁶

Choosing to pursue judicial forfeiture under a CAFRA statute, after CBP has commenced an administrative forfeiture under an exempted statute, thus presents the Government with a number of questions: Does the 90-day period for filing a judicial forfeiture action under section 983(a)(3) run from the date the claim was filed with CBP (or ICE), or from the date the AUSA decided to pursue civil forfeiture under a CAFRA statute? Does the 60-day notice requirement for administrative forfeitures apply retroactively so that a claimant who did not get notice within 60 days of the seizure could demand the return of the property pursuant to section 983(a)(1)(F) on the ground that the Government did not comply with the requirements in section 983(a)(1)(A)? Should the Government return the cost bond?

The question regarding the cost bond is the easiest to resolve. If the Government is no longer pursuing civil forfeiture under a statute exempted from CAFRA, it has no legal authority to continue to hold the cost bond. In such cases, the U.S. Attorney should advise CBP that the cost bond must be released. On the other hand, if the Government pursues the civil judicial forfeiture under *both* the exempted statute and a CAFRA statute, the cost bond may be retained as long as the exempted cause of action remains part of the complaint.⁴⁷

The question regarding the retrospective application of the 60-day notice requirement is also easy to resolve. If, at the time it seized the property and commenced administrative

⁴⁶ Section 983(a)(1) deals with notice of administrative forfeiture actions, which must, in general, be sent to interested persons within 60 days of the seizure of the property.

Section 983(a)(2) deals with filing a claim in the administrative forfeiture proceeding in response to the notice. Under this provision, property owners have 30 days from the last date of publication to file a claim, and may do so without having to file a cost bond (section 983(a)(2)(E)).

Section 983(a)(3) deals with the filing of the judicial forfeiture complaint in cases where a claim is filed. Under this provision, the Government has 90 days to file a civil judicial action (or include the forfeiture allegation in a related criminal indictment).

Finally, if the Government files a civil judicial complaint, section 983(a)(4) gives any person claiming an interest in the seized property 30 days to file a claim to the property in accordance with the supplemental rules, and 20 days from the filing of the claim to file an answer.

⁴⁷ We note that pursuing civil judicial forfeiture under mixed theories (i.e., under CAFRA statutes and statutes covered by the Customs carve-out) will be problematic and is not recommended. Among other things, the trial procedure and jury instructions would be extraordinarily complex, given that hearsay would be admissible to allow the Government to establish probable cause (outside the presence of the jury) on the exempted theory, while only admissible evidence could be used (in the presence of the jury) to establish the forfeitability of the property by a preponderance of the evidence on the CAFRA theory. Also, if the Government meets its burden under both theories, the innocent owner defense in section 983(d) would apply to the CAFRA theory, but would not apply to the exempted theory.

forfeiture proceedings, CBP or ICE was acting pursuant to an exempted statute, it is not required to send any notice within any fixed period of time. That the U.S. Attorney subsequently decides to pursue the forfeiture under a CAFRA statute does not change that fact. Accordingly, the U.S. Attorney's charging decision would not retroactively convert a properly conducted administrative forfeiture proceeding into one that constituted a violation of the notice requirements in section 983(a)(1).

Moreover, even if we are mistaken in that regard, the same event that created the retrospective violation—the filing of the civil judicial action under the CAFRA statute—would itself render any supposed violation of the notice requirement moot. That is because we interpret section 983(a)(1)(F), which requires the return of the seized property if the Government fails to comply with the 60-day notice deadline “without prejudice to the right of the Government to commence a forfeiture proceeding at a later time,” as allowing the Government to retain possession of the seized property if it promptly files the civil judicial action upon discovery of the missed deadline. *See also Manjarrez v. United States*, 2002 WL 31870533 (N.D. Ill. 2002) (failure to send notice of an administrative forfeiture within the 60-day period prescribed by CAFRA does not bar the Government from commencing a civil judicial forfeiture action against the same property without first returning the property to the claimant). In a case where the supposed violation of the notice requirement does not even occur until the Government has decided to abandon the non-CAFRA forfeiture theory in favor of one to which the notice requirement applies, the Government will have filed the judicial action as discussed in Interim Legal Advice Memo (ILAM) 02-2, and maintained custody of the property pursuant to an arrest warrant in rem, before any obligation to return the seized property arises.

How to deal with the 90-day filing requirement in section 983(a)(3) presents a closer question. On the one hand, until the U.S. Attorney determines to pursue the civil judicial forfeiture under CAFRA statute, the 90-day filing requirement simply does not apply. On the other hand, if the Government routinely seized property under an exempted statute, delayed filing any civil judicial action for more than 90 days after a claimant filed a claim and cost bond, and then filed the judicial forfeiture under a CAFRA statute, it might create the appearance that the initial seizure under the exempted statute was merely a ruse to allow the U.S. Attorney to avoid complying with CAFRA when the Government intended all along to pursue the judicial forfeiture under the CAFRA statute. Accordingly, in any case referred by CBP or ICE where the initial seizure was pursuant to an exempted statute, the U.S. Attorney should make the decision whether to switch theories to a CAFRA statute, or to include both CAFRA and non-CAFRA theories in the complaint, within 90 days of the filing of the claim and cost bond; and if the decision is made to pursue the CAFRA forfeiture, the U.S. Attorney

should file the complaint before the 90 days expires, or ask the court for an extension of time in accordance with section 983(a)(3).

D. Whether to file a judicial forfeiture action when the timeliness or form of an administrative forfeiture claim is in dispute⁴⁸

There are times when the claim filed in an administrative forfeiture proceeding is facially defective or filed out of time, but the claimant disputes that characterization. This section discusses whether, in such cases, the seizing agency should enter a declaration of forfeiture or refer the case to the U.S. Attorney.

1. Summary

Section 983(a)(2) requires that a claim contesting an administrative forfeiture action contain certain information and be filed within a certain number of days. If the claim is not filed in accordance with the statute, the seizing agency may enter a declaration of forfeiture pursuant to 19 U.S.C. § 1609. There are times, however, when the claimant may dispute the agency's characterization of the claim as defective or untimely.

If the seizing agency ignores the claimant's protestations and proceeds with the declaration of forfeiture without referring the case to the U.S. Attorney, it runs the risk that the claimant may turn out to have been correct. By that time, it is likely that the 90-day period for commencing a civil judicial forfeiture action pursuant to section 983(a)(3) will have expired, and that civil forfeiture of the property will be barred by the "death penalty" provision in section 983(a)(3)(B).

On the other hand, if the agency routinely forwards untimely or defective claims to the U.S. Attorney, and the U.S. Attorney files a civil judicial forfeiture action to toll the 90-day period, the agency's policy of insisting on strict compliance with section 983(a)(2) will be undermined, and claimants will have little incentive to adhere to the statutory requirements.

On balance, the seizing agencies should continue to adhere to the policy of strict compliance and should only refer valid claims to the U.S. Attorney. The agencies are encouraged, however, to consult with the local U.S. Attorney if the content or timeliness of a claim filed in an administrative forfeiture proceeding is questionable before deciding to issue a declaration of forfeiture.

⁴⁸ Section I.D was previously disseminated as ILAM Memo 03-4 in 2003.

2. Discussion

Section 983(a)(2) provides that a person contesting an administrative forfeiture proceeding must file a claim with the seizing agency not later than the deadline set forth in the letter giving the person notice of the forfeiture, or not later than 30 days after the final day of publication of that notice in a newspaper, if direct notice was not received. *See* section 983(a)(2)(B). Moreover, the statute also provides that the claim must identify the property being claimed, state the claimant's interest in the property, and be made "under oath" subject to penalty of perjury. *See* section 983(a)(2)(C).⁴⁹ If no valid and timely claim is filed, the seizing agency is entitled to enter a declaration of forfeiture against the property pursuant to section 1609.

If a claim is timely and contains the required information, however, the agency must transfer the case to the U.S. Attorney, who must either commence a civil or criminal forfeiture action in the district court or return the within 90 days after the agency received the claim. *See* 18 U.S.C. § 983(a)(3)(A). If the U.S. Attorney does not comply with the statutory requirement, and the 90-day deadline is neither waived by the claimant nor extended by the court, the Government must release the property and the civil forfeiture of the property is forever barred. *See* section 983(a)(3)(B).

In the vast majority of cases, no one files a claim, and the seizing agency proceeds to enter the declaration of forfeiture. In most other cases, a clearly valid and timely claim is filed, and the agency transfers the case to the U.S. Attorney as required by law. In a small but significant number of cases, however, the timeliness or adequacy of the claim is in doubt. In such cases, the seizing agency may—in its discretion—give the claimant additional time to perfect the claim; but if the claim was untimely, or if the defects are not corrected, the agency has the right to proceed with the administrative forfeiture.

It is clear that the U.S. Attorney's duty to file a civil or criminal forfeiture action in the district court does not arise until a claim is filed with the seizing agency in the proper form. For example, in *Manjarrez v. United States*, 2002 WL 31870533 (N.D. Ill. 2002), the district court held that a claim filed by the claimant's attorney, instead of by the claimant personally, was not under oath as the statute requires, and therefore was not a valid claim. Accordingly, the court held, the 90-day period in which the Government was required to commence a judicial forfeiture action never began to run.

⁴⁹ *See* section III at page 54, regarding the "under oath" requirement.

There are times, however, when it is not entirely clear that the claim filed with the seizing agency is defective or untimely. For example, the agency may believe a claim is late because it was filed after the deadline set forth in the notice letter that the agency sent to the claimant; but the claimant may assert that the notice was defective because it was sent to the wrong address. If the agency is convinced that a claim is incomplete or is filed out of time, and it sticks to its guns and proceeds with the administrative forfeiture without referring the case to the U.S. Attorney, there is always the chance that a court will agree with the claimant and hold that the Government should have filed a judicial forfeiture action within the 90-day period prescribed by section 983(a)(3)(A). In that case, because there is no provision in the statute tolling the 90-day period while such disputes are resolved, it is likely that the Government will find itself outside of the 90-day period and unable to pursue the civil forfeiture of the property.

On the other hand, if the seizing agency forwarded every questionable case to the U.S. Attorney, the agency's policy of insisting on strict compliance with the terms of section 983(a)(2) would be rendered meaningless, and claimants would have little incentive to comply with those terms.

What is truly needed to resolve this problem is a provision in the statute tolling the 90-day period while any dispute as to the adequacy or timeliness of the claim filed in the administrative forfeiture proceeding is resolved by the court. But the absence of such a provision does not mean that the Government must liberally construe the otherwise strict requirements of section 983(a)(2). In fact, a recent decision by the Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit suggests that when there is a bona fide dispute as to the timeliness of a claim, the court should *equitably toll* the period for filing the judicial action to avoid any injustice to the Government.

In *Longenette v. Krusing*, 322 F.3d 758 (3d Cir. 2003), a claimant mailed his claim to the seizing agency within the statutory time period, but the agency did not receive the claim until after the time period expired. The agency assumed that the claim was untimely and entered a declaration of forfeiture, but the claimant disagreed and filed an action to recover his property in the district court. Ultimately, after protracted litigation, the court of appeals held that the claimant was correct: under pre-CAFRA law, at least, the timeliness of a claim filed in an administrative forfeiture proceeding by a prisoner was determined by the "mailbox rule." That is, the claim was deemed to have been filed when it was mailed.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ The rule seems to be otherwise for CAFRA cases and for claims filed by persons who are not prisoners. See *Sandoval v. United States*, 2001 WL 300729 (S.D.N.Y. 2001) (claim is considered filed in a civil forfeiture action when it is received by the seizing agency, not when it is mailed by the claimant); *Florez-Perez v. United States*, Case No. 3:99-cv-1230-J-20A (M.D. Fla. Sept. 1, 2000) (claim sent by Federal Express on the last day for filing a claim but not received by DEA until the next day was not timely filed).

By this time, however, the 5-year statute of limitations for filing a civil forfeiture action had expired. The claimant argued that, accordingly, the Government should be required to release the property and should be forever barred from commencing a civil forfeiture action. But the Third Circuit held that in fairness to the Government, given the novel legal issue involved, the statute of limitations would be equitably tolled. Thus, the Government was given 6 additional months in which to commence a new forfeiture action against the property.

While *Longenette* was a pre-CAFRA case involving the 5-year statute of limitations under 19 U.S.C. § 1621, and not the 90-day filing deadline under section 983(a)(3), the principle is the same. When the Government, in good faith, enters a declaration of forfeiture believing that the claim filed in an administrative forfeiture proceeding was inadequate or untimely, but is ultimately mistaken in that belief, the U.S. Attorney may argue that the time for filing a judicial action should be equitably tolled.

There is no guarantee, of course, that any court will agree with the Government on this point. But the availability of that remedy, coupled with the disadvantages of routinely referring all cases involving defective or untimely claims to the U.S. Attorney, militates in favor of taking the more aggressive approach on this issue.

It should be added, however, that in any case in which the legal issues regarding the adequacy or timeliness of a claim are unclear, the seizing agencies are encouraged to consult with the U.S. Attorney before deciding to go forward with the administrative forfeiture of the property. Such consultations—particularly in cases where further litigation is likely—will give the U.S. Attorney, who ultimately will have to defend the agency's action in the district court, the opportunity to advise the agency on the strengths and weaknesses of its position and the risks involved in not transferring the case for judicial forfeiture.

3. Conclusion

Seizing agencies should insist on strict compliance with the filing requirements of section 983(a)(2), and should not routinely refer defective claims to the U.S. Attorney just because a claimant insists that a claim contained all of the required information and was timely filed. The agencies, however, should consult with the U.S. Attorney regarding any claims in which the adequacy or the timeliness of the claim is unclear. If the agency rejects the claim and declares forfeiture but a court ultimately decides that the claim filed in that proceeding was valid, the U.S. Attorney should argue that the 90-day period for filing a judicial forfeiture action under section 983(a)(3) should be equitably tolled.

E. 60-day notice period in all administrative forfeiture cases

1. Background

Through the many forfeiture statutes, Congress has made clear its intent that the Government be expeditious in providing notice and in initiating forfeiture actions against seized property. Further, a fundamental aspect of due process in any forfeiture proceeding is that notice be given as soon as practicable to apprise interested persons of the pendency of the action and afford them an opportunity to be heard.

Notice to owners and interested parties of the seizure and intent to forfeit in any non-judicial civil forfeiture proceeding is governed by section 983(a)(1), which requires “written notice” to all interested parties.

2. 60-day notice

Section 983(a)(1) requires that written notice of an administrative forfeiture action be sent to interested parties as soon as practicable but no later than 60 days after the date of the seizure. For interested parties determined after seizure, the written notice shall occur within 60 days after reasonably determining ownership or interest. *See* section 983(a)(1)(A)(v). Waivers of this notice deadline may be obtained in writing in exceptional circumstances from a designated official within the seizing agency. *See* section 983(a)(1)(B).⁵¹ The exceptional circumstances are those set forth in section 983(a)(1)(D).

If a waiver is granted, it must set forth the exceptional circumstances and be included in the administrative forfeiture case file. A waiver issued under this provision, however, is valid for no more than 30 days. If additional time is required, the waiver must be extended by a judicial officer pursuant to section 983(a)(1)(C).

F. Inadvertent violation of 60-day deadline for sending notice⁵²

This section discusses what action the Government should take if it discovers that the seizing agency has inadvertently failed to send notice of the commencement of administrative forfeiture proceedings within 60 days of the seizure of the property as required by section 983(a)(1)(A).

⁵¹ For DEA, the designated official is the DEA forfeiture counsel in DEA headquarters.

⁵² Section I.F was previously disseminated as ILAM 02-2 in 2002.

1. Summary

Failure to comply with the 60-day deadline for sending notice precludes the Government from pursuing administrative forfeiture of the seized property and requires that the property be returned to the property owner. Section 983(a)(1)(F), however, permits the Government to file a judicial forfeiture action—civil or criminal—against the same property, and to re seize the property with either civil or criminal process. If the judicial action is commenced as soon as practicable after the discovery of the inadvertent failure to send notice, the Government may maintain custody of the property pursuant to the new civil or criminal process without having to go through the exercise of returning the property and seizing it back.

2. Discussion

Section 983(a)(1)(A)(i) provides that in non-judicial forfeiture proceedings,⁵³ the Government must send notice of the forfeiture within 60 days after the date of the seizure. Section 983(a)(1)(A)(iv) extends the deadline to 90 days in cases where the forfeiture is adopted from a state or local law enforcement agency. The statute also contains various exceptions to the notice deadlines and a procedure for obtaining extensions of time.⁵⁴

Congress enacted these deadlines to ensure that property owners are given timely notice of their right to contest a forfeiture and are apprized of the procedures for doing so. Hence, law enforcement agencies should endeavor at all times to adhere to the notice deadlines and obtain extensions of time for sending notice only when necessary, and only in the manner described in the statute. *See* sections 983(a)(1)(B) and (C). Intentionally ignoring a notice deadline in order to delay the sending of notice to the property owner or other interested parties is not permissible.

There are times, however, when the failure to send notice within the statutory period is purely inadvertent. The question that arises in such cases is what action the Government must take to rectify the situation.

⁵³ The notice requirement in section 983(a)(1) applies to all cases where the property was seized for the purpose of forfeiture, and administrative forfeiture is permissible under 19 U.S.C. § 1608 and not barred by 18 U.S.C. § 985. Seizures that are strictly for evidence, that are undertaken only pursuant to a criminal seizure warrant (21 U.S.C. § 853(f)), or that cannot, by statute, lead to an administrative forfeiture proceeding, do not trigger the notice requirements of section 983(a)(1).

⁵⁴ References in this section to the notice deadline apply to whatever deadline may be applicable in a given case, be it the 60-day deadline, the 90-day deadline, or some other deadline established pursuant to the statutory procedure for obtaining an extension of time.

Section 983(a)(1)(F) provides as follows:

(F) If the Government does not send notice of a seizure of property in accordance with subparagraph (A) to the person from whom the property was seized, and no extension of time is granted, the Government shall return the property to that person *without prejudice to the right of the Government to commence a forfeiture proceeding at a later time*. The Government shall not be required to return contraband or other property that the person from whom the property was seized may not legally possess. (Emphasis added.)

In our view, subparagraph (F) evinces Congress's intent to ensure that seized property does not indefinitely remain in the hands of the Government without the property owner having any opportunity to contest the forfeiture in a court of law. Thus, if the Government fails to send notice to the person from whom the property was seized within the statutory period for sending notice, it must return the property to that person (unless the property was contraband).

Section 983(a)(1)(F) also makes clear, however, that the Government is permitted to commence a new forfeiture proceeding. This presents two questions: Can the new proceeding be administrative, or must it be judicial? And can the Government re seize the property from the property owner when it commences the new proceeding?

While the statute does not make clear whether the new forfeiture proceeding can be administrative or must be judicial, we reject the view that section 983(a)(1)(F) permits the Government to re seize property for administrative forfeiture, thus starting the clock for sending notice all over again. The statute does not prohibit such action, but returning property to a property owner after the Government has missed the notice deadline, only to snatch the property back from the owner in order to start the clock over again, may violate the spirit of the legislation, and creates the appearance that the Government is trying to circumvent the statutory requirement. Thus, it is our view that once the Government misses the notice deadline for administrative forfeiture, and has returned the property pursuant to section 983(a)(1)(F), no new administrative forfeiture should be commenced against the same property based on the violation that led to the initial seizure, unless there are extraordinary circumstances indicating that return of the property would be contrary to the public interest.

On the other hand, section 983(a)(1)(F) does permit the Government to commence either a civil or criminal forfeiture action in court. In the case of a criminal action, the Government may name the property in an indictment or information and obtain a criminal seizure warrant,

a restraining order, or some other order under 21 U.S.C. § 853(e).⁵⁵ In the case of a civil judicial action, the Government may file a complaint and obtain an arrest warrant in rem for the property pursuant to Supplemental Rule C. Like the criminal seizure warrant, the arrest warrant in rem gives the Government a lawful basis to maintain custody of the property pending the resolution of the case in court. Thus, once the Government commences a judicial forfeiture action—either civil or criminal—against the property, it may re seize the property and hold it pending the resolution of the forfeiture case.

This matter is not without some ambiguity. It is possible to read section 983(a)(1)(F) to say that once the 60-day notice deadline is missed, the property must be returned to the property owner, and must remain in the owner's possession even though a civil or criminal forfeiture action is commenced in court. We do not think, however, that this was the intent of Congress. Again, the purpose of section 983(a)(1)(F) was to ensure that the Government did not hold property indefinitely without giving the property owner a day in court. Thus, absent extraordinary circumstances, if the notice deadline has passed, *and no forfeiture action is pending*, the property must be returned to the person from whom it was seized.⁵⁶ But once a judicial forfeiture action is filed, and the property owner is assured of a day in court, the Government can maintain the property in its possession as it would in any other forfeiture case, subject only to the "hardship" provisions in section 983(f). That, in our view, is what Congress meant by the language in section 983(a)(1)(F) providing that the return of the property is "without prejudice" to the right of the Government to commence a forfeiture proceeding at a later time.

The remaining question is whether, in cases where the Government files the criminal or civil judicial action immediately upon discovering the failure to send notice within the 60-or 90-day period, it is necessary to go through the exercise of physically returning the property to the property owner, only to re seize it immediately thereafter. We think that exercise is unnecessary.

Returning the property with one hand while seizing it back with the other, pursuant to an arrest warrant in rem or criminal seizure warrant, is an empty gesture that accomplishes nothing either in terms of the public interest or the private rights of the property owner.

⁵⁵ See *In Re: 2000 White Mercedes ML320*, 220 F. Supp. 2d 1322, 1326 n.5 (M.D. Fla. 2001) (if property is already in Government custody, no section 853(f) seizure warrant can be issued, as an order under section 853(e) would be sufficient to preserve the property; a section 853(e) order need not be an injunction or restraining order, but can be any order that will "assure the availability of the property"), *aff'g* 174 F. Supp. 2d 1268 (M.D. Fla. 2001).

⁵⁶ If the judicial forfeiture action cannot be filed immediately, the prosecutor may want to consider obtaining a precomplaint civil restraining order under section 983(j), or a preindictment restraining order under section 853(e), to preserve the property until an action is commenced.

Moreover, proceeding directly to a judicial forfeiture action while maintaining custody of the property is entirely consistent with the intent of section 983(a)(1)(F). By commencing civil judicial forfeiture actions immediately upon learning of the inadvertent violation of the filing deadline, the Government will, in most cases, be placing property owners in a better position than they would have been in had the Government successfully commenced an administrative forfeiture proceeding.

As set forth in sections 983(a)(2) and (3), if the seizing agency sends notice of the administrative forfeiture action within the statutory period, the claimant has 30 days within which to file a claim to the property, after which the Government has 90 days to commence a civil or criminal forfeiture action in court. In contrast, by proceeding directly to the filing of the civil forfeiture complaint, the Government immediately places claimants in the position they would have been in if they had received the notice, filed a claim, and waited for the Government to file its complaint before the expiration of the 90-day period for doing so—assuming it did not take so long to discover the inadvertent failure to send notice that the 90-day period for filing a complaint would already have expired. Thus, filing a civil forfeiture complaint as soon as may be practicable after learning of the inadvertent violation of the notice deadline is in keeping with the intent of Congress to prevent the Government from holding on to property without giving the property owner a day in court. *See United States v. \$39,480.00 in U.S. Currency*, 190 F. Supp. 2d 929 (W.D. Tex. 2002) (where the Government inadvertently filed its complaint on the 91st day because of a clerical error on the date stamp, claimant suffered no prejudice, and strict enforcement of the 90-day rule would have a “Draconian effect” on the Government’s forfeiture case, the court equitably tolled the 90-day period and deemed the complaint timely filed).

3. Conclusion

If a seizing agency discovers that it has inadvertently failed to comply with a deadline for sending notice of the administrative forfeiture of property in a case where such deadlines apply, and the person from whom the property was seized has not waived the 60-day deadline, no further action may be taken to forfeit the property administratively based on the offense giving rise to the original seizure, and the property must be returned to the person from whom it was seized in accordance with section 983(a)(1)(F), unless the return of the property would be unlawful, or unless the Government, as soon as may be practicable, commences a judicial forfeiture proceeding by (1) naming the property in a criminal indictment or information and obtaining a judicial order pursuant to section 853(e) or (f) allowing it to hold the property; or (2) filing a civil judicial forfeiture action and retaining lawful possession of the property pursuant to an arrest warrant in rem.

II. Interplay of Administrative Forfeiture and Criminal Forfeiture

A. Starting a case administratively

A recurring issue concerns the interplay of criminal and administrative forfeiture. In general, there is no reason for the seizing agency not to commence administrative forfeiture proceedings against property even if the property could be included in a future criminal indictment. Therefore, in most cases, the seizing agency will commence administrative forfeiture proceedings against seized property by sending notice to potential claimants, while simultaneously, the U.S. Attorney will ask the grand jury to include a forfeiture allegation against the same property in a criminal indictment. This is the proper procedure. If there is no claim in the administrative forfeiture proceeding, the property will automatically be forfeited, thus simplifying the criminal case; and if there is a claim, there will be no need to supersede the indictment to include a forfeiture allegation.

In cases where no claim is filed and the property is forfeited administratively, however, it is necessary to strike the forfeiture allegation from the indictment to avoid a situation in which the court, the defendant, or the jury is confused by the procedure and mistakenly believes that the Government abandoned the administrative forfeiture once the indictment was returned, and intended to proceed with the criminal forfeiture alone. Accordingly, in cases where administrative and criminal forfeiture proceedings are instituted simultaneously, and no one files a claim in the administrative proceeding, the agency should complete the administrative forfeiture, and the AUSA handling the criminal case should file a motion reporting the completed forfeiture and therefore striking the forfeiture from the indictment.⁵⁷

If the Government serves the motion to strike the forfeiture allegation on defense counsel, and the defendant does not respond, it is safe to assume that the defendant is aware of the administrative forfeiture and is not expecting to have an opportunity to contest the forfeiture in the criminal case. In that situation, the defendant would be estopped for later contesting the administrative forfeiture on the ground that the defendant never received notice of the administrative forfeiture or he or she thought the forfeiture would be handled criminally. On the other hand, if the defendant responds to the motion by stating that he or she would have contested the administrative forfeiture but for the indictment, the prosecutor should either withdraw the motion and proceed with the criminal forfeiture, or ask the court to conduct a hearing to determine if the defendant's assertion is bona fide. If the court finds that the defendant was properly notified of the administrative forfeiture and did not file a

⁵⁷ Form CRM2901 on AFML Online, <http://10.173.2.12/criminal/afoml/pleadings/criminal/crm2901.htm>, is designed for this purpose.

claim, it should enter an order to that effect and grant the motion to strike the forfeiture allegation. But if the court finds that the defendant may in fact have been confused regarding the status of the administrative forfeiture, the Government should proceed with the criminal forfeiture.

B. Requesting the seizing agency to suspend the administrative forfeiture

In an extraordinary case, the U.S. Attorney may have a reason why the case should not be handled administratively and may ask the seizing agency to suspend the administrative forfeiture in favor of criminal forfeiture. Seizing agencies will generally comply with that request, but the U.S. Attorney may then have to take steps to ensure that the 60-day deadline for commencing an administrative forfeiture proceeding under section 983(a)(1)(A) is not violated. *See* section 983(a)(1)(A)(iii) (no notice of administrative forfeiture is required if, before the 60-day period expires, a grand jury returns an indictment naming the property, and the Government takes steps to preserve its right to maintain custody of the property under the criminal forfeiture laws).

C. Disposing of administrative forfeiture in a plea agreement

Criminal prosecutors should not agree to return property that has already been forfeited administratively as part of the plea agreement in a criminal case. Once the property has been forfeited, it belongs to the Government, and may have already been liquidated, put into official use, or shared with a state or foreign law enforcement agency. Thus, the U.S. Attorney has no authority to agree to return such property as part of a plea agreement in a criminal case.

Moreover, recognizing that the seizing agencies often have put considerable resources into the administrative forfeiture of property by the time the prosecutor is negotiating a plea agreement, the U.S. Attorney should not agree to the return of property as part of a plea agreement if the property is subject to an ongoing administrative forfeiture proceeding unless (1) the seizing agency is requested to suspend the administrative forfeiture and it agrees to do so, or (2) the Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section (AFMLS) approves the decision to return the property.

D. Seizure pursuant to a criminal warrant: availability of administrative forfeiture⁵⁸

This section deals with the issues that arise when property is seized with a criminal seizure warrant, but the seizing agency nevertheless wants to initiate administrative forfeiture proceedings. Note: This is the reverse of the situation discussed in section II.A at page 48, which dealt with pursuing criminal forfeiture after property was seized for civil or administrative forfeiture.

1. Summary

There are two separate issues here. The first is whether a seizing agency can begin a forfeiture proceeding as a criminal forfeiture (i.e., by seizing the property with a criminal seizure warrant under section 853(f)) and then convert the proceeding to an administrative one without reseizing the property or taking some other action under the civil forfeiture statutes. The second is whether such an administrative forfeiture must be conducted in accordance with the 60-day deadline and other procedural requirements enacted by CAFRA.

The answer to the first question appears to be yes. Despite the common practice of commencing an administrative forfeiture only after the property has been seized pursuant to a civil warrant, there is no reason why property seized pursuant to a criminal warrant issued under section 853(f) cannot be forfeited administratively. There is no requirement in such cases that the Government reseize the property from itself with a civil warrant.

The second question is more difficult. The 60-day requirement in section 983(a)(1) that was enacted by CAFRA does not, by its terms, apply to criminal forfeiture proceedings. Thus, the 60-day clock never starts to tick if property is seized pursuant to a criminal seizure warrant. However, if the Government were routinely to seize property with a criminal warrant, ignore the 60-day deadline for commencing an administrative forfeiture proceeding, and then commence such a proceeding at a later date, it would create the appearance of misusing the criminal forfeiture process as a way of evading CAFRA's strict deadlines. Therefore, except in extraordinary circumstances, if the Government desires to commence administrative forfeiture proceedings against property seized pursuant to a criminal seizure warrant, it should do so within 60 days of the seizure. If the 60-day deadline has passed, and the Government still desires to pursue the forfeiture civilly instead of criminally, the case should be referred to the U.S. Attorney to commence a civil judicial proceeding.

⁵⁸ Section II.D was previously disseminated as ILAM 02-3 in 2002.

2. Discussion

Most civil forfeiture statutes authorize the seizing agency to forfeit seized property administratively in accordance with the Customs laws. *See, e.g.*, 18 U.S.C. § 981(d) and 21 U.S.C. § 881(d) (incorporating the provisions of 19 U.S.C. § 1602 *et seq.* into the civil forfeiture statutes). Nothing in the incorporated provisions of Title 19 limits administrative forfeiture to cases where the property was seized pursuant to a particular kind of seizure warrant. To the contrary, section 1603(a) provides that property may be seized for administrative forfeiture “upon process issued in the same manner as provided for a search warrant under the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure [i.e., Rule 41], [or] any seizure authority otherwise provided by law.” Thus, nothing in the Customs laws themselves would preclude the commencement of administrative forfeiture proceedings following the seizure of property pursuant to a criminal seizure warrant issued under section 853(f).

Likewise, the civil forfeiture statutes themselves do not prescribe a particular form of warrant to be used to commence a civil—and hence, an administrative—forfeiture proceeding. Section 981(b)—which governs seizures for the purpose of civil forfeiture under both that section and the drug laws⁵⁹—provides that property may be seized either pursuant to a warrant “obtained in the same manner as provided for a search warrant under the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure” or without a warrant if (1) there is probable cause to believe the property is subject to forfeiture and an exception to the Fourth Amendment warrant requirement would apply, or (2) the property was seized by a state or local agency and transferred to a federal agency. *See* sections 981(b)(1) and (2).

Finally, it is now established that there is nothing improper about the Government beginning a case criminally and then deciding to proceed civilly, or vice versa. *See United States v. Leyland*, 277 F.3d 628 (2d Cir. 2002) (there is nothing improper about beginning forfeiture as an allegation in a criminal indictment and then switching to civil forfeiture); *United States v. Candelaria-Silva*, 166 F.3d 19 (1st Cir. 1999) (there is nothing improper in the Government beginning a forfeiture case with a civil seizure and switching to criminal forfeiture once an indictment is returned; it is commonplace). Moreover, CAFRA specifically authorizes parallel administrative and criminal forfeiture actions. *See* section 983(a)(1)(A)(iii)(I). Thus, administrative forfeiture under the Customs laws may be commenced in respect of any property seized by a federal law enforcement agency (including property seized by a state or local agency and transferred to a federal agency for

⁵⁹ *See* section 881(b), incorporating section 981(b).

the purpose of adoptive forfeiture) without regard to the nature of the warrant that was used to seize the property.⁶⁰

The second question is whether such administrative forfeiture proceedings must be commenced within the 60-day deadline set forth in section 981(a)(1)(A). Section 983(a)(1)(A)(i) provides that in non-judicial forfeiture proceedings,⁶¹ the Government must send notice of the forfeiture action within 60 days after the date of the seizure. Section 983(a)(1)(A)(iv) extends the deadline to 90 days in cases where the forfeiture is adopted from a state or local law enforcement agency. The statute also contains various exceptions to the notice deadlines and contains a procedure for obtaining extensions of time.⁶²

Congress enacted these deadlines to ensure that property owners are given timely notice of their right to contest an administrative forfeiture action and are apprized of the procedures for doing so. But the statute, by its terms, only applies to *non-judicial* forfeiture proceedings, and thus cannot, and does not, apply to criminal forfeiture proceedings which must, in all cases, be judicial proceedings. Accordingly, if the Government seizes property for the purpose of criminal forfeiture and proceeds solely along the criminal forfeiture track, the 60-day deadline under section 983(a)(1)(A) never comes into play.

To be sure, there will be cases where the Government seizes property for criminal forfeiture, intending at all times that the forfeiture will be made a part of the criminal case,

⁶⁰ In *United States v. Millan-Colon*, 836 F. Supp. 994 (S.D.N.Y. 1993), a district court held that it was improper for the Government to commence administrative forfeiture proceedings against property that had already been included in a criminal indictment and was subject to a pretrial restraining order in the criminal case. As mentioned in the text, that case appears to be inconsistent with later Second Circuit law, *see Leyland, supra*, and CAFRA. Moreover, *Millan-Colon* is easily distinguished from most cases in that the pretrial restraining order in that case may have signaled to the defendant that he did not need to respond to the notice of the administrative forfeiture proceeding. As mentioned in section II.A at page 48, such misunderstandings will be avoided if, once parallel administrative and criminal forfeiture proceedings have been commenced and the claimant fails to file a timely claim in the administrative forfeiture proceeding, the Government moves to strike the forfeiture allegation from the criminal indictment, thus giving the defendant a fair opportunity to argue that the default in the administrative proceeding was based on an assumption that the forfeiture in the criminal case could be opposed. A motion to strike form can be downloaded from AFML Online. *See* Form CRM2901.

⁶¹ For purposes of section 983(a)(1), a non-judicial forfeiture proceeding is any proceeding in which (1) the motive for the seizure was, at least in part, to take custody of property that the Government intended to pursue in a civil forfeiture action; and (2) administrative forfeiture is permissible under section 1608 and notwithstanding section 985. Seizures that are strictly for evidence, that are undertaken for the purpose of criminal forfeiture, or that cannot, by statute, lead to an administrative forfeiture proceeding do not trigger the notice requirements of section 983(a)(1). *See* Cassella, "The Civil Asset Forfeiture Reform Act of 2000," 27 J. Legislation 97, 127 (2001).

⁶² References in this section to the notice deadline apply to whatever deadline may be applicable in a given case, be it the 60-day deadline, the 90-day deadline, or some other deadline established pursuant to the statutory procedure for obtaining an extension of time.

but then finds that the criminal forfeiture option is not viable.⁶³ In such cases, there is nothing in the law preventing the Government from switching to civil forfeiture, or forfeiting the property administratively. Nor would the Government be required in such circumstances to seize the property from itself with a civil seizure warrant in order to commence the civil or administrative forfeiture proceeding. CAFRA does contain an odd and burdensome procedure requiring the Government to obtain new authority to maintain custody of property already in its possession when it switches *from civil forfeiture to criminal forfeiture*. See section 983(a)(3)(B)(ii)(II); Form CRM1001 available on AFML Online.⁶⁴ But as discussed above, nothing in the civil forfeiture statutes predicates administrative forfeiture proceedings on the use of a particular form of seizure warrant.

Thus, the Government may switch theories of forfeiture from criminal forfeiture to civil or administrative forfeiture at any time. At most, the deadline for commencing an administrative forfeiture would relate back to (i.e., would begin to run from) the date when the decision was made to pursue a non-judicial forfeiture, not the date of the original seizure. If, however, the Government were routinely to assert that it had originally intended to pursue a forfeiture criminally, but after 60 days had passed from the date of the seizure, it had decided to pursue administrative forfeiture instead, it would create the appearance that the criminal forfeiture process had been abused, or was a post hoc invention designed to excuse the Government from having to comply with the 60-day deadline for commencing an administrative forfeiture when the property is seized for civil forfeiture in the first instance.

To avoid such appearance of impropriety, we recommend that whenever the Government commences a criminal forfeiture action by seizing property for the purpose of criminal forfeiture, but later decides to switch theories to forfeit the property under the civil forfeiture statutes, the forfeiture action be referred to the U.S. Attorney for the purpose of filing a civil complaint in the district court unless fewer than 60 days have elapsed since the date of the seizure. Only when the decision to switch theories of forfeiture is made within 60 days of the seizure should the Government consider commencing an administrative forfeiture proceeding against the seized property. There may be other exceptions to this, but the only two that presently come to mind are (1) the extraordinary case where there is clear documentation that the decision to switch from criminal to civil forfeiture was made after the 60 days expired; and (2) a case where the claimant agrees to waive the 60-day notice requirement and allow the Government to proceed administratively (e.g., as part of a settlement or plea agreement.)

⁶³ Among other reasons, it may turn out that the defendant has died or is a fugitive, that criminal charges cannot be presented to a grand jury for strategic or evidentiary reasons, that the property subject to forfeiture belongs to a third party, or that the property was derived from or involved in an offense other than the offenses to be charged in the criminal case.

⁶⁴ See AFML Online, <http://10.173.2.12/criminal/afoml/pleadings/criminal/crm1001.htm>.

III. Form of the Claim

A. Claims must be filed under oath by the claimant, not by an attorney or agent⁶⁵

This section addresses the question whether claims filed by persons contesting forfeiture actions must be filed under oath by the claimants themselves instead of being verified and filed on behalf of the claimant by an attorney or other representative.

1. Summary

The provision of CAFRA relating to claims filed in administrative forfeiture proceedings requires that the claim be filed under oath by the claimant, and not by an attorney or other representative. The same is true for the statute describing the form of the third party claims filed in criminal forfeiture proceedings. The provision governing the filing of claims in civil judicial cases—Supplemental Rule C(6)—is less clear on this point, but we believe that it should be construed in accordance with the other provisions to require the claimant to verify the claim personally.

2. Discussion

With respect to claims filed in administrative forfeiture proceedings, section 983(a)(2)(C)(iii) provides in relevant part that “A claim shall . . . be made under oath, subject to penalty of perjury.” Moreover, section 983(h) provides that if a court finds that a “claimant’s assertion of an interest in the property was frivolous, the court may impose a civil fine *on the claimant* of an amount equal to 10 percent of the value of the forfeited property.” (Emphasis added.)

These provisions were included in CAFRA to address the concern that by eliminating the cost bond requirement,⁶⁶ Congress would be encouraging the filing of false and frivolous claims in administrative forfeiture cases.⁶⁷ Given that context, it is clear that Congress intended that the claim be filed by the claimant personally, and that the claimant be the one to swear under oath that the assertions made in the claim are well-founded. *See Manjarrez v.*

⁶⁵ Section III.A was previously disseminated as ILAM 03-1 in 2003.

⁶⁶ Under pre-CAFRA law, a claimant had to post a bond equal to 10 percent of the value of the seized property. *See* section 1608. This provision was repealed by section 983(a)(2)(E).

⁶⁷ “The Civil Asset Forfeiture Reform Act of 2000”, 27 J. Legis. 97, 142 & nn. 239-40 (2001) (quoting legislative history of the requirement that the claim be filed under oath, subject to the penalty of perjury).

United States, 2002 WL 31870533 (N.D. Ill. 2002) (claim filed by claimant's attorney, instead of by claimant personally, is not "under oath" as the statute requires, and therefore is not a valid claim).

In the case of claims (petitions) filed in the ancillary proceeding in criminal forfeiture cases, the applicable statute is section 853(n). Subsection 853(n)(2) provides in relevant part that "any person, other than the defendant, asserting a legal interest in property which has been ordered forfeited to the United States...may...petition the court for a hearing to adjudicate the validity of his alleged interest in the property...." Subsection 853(n)(2) is qualified by subsection 853(n)(3), which mandates that "the petition shall be *signed by the petitioner under penalty of perjury* and shall set forth the nature and extent of the petitioner's right, title, or interest in the property...." (Emphasis added.) This statute appears unequivocal: if the petition must be "signed by the petitioner under penalty of perjury," there is little room to suggest that it could be filed on behalf of a claimant by an attorney or other representative.⁶⁸

The requirements regarding claims filed in civil judicial forfeiture cases are less clear. Subsection 983(a)(4)(A) provides that "any person claiming an interest in the seized property may file a claim asserting such person's interest in the property in the manner set forth in the Supplemental Rules for Certain Admiralty and Maritime Claims." Supplemental Rule C(6)(a)(i) provides that "a person who asserts an interest in or right against the property that is the subject of the action must file a *verified statement* identifying the interest or right." (Emphasis added.) But the suggestion that this requires the claim to be verified personally by the claimant is undermined by Supplemental Rule C(6)(a)(ii), which states that "any agent, bailee, or attorney must state the authority to file a statement of interest in or right against the property on behalf of another."

Supplemental Rule C(6)(a)(ii) appears to imply that someone other than the claimant may be able to file a claim on the claimant's behalf, thus allowing the claimant to avoid having to verify the claim personally. If that were so, the verification requirement would not serve the evident purpose of discouraging the filing of false claims, as third party representatives would not be subject to the penalty of perjury if they were merely reciting what the claimant told them to say. For the following reasons, however, we think that the

⁶⁸ Courts have strictly enforced this provision. See *United States v. BCCI Holdings (Luxembourg) S.A. (Fifth Round Petition of Liquidation Comm'n for BCCI (Overseas) Macau)*, 980 F. Supp. 1 (D.D.C. 1997) (petition that is not signed under penalty of perjury and fails to identify asset in which claimant is asserting an interest and nature of that interest does not comply with 18 U.S.C. § 1963(1)(3)); *United States v. BCCI Holdings (Luxembourg) S.A. (Petition of BCCI Campaign Committee)*, 980 F. Supp. 16 (D.D.C. 1997) (petition dismissed because not signed under penalty of perjury). Note: section 1963(1)(3) is the RICO counterpart to section 853(n)(3).

courts would interpret Supplemental Rule C(6)(a) to require that a claim be personally verified by the claimant, except in extraordinary circumstances where the claimant is unavailable and unable to file it him or herself.

Not surprisingly, the provision in the supplemental rules permitting claims to be filed by a legal representative on behalf of the actual claimant comes from ancient admiralty practice. As explained long ago by the Supreme Court, “Where the principal is without the country, or resides at a great distance from the court, the admission of a claim and test-affidavit by his agent, is the common course of the admiralty.” *The Schooner Adeline*, 13 U.S. (9 Cranch) 244, 286-87 (1815). But this practice was an accommodation to distant litigants, and did not apply to those who were capable of filing claims on their own behalf: “Where the principal is within a reasonable distance,” the Court said, “something more than a formal affidavit by his agent is expected.” *Id.*

The Court then went on to express the very same concerns regarding the truthfulness of the claim that concerns us today:

If, indeed, the principal might always withdraw himself from the view of the court, and shelter his pretensions behind the affidavit of an innocent or ignorant agent, there would be no end to the impositions practiced upon the court. *The court expects, in proper cases, something more than the mere formal test-affidavit of an agent, who may swear truly, and yet, from his want of knowledge, be the dupe of cunning and fraud.” Id.* (Emphasis added.)

Much more recently, courts have interpreted Supplemental Rule C(6) to require claims in civil forfeiture cases to be filed personally by the claimant, except in extraordinary circumstances. In *Mercado v. U.S. Customs Service*, 873 F.2d 641 (2d Cir. 1989), the Second Circuit upheld a district court ruling that a claim verified “to the best of [the claimant’s attorney’s] knowledge, information and belief” did not satisfy the verification requirement of Rule C(6). The court of appeals stated its rationale as follows (citations omitted):

Because there is a substantial danger of false claims in forfeiture proceedings, more was required than the conclusory, hearsay, on-information-and-belief statement of Mercado’s lawyer. Affidavits such as this by an attorney would be given no weight in summary judgment proceedings. Claims in *in rem* forfeiture proceedings usually involve substantial sums of money and lend themselves readily to the filing of false claims. *Where, as here, the claimant is available to verify his own claim, he should not be permitted to rely upon a hearsay and conclusory verification by his lawyer.*

Id. at 645. (Emphasis added.)

Courts have often opined that the act of verification is an “essential element of any claim because of the substantial danger of false claims.”⁶⁹ The act of verification effectively forces claimants to place themselves at risk of perjury for false claims. In *Mercado*, the Second Circuit rejected the attempt by an attorney to file a verified claim on behalf of a claimant because it would not subject the claimant to risk of perjury and thus would create a disincentive to file a false claim.

For these reasons, we conclude that Supplemental Rule C(6) requires that a claim be personally verified by the claimant, and not by an attorney or other representative, unless the claimant, for some extraordinary reason, is unavailable to verify the claim.

3. Conclusion

In all federal forfeiture cases—including administrative forfeiture proceedings conducted by seizing agencies, civil judicial proceedings, and the ancillary proceedings in criminal cases—a claim filed by a person contesting the forfeiture action must be filed under oath by the claimant him or herself, and not by an attorney or other representative acting on behalf of the claimant. The only exception applies to civil judicial cases where, pursuant to Supplemental Rule C(6)(a)(ii), the claim may be filed by an agent, bailee, or attorney if the claimant, due to extraordinary circumstances, is unavailable to verify the claim.

⁶⁹ *United States v. Commodity Account No. 549 54930*, 219 F.3d 595, 597 (7th Cir. 2000) (unverified claim filed), citing *United States v. \$103,387.27*, 863 F.2d 555, 559 (7th Cir. 1988). See also *United States v. 51 Pieces of Real Property, Roswell, N.M.*, 17 F.3d 1306, 1318 (10th Cir. 1994); *United States v. U.S. Currency in the Amount of \$2,857.00*, 754 F.2d 208, 213 (7th Cir. 1985); and *Baker v. United States*, 722 F.2d 517, 519 (9th Cir. 1983).

Chapter 3

Settlements

I. General Policy

A. Scope

For purposes of this chapter, the term settlement includes:

- (1) a plea agreement with the defendant in a criminal case in which there is an agreement regarding the forfeiture of property;
- (2) the resolution of a third party claim in the ancillary proceeding in a criminal case; and
- (3) the resolution of a claim filed by any claimant in a civil forfeiture case, either before or after the judicial complaint is filed.

B. Principles

Settlements to forfeit property are encouraged to conserve the resources of both the United States and claimants in situations where justice will be served. The following principles must be observed when negotiating and structuring settlements.

1. Factual basis

There must be a statutory basis for the forfeiture of the property and sufficient facts stated in the settlement documents to satisfy the elements of the statute.

2. Consultation

All settlements must be negotiated in consultation with the seizing agency⁷⁰ and the U.S. Marshals Service.⁷¹ The agency's input is essential in order to reach a settlement that is based on a common understanding of the facts and circumstances surrounding the seizure. This requires that administrative action be taken by the agency to implement those settlements that include a referral back to the agency for administrative forfeiture of all or a part of the seized property. Input from the U.S. Marshals Service should be sought to determine current and prospective expenses to ensure that the settlement is fiscally sound from the Government's perspective.

3. Status of administrative forfeiture

It is the obligation of both the AUSA and the investigating agent, before any type of settlement is discussed, to determine what property, if any, is presently being processed for administrative forfeiture. AUSAs may not reach agreements with defendants or their counsel in a criminal case regarding the return of property that is the subject of an administrative

⁷⁰ The contact person at the seizing agency for the purpose of determining the agency's view of the terms of the settlement is as follows:

- (1) FBI: assistant special agent-in-charge of the respective field office or designee;
- (2) DEA: assistant special agent-in-charge or resident agent-in-charge or designee;
- (3) Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement: regional or district counsel for the respective field office or designee;
- (4) U.S. Postal Inspection Service: inspector-in-charge of respective field division or designee;
- (5) IRS: chief, criminal investigation division of the key district, or designee;
- (6) U.S. Secret Service: special agent-in-charge or designee, asset forfeiture program, headquarters office.
- (7) Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives: resident agent-in-charge of the respective field office or designee.

⁷¹ In Department of the Treasury cases where the U.S. Marshals Service is not the custodian of the property, the independent contractor will serve as the property manager, and the U.S. Marshals Service need not be consulted. It is the responsibility of the seizing agency to contact the independent contractor and inform it of any settlement proposals.

forfeiture proceeding without first consulting the seizing agency.⁷² Property that has been administratively forfeited belongs to the Government and, therefore, cannot be returned to a defendant or used to pay restitution as part of a plea agreement.

4. Disagreements

Where the seizing agency disagrees with the U.S. Attorney's recommended settlement proposal, it must follow the procedures that are set forth in the regulations cited herein in footnote 75, *infra*.

5. Property located in another district

To settle a forfeiture action involving property located in another judicial district, the U.S. Attorney handling the forfeiture must notify and coordinate with the U.S. Attorney in the district where the property is located. It is the responsibility of the U.S. Attorney in the district that forfeits property located in another district to comply with the requirements for forfeiture in the district where the property is located. Failure to comply with such requirements may result in a cloud on the Government's title; coordination will minimize this possibility.

6. Global settlements

Civil forfeiture, either judicial or administrative, should not be used to gain an advantage in a criminal case. The Government, however, may conclude a civil forfeiture action in conjunction with the resolution of the criminal charges that provided the cause of action against the property. The following principles should be observed in negotiating a global settlement:

- (a) The Government should *not* agree to release property subject to forfeiture (civil or criminal) in order to *coerce* a guilty plea on the substantive charges, nor should the Government agree to dismiss criminal charges in order to *coerce* a forfeiture settlement.
- (b) To the maximum extent possible, the criminal plea and forfeiture should conclude the defendant's business with the Government. Delaying forfeiture considerations

⁷² There have been instances in which AUSAs have arranged plea agreements providing for the disposition of administratively forfeitable property without consulting the appropriate seizing agency. There also have been instances in which AUSAs have agreed to return to a defendant property that has already been forfeited administratively. Such agreements and arrangements cause great difficulty for the seizing agencies and are improper.

until after the conclusion of the criminal case unnecessarily extends the Government's involvement with the defendant and diminishes its effectiveness.

- (c) If a plea agreement in a criminal case is not to conclude a related civil forfeiture case, language to that effect should also be stated in the plea agreement. Failure to specify in this manner could be fatal to the concurrent civil forfeiture action.
- (d) Where the claimant/defendant has negotiated a plea agreement and concurrently wishes to forfeit the property subject to a civil forfeiture action, the plea agreement should state that the defendant has waived any and all rights—constitutional, statutory, or otherwise. Any civil settlement should be documented independently of the plea agreement and should include the following information:
 - (i) the claimant/defendant's interest in the property;
 - (ii) an admission of the facts supporting forfeiture;
 - (iii) that the claimant/defendant gives up all rights to the property;
 - (iv) that he/she gives up any right to contest the forfeiture; and
 - (v) that settlement should be supported by written agreement.
- (e) The defendant, in a plea agreement, must admit to facts sufficient to support the forfeiture. The Government, however, should not waive its right to reopen a civil forfeiture action where it is later determined that the settlement was based on false information or where the defendant violates the plea agreement.

7. Partial payments

Settlements shall not provide for partial payments, except upon the advice and approval of the Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section (AFMLS), Criminal Division, in consultation with the U.S. Marshals Service, Headquarters Seized Assets Division.⁷³

⁷³ In Department of the Treasury cases, the advice and approval of AFMLS should also be sought.

8. Reacquiring the property

The settlement should state that the claimant/defendant may not reacquire the forfeited property directly or indirectly through family members or others acting in concert with him or her.

9. Effect on taxes and other obligations

Settlement documents should clearly state that the terms of the settlement, unless specified, do not affect the tax obligations, fines, penalties, or any other monetary obligations of the claimant/defendant owed to the Government.⁷⁴

10. Settlement authority

The authority of the U.S. Attorney to settle a forfeiture matter, other than by plea agreement with the defendant in a criminal case, is circumscribed by Attorney General Order No. 1598-92, as described in section III below.⁷⁵

II. Authority of the U.S. Attorney to Enter Into a Settlement

- (1) U.S. Attorneys have the authority to settle any civil or criminal forfeiture case in which the amount involved does not exceed \$500,000, regardless of the portion of the property that would be released as a result of the settlement.
- (2) U.S. Attorneys also have the authority to settle any civil or criminal forfeiture case in which the amount involved exceeds \$500,000 but does not exceed \$5 million, if the amount to be released does not exceed 15 percent of the amount involved.
- (3) In all other cases, the U.S. Attorney must obtain the approval of the settlement by AFMLS.

⁷⁴ U.S. Attorneys' Offices are obligated pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 547(4) to "institute and prosecute proceedings for the collection of fines, penalties, and forfeitures incurred for violation of any revenue law, unless satisfied on investigation that justice does not require the proceedings." Therefore, in order that appropriate actions may be taken when a proposed forfeiture settlement will release assets to a claimant/defendant who is known or likely to have other outstanding obligations to the United States (e.g., taxes), AUSAs should routinely notify the appropriate agency (e.g., IRS) of the proposed settlement.

⁷⁵ See Attorney General Order No. 1598-92, Appendix to Subpart Y, Part O, Title 28, Code of Federal Regulations, establishing the settlement and compromise authority re delegated to the U.S. Attorneys from the Assistant Attorney General, Criminal Division, in accordance with the requirements of 28 C.F.R. § 0.168(d). Attorney General Order No. 1598-92 is reprinted in the Appendix C at C-1.

For the purposes of this provision, the “amount involved” means the total value of any property that is—

- (1) seized, restrained, or otherwise named as the defendant property in a civil forfeiture case and claimed by a particular claimant;
- (2) seized, restrained, or otherwise names as property subject to forfeiture in any forfeiture count or allegation in an indictment or information in a criminal case; or
- (3) named as the property subject to forfeiture in the preliminary order of forfeiture in a criminal case and claimed by a particular claimant in the ancillary proceeding.

The “amount to be released” means the value of the property that a claimant would recover or would be permitted to retain in a civil case or in the ancillary proceeding in a criminal forfeiture case.

III. Authority of AFMLS to Approve a Settlement

The chief of AFMLS⁷⁶ has the authority to approve any settlement which must be submitted to that office pursuant to section II, except if the amount to be released exceeds 15 percent of the amount involved *and* is more than \$2 million, the settlement must be approved by the Deputy Attorney General.⁷⁷

A. Examples

- (1) The amount involved in a case is \$900,000, and the amount to be released is \$500,000. The amount to be returned is more than 15 percent of the amount involved (\$135,000), but because the amount to be returned does not exceed

⁷⁶ The authority of the Assistant Attorney General pursuant to 28 C.F.R. § 0.160 for settlement of forfeiture cases is delegated to the chief, AFMLS, Criminal Division, by paragraph (c) of Attorney General Order No. 1598-92.

⁷⁷ This policy is based on 28 CFR §§ 0.160 and 0.161. Section 0.160 provides that “Assistant Attorneys General are authorized, with respect to matters assigned to their respective divisions, to: (1) Accept offers in compromise of claims asserted by the United States in all cases in which the difference between the gross amount of the original claim and the proposed settlement does not exceed \$2,000,000 or 15 percent of the original claim, whichever is greater.” This is simply another way of saying that if the amount to be returned is greater than both \$2 million and 15 percent of the amount involved, it requires approval at a higher level; but if it is less than either figure, it does not. (A number cannot be greater than the greater of two other numbers unless it is greater than both of them: $A > \max(x,y)$ if and only if $A > x$ and $A > y$.) Section 0.161 provides that matters that cannot be approved at the Criminal Division level must be approved by the Deputy Attorney General.

\$2 million, the chief of AFMLS would have the authority to approve the settlement.

- (2) The amount involved in a case is \$100 million, and the amount to be returned is \$10 million. The amount to be returned exceeds \$2 million, but because it does not exceed 15 percent of the amount involved (\$15 million), the chief of AFMLS would have authority to approve the settlement.
- (3) The amount involved in a case is \$10 million, and the amount to be returned is \$3 million. The settlement has to be approved by the Deputy Attorney General because the amount to be returned is greater than \$2 million *and* is greater than 15 percent of the amount involved.

IV. Using Administrative Forfeiture to Effect a Settlement

The following procedures apply to settlement agreements in civil judicial forfeiture cases and to criminal forfeiture plea agreements where an administrative forfeiture is necessary to effectuate the agreement. In such cases, the headquarters of the seizing agency involved must be consulted by the U.S. Attorney's Office prior to finalizing an agreement in order to ensure the agency can accommodate the terms of the agreement.⁷⁸ The DOJ's policy is to pursue an agreed upon administrative forfeiture where it is possible and economically efficient to do so.

⁷⁸ The contact person at the seizing agency, for the purpose of determining whether the terms of any settlement requiring administrative action by the agency can be implemented, is the Forfeiture Counsel of the FBI and DEA. Contact persons for the other agencies are as follows:

- (1) Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement: regional or district counsel for the respective field office, or designee.
- (2) U.S. Postal Inspection Service: manager, forfeiture group, or designee.
- (3) IRS: chief, criminal investigation division of the key district, or designee.
- (4) U.S. Secret Service: Office of Chief Counsel or designee.
- (5) Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives: staff assistant to chief counsel, headquarters.

A. Settlement of forfeiture after a claim is filed in an administrative forfeiture proceeding, but before a judicial complaint is filed

The following requirements must be met where a claim has been filed and the case has been referred to the U.S. Attorney, but a settlement is reached before a civil judicial complaint has been filed.

- (1) The terms of the settlement should be reduced to writing by the U.S. Attorney and include
 - (a) a provision whereby the claimant/defendant identifies his or her ownership interest in the property to be forfeited;
 - (b) a provision whereby the claimant/defendant gives up all right, title, and interest in the property;
 - (c) a provision whereby the claimant/defendant agrees not to contest the Government's administrative forfeiture action and waives all deadlines under 18 U.S.C. § 983(a);
 - (d) a provision whereby the claimant/defendant agrees and states that the property to be forfeited administratively was connected to the illegal activity as proscribed by the applicable civil forfeiture statute (e.g., money to be forfeited is in fact proceeds from illegal drug trafficking);
 - (e) specific reference to the withdrawal of the claim; and
 - (f) a "hold harmless" provision and a general waiver of Federal Tort Claims Act rights and *Bivens* actions, as well as other actions based on the Constitution (e.g., the Excessive Fines Clause).
- (2) The case should be referred promptly back to the seizing agency to reinstitute the administrative process. The seizing agency shall reinstitute the administrative forfeiture process to effectuate the agreement upon receipt of a referral in compliance with this policy, consistent with its lawful authority.

Where the agreement provides for the claimant to withdraw the claim to all property subject to forfeiture, the entire case will be referred back to the agency for administrative forfeiture.

Where the agreement provides for the claimant to withdraw only a part of a claim, the case will be referred back to the agency for administrative forfeiture of that portion of the forfeitable property named in the agreement, and the agency may release the remainder to the claimant consistent with the settlement.

Republication of the notice or of the administrative forfeiture action is not necessary, provided publication covering the property to be forfeited occurred prior to the filing of the claim.

IV. Settlement of Civil Judicial Forfeiture Without Prior Administrative Action

In those other cases where the judicial action was commenced without a prior administrative forfeiture action having begun and a settlement agreement has been reached involving a proposed administrative forfeiture of seized property

- (1) the headquarters of the seizing agency must concur in that part of the settlement that would obligate the agency to commence administrative forfeiture proceedings;
- (2) the complaint must be dismissed; and
- (3) the jurisdiction of the district court must be relinquished before referral may be made to a seizing agency under this policy.

The seizing agency shall initiate the administrative forfeiture process to effectuate such an agreement upon receipt of a referral in compliance with this policy, consistent with its lawful authority.

V. Using Administrative Forfeiture to Settle a Criminal Forfeiture Action

In those cases where property has been seized or restrained for forfeiture under criminal statutes and an agreement reached between the U.S. Attorney and the claimant/defendant prior to an order of forfeiture relating to a proposed administrative forfeiture of the property

- (1) the headquarters of the seizing agency must concur in that part of the settlement that would obligate the agency to commence administrative forfeiture proceedings;
- (2) the seizure or restraining orders must be dismissed; and
- (3) the jurisdiction of the district court over the property must be relinquished. The provisions of sections IV.A(1)(a) and (b) at page 66, must be met before referral may be made to a seizing agency under this policy. The seizing agency shall initiate the administrative forfeiture process to effectuate such an agreement upon receipt of a referral in compliance with this policy, consistent with its lawful authority.

VI. References to the Remission Process in Settlements

No agreement, whether a settlement in civil judicial action or a plea agreement resolving both criminal charges and the forfeiture of assets, may contain any provision binding the DOJ and the agencies to a particular decision on a petition for remission or mitigation, or otherwise contain terms whose effectiveness is contingent upon such a decision. The remission and mitigation process, like the pardon process in criminal cases, is completely independent of the litigation and case settlement process.

AFMLS, however, in appropriate cases upon request, will adjudicate a properly filed petition for remission or mitigation prior to the negotiation of a forfeiture settlement or entry of a final order of forfeiture. It is proper to include in a settlement agreement a provision that expressly leaves open or expressly forecloses the right of any party to file a petition for remission or mitigation.

VII. Settlements in Civil Judicial Forfeiture Cases

Any settlement that purports to forfeit property binds only the parties to it and forfeits only that interest in the property that the claimant possesses. The following procedures must be followed to ensure that a valid and complete civil judicial forfeiture by settlement occurs:

- (1) a civil verified complaint for forfeiture of the property must be filed in the U.S. district court to establish the court's jurisdiction. Filing an action as a "miscellaneous docket" and other attempts to short-cut the process will not be recognized as a valid forfeiture;
- (2) a warrant of arrest in rem must be executed against the property;
- (3) all known parties in interest must be given written notice, and notice by publication must be made;
- (4) if no timely claim has been filed pursuant to the Supplemental Rules for Certain Admiralty and Maritime Claims, a default judgment must be sought pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 55;
- (5) proposed orders of forfeiture must be filed with the settlement agreement and include the terms of the settlement agreement.

VIII. Settlements in Criminal Forfeiture Cases

In any plea settlement, a defendant may only consent to the forfeiture of his or her interest in the property. Forfeiture of the defendant's interest in property held by nominees can proceed criminally, but the potential for an ancillary claim by the nominee must be anticipated. A settlement that purports to forfeit the property may only bind the parties to it and transfers only that interest which the claimant/defendant possesses.

The following procedures must be followed to ensure that a valid forfeiture results from a plea settlement:

- (1) There must be a forfeiture count in the indictment or information; otherwise, forfeiture is legally impossible. To the extent property is known to be subject to forfeiture, it should be listed in the indictment, information, or in a subsequent bill of particulars. The U.S. Attorney's Office must ensure that its criminal

pleadings are in compliance with Rules 7 and 31 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure.

- (2) The U.S. Attorney must comply with the requirements applicable to third party interests (e.g., 21 U.S.C. § 853(n)(1)-(7)), including notice of the forfeiture and the right of third parties to obtain an adjudication of their interests in the property.
- (3) The settlement to forfeit property must be in writing, and the defendant must concede facts supporting the forfeiture.
- (4) The court must issue a final order of forfeiture that incorporates the settlement and, must include the forfeiture order in the judgment at sentencing.
- (5) Wherever possible, in order to avoid protracted litigation of ownership issues in the context of ancillary hearings, the United States should agree to accept unencumbered property only, with the exception of valid financial institution liens, or at the very least, the plea agreement should require the defendant to convey clear title to the Government.⁷⁹

IX. Acceptance of a Monetary Amount in Lieu of Forfeiture

If property subject to forfeiture is seized, and a civil or criminal forfeiture action is commenced, the Government may accept a monetary amount in lieu of forfeiture of the seized property pursuant to 19 U.S.C. § 1613(c).⁸⁰ The following procedures must be followed:

- (1) A civil complaint against the property, or an indictment or information naming the property and alleging the defendant's interest in the property, must be filed.
- (2) A written statement that incorporates the language of section 1613(c) must be filed and approved by the court.
- (3) The agreement to substitute money in lieu of forfeiture of property in judicial cases must be approved by the court.

⁷⁹ See also section VI.A at page 66.

⁸⁰ Section 1613(c) is one of the Customs laws (Tariff Act of 1930, 19 U.S.C. § 1602-21) incorporated by reference into various federal forfeiture statutes. See, e.g., 21 U.S.C. § 881(d).

- (4) The U.S. Marshals Service will accept this court-approved settlement and deposit the money (and share it where appropriate) in the same manner as the proceeds of sale of a forfeited item.
- (5) Monies received in lieu of forfeiture must be transferred to the U.S. Marshals Service's district office in custody of the asset being returned.
- (6) In cases where the U.S. Postal Inspection Service or the National Marine Fisheries Service is the primary federal investigative agency, the U.S. Marshals Service must deposit the money, deduct expenses (if any) incurred with respect to the property being returned, deduct the approved equitable shares attributable to other federal agencies participating in the DOJ Assets Forfeiture Fund, and transfer the balance by refund to the above services, as appropriate. Each service will be responsible for sharing with participating state and local agencies in these cases.

X. Agreements to Exempt Attorney's Fees from Forfeiture

Any agreement to exempt an asset from forfeiture so that it can be transferred to an attorney as fees must be approved by the Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division.⁸¹

⁸¹ See *United States Attorneys' Manual* § 9-119.203.

Chapter 4

Third Party Interests

I. State and Local Real Property Taxes

A. Civil forfeiture cases⁸²

In light of the Supreme Court's decision in *United States v. 92 Buena Vista Ave.*, 507 U.S. 1111 (1993), the Office of Legal Counsel was asked to reconsider its July 9, 1991, opinion concerning payment of state and local property taxes in civil forfeiture cases.⁸³

The opinion concludes that we must pay state and local taxes on properties civilly forfeited where the taxing authority established its innocent owner status prior to the entry of a final order of forfeiture. Given the unique nature of the interest of taxing authorities, the Department will in the future indulge a presumption of innocence in the absence of exceptional circumstances. Accordingly, in civil forfeiture cases, the United States will henceforth pay standard ad valorem property taxes up to the date of entry of an order of forfeiture.

Payment of taxes upon civilly forfeited properties is permitted when

- (1) the properties have not yet been sold, or
- (2) the properties are the subject of pending litigation regarding payment of taxes, *provided however*, that:
 - (a) a tax claim was filed with the federal district court prior to entry of the order of forfeiture; or

⁸² On September 13, 1994, Congress enacted 28 U.S.C. § 524(c)(1)(H), which authorized payment of state and local property taxes on forfeited real property that accrued between the date of the violation giving rise to the forfeiture and the date of the forfeiture order.

⁸³ The Office of Legal Counsel opinion, reprinted as Appendix D at D-1, represents the DOJ's official position on the issue.

- (b) a valid lien had been recorded among the pertinent land records giving the federal district court notice of the tax claim prior to entry of the order of forfeiture.

B. Criminal forfeiture cases⁸⁴

DOJ, established policy concerning the payment of state and local taxes on civilly forfeited real property, but noted that, as to state and local taxes on criminally forfeited real property, the DOJ remained bound by the Office of Legal Counsel's opinion of July 9, 1991.

In order to facilitate the resolution of this discrepancy between civil and criminal forfeiture cases regarding the payment of property taxes, on March 19, 1994, by Order No. 1860-94,⁸⁵ the Attorney General delegated to the director, Asset Forfeiture Office (*now* the chief, Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section [AFMLS]), Criminal Division, her discretionary authority with respect to property forfeited under the original forfeiture statutes to "...take any other action to protect the rights of innocent persons which is in the interest of justice and which is not inconsistent with the provisions of [the applicable chapter or section]."⁸⁶

Pursuant to this delegated authority, the chief, AFMLS, Criminal Division, has authorized the payment of state and local taxes on criminally forfeited real property in the same manner and to the same extent as is authorized for the payment of such taxes on civilly forfeited real property pursuant to the policy set forth at page 73.

C. Payment of interest and penalties on state and local real property taxes

The following policy is meant to ensure consistent national treatment of the payment of interest and penalties on state and local taxes on forfeited real property:

- (1) the United States will pay interest but not penalties on overdue taxes;

⁸⁴ On September 13, 1994, Congress enacted section 524(c)(1)(H), which authorized payment of state and local property taxes on forfeited real property that accrued between the date of the violation giving rise to the forfeiture and the date of the forfeiture order.

⁸⁵ See Appendix D at D-10.

⁸⁶ See 18 U.S.C. § 1467(h)(1) (obscene material); 18 U.S.C. § 1963(g)(1) (RICO); 18 U.S.C. § 2253(h)(1) (sexual exploitation of minors); 21 U.S.C. § 853(i)(1) (controlled substances); and, by incorporation of 21 U.S.C. § 853(i) by reference, 18 U.S.C. § 982(b)(1) (money laundering) and 18 U.S.C. §§ 793(h)(3) and 794(d)(3) (espionage).

- (2) the formula for the rate of interest is set forth in 28 U.S.C. § 1961(a);
- (3) higher rates of interest may be paid where the taxing authority has incurred out-of-pocket interest expenses in excess of the rate specified by section 1961(a) (e.g., where tax certificates have been sold to private investors);
- (4) U.S. Attorneys, with the concurrence of AFMLS, may agree to a higher rate of interest provided that such higher rate is not punitive; and
- (5) taxes and interest thereon may only be paid up to the amount realized from the sale of the property.

II. Guidelines and Procedures for Restoration of Forfeited Property to Crime Victims via Restitution in lieu of Remission

A. Purpose

The guidelines and procedures set forth in this policy are intended to expedite the transfer of forfeited property to the victims of the crimes underlying forfeitures, or related offenses, by releasing forfeited property, in appropriate cases, to satisfy victim restitution orders in forfeiture-related criminal cases in lieu of requiring such victims to petition the Attorney General for remission of the forfeited property.

B. Authority

With respect to property ordered forfeited under the criminal forfeiture statutes, the Attorney General has statutory authority to ...

grant petitions for remission or mitigation of forfeiture, restore forfeited property to victims of a violation of [the applicable chapter or subchapter], or take any other action to protect the rights of innocent persons which is in the interest of justice and which is not inconsistent with the provisions of [the applicable chapter or section]...

18 U.S.C. §§ 1467(h)(1) (obscene material); 1963(g)(1), 2253(h)(1) (sexual exploitation of minors); 21 U.S.C. § 853(i)(1) (controlled substances); and by incorporation of section 853(i)(1) by reference, 18 U.S.C. §§ 793(h)(3) and 794(d)(3) (espionage); 982(b)(1) (money laundering and other offenses).

In civil forfeitures also, the Attorney General is authorized to decide petitions for remission or mitigation. *See, e.g.*, 18 U.S.C. § 981(d) and 21 U.S.C. § 881(d). In addition, section 981 authorizes the Attorney General, in section 981 civil forfeitures, to transfer the forfeited property “as restoration to any victim of the offense giving rise to the forfeiture, including, in the case of a money laundering offense, any offense constituting the underlying specified unlawful activity.” *See* section 981(e)(6).

The authority of the Attorney General to grant petitions for remission or mitigation in criminal and civil judicial forfeitures is delegated to the chief of AFMLS by title 28, Code of Federal Regulations, part 9 (28 C.F.R. Part 9), at 28 C.F.R. Part 9.1(b)(2). In addition, the Attorney General has delegated to the chief of AFMLS, the authority pursuant to any civil or criminal forfeiture statute enforced or administered by the DOJ, *e.g.*, 18 U.S.C. §§ 981(e)(6), 1963(g)(1), and 982(b)(1) [incorporating section 853(i)(1)], “to restore forfeited property to victims or take other actions to protect the rights of innocent persons in civil or criminal forfeitures that are in the interest of justice and that are not inconsistent with the provisions of the statute.”⁸⁷ Accordingly, in appropriate cases, the chief of AFMLS has discretionary authority to authorize the restoration of forfeited property to compensate victims by means of court-ordered restitution.

Pursuant to this restoration authority, and applying the guidelines for restoration decisions set forth below and the procedures for restoration decisions set forth in section II.D.1 at page 78, the chief of AFMLS, in appropriate cases, may authorize federally forfeited property or proceeds to be transferred to the court for use in satisfaction of orders of restitution entered at sentencing pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3363 *et seq.* Such authority may be used by the chief of AFMLS in lieu of the separate authority and procedures set forth at 28 C.F.R. Part 9 governing petitions for remission or mitigation of forfeited property to victims. However, insofar as is reasonably feasible, such authority will be used to accomplish results that are not inconsistent with the standards set forth at 28 C.F.R. Part 9.8 for determining remission of forfeited property to non-owner victims. Additionally, insofar as may be applicable and not inconsistent with the standards or procedures herein, the other provisions of 28 C.F.R. Part 9 also shall apply.

⁸⁷ *See* Attorney General Order No. 2088-97 (June 14, 1997).

C. Guidelines for restoration decisions

1. Representations

The chief of AFMLS will grant restoration requests submitted in accordance with section II.D.1 at page 78 only when the U.S. Attorney, or his or her delegee, has informed AFMLS of the following in writing:

- (1) all known victims have been properly notified of the restitution proceedings and are properly accounted for in the restitution order;
- (2) to the best of knowledge and belief after consultation with the seizing agency, the losses described in the restitution order have been verified and reflect all sources of compensation received by the victims, including returns on investments, interest payments, insurance proceeds, refunds, settlement payments, lawsuit awards, and any other sources of compensation for their losses;
- (3) to the best of knowledge and belief after consultation with the seizing agency, reasonable efforts to locate additional assets establish that the victims do not have recourse reasonably available to other assets from which to obtain compensation for their losses, including, other assets owned or controlled by the defendant(s); and
- (4) there is no evidence to suggest that any of the victims knowingly contributed to, participated in, benefitted from, or acted in a willfully blind manner toward the commission of the offenses underlying the forfeiture or related offenses.

2. Statutory authority

The property to be restored must be forfeited pursuant to a statute that explicitly authorizes restoration or remission of forfeited property to victims. *See, e.g.,* sections 981(e)(6) and 982(b)(1) (incorporating the provisions of section 853(i)(1)) and section 1963(g)(1).

3. Pro rata

Restoration will be granted only to the victims and in the amounts described in the court's restitution order, or as a pro rata percentage based on such amounts.

4. Allowed losses

The losses allowed in the restitution order should primarily represent monetary losses directly caused by the illegal activities underlying the forfeiture. The chief of AFMLS may refuse to grant restoration where a pro rata distribution to the victims would be unduly skewed in favor of one or more victims who suffered non-monetary losses or losses associated with torts, physical injuries, interest foregone, or collateral expenses incurred to recover lost property or to seek other recompense (although such expenses may constitute some of the losses allowed in the restitution order).

5. Priority

Restoration decisions must not prejudice the judicial or administrative claims of owners, lienholders, or federal financial institution regulatory agencies pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Governing Financial Institution Reform, Recovery, and Enforcement Act (FIRREA) Forfeiture Cases.⁸⁸ Such claims shall have the same priority over non-owner victims in the restoration process as in the remission process. Accordingly, petitions for remission or mitigation based upon such claims must be decided by the seizing agency (in administrative cases) or the chief of AFMLS (in judicial cases) pursuant to 28 C.F.R. Part 9 and (if granted) paid prior to payment of restoration decisions. Restoration payments will be made from the net proceeds remaining after payment of allowed costs and the claims of owners, lienholders, and others recognized in the final order of forfeiture and/or through petitions for remission.

6. Petitions for remission or mitigation

To expedite resolution of restoration requests, when necessary, decisions on restoration requests may be made *subject to* pending decisions on petitions for remission by owners, lienholders, and federal financial institution regulatory agencies (as opposed to *delaying* a decision on the restoration request until after all petitions for remission or mitigation are decided).

D. Procedures for restoration decisions

1. Restoration requests

⁸⁸ See *U.S. Attorneys' Manual*, section 9-119.500.

The U.S. Attorney's Office will forward a copy of the restitution order to the chief of AFMLS along with a written request that property forfeited in the same and/or related civil, criminal, or administrative forfeiture proceedings be used to compensate the victims and losses specified in the restitution order. The written request must identify each asset involved including the seizing agency involved and, where applicable, the agency seizure number. The request and order shall be accompanied by the written representations required of the U.S. Attorney, or his or her delegee, by section II.C.1 at page 77. In cases where an order of restitution is anticipated but has not yet been signed and entered, a draft restitution order may be submitted to AFMLS at any time for an informal advance decision, which AFMLS will formally finalize after receipt of a copy of the final restitution order entered. In addition, pursuant to section II.E at page 80, the U.S. Attorney, or his or her delegee, may place a 12-month hold on the final distribution of net proceeds of property subject to civil or administrative forfeiture pending issuance of a criminal restitution order. However, such holds will not apply to administrative forfeitures by non-DOJ seizing agencies unless the U.S. Attorney's Office obtains the written concurrence of the local agency special agent-in-charge (SAC) or other appropriate agency official.

2. Time limits

Restoration requests must be sent to AFMLS within 30 days of the entry of the restitution order into the Consolidated Asset Tracking System (CATS). The U.S. Attorney's Office must enter restitution orders in CATS within 5 days of sentencing.

3. Evidentiary basis

U.S. Attorneys' Offices should work closely with the probation office and the investigative agency for the criminal case in formulating restitution awards to ensure that the victims' losses are supported by documentary evidence, including invoices and receipts.

4. Seizing agency investigation

The U.S. Attorney's Office may direct the investigative agency for the criminal case to investigate the merits of victims' claims, including, specifically, the claimed losses and the eligibility of the victims in accordance with section II.A at page 75. When requested, the investigative agency shall submit to the U.S. Attorney's Office a report of its investigation and its recommendation on whether the victims' claims should be recognized or opposed. The U.S. Attorney's Office shall forward a copy of the investigative agency's report and recommendation, if any, to the chief of AFMLS along with the written request for restoration approval.

5. Decision by AFMLS

Using the guidelines for restoration decisions set forth above in section II.C.1 at page 77, the chief of AFMLS will determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether the restoration request will be granted. In cases involving assets forfeited administratively by a seizing agency other than a DOJ seizing agency, the chief of AFMLS will need the concurrence of that agency in order to grant the restoration request as to those assets.

If the chief of AFMLS denies the restoration request, AFMLS will advise the U.S. Attorney's Office of the denial, and disposition of forfeited property to victims will be decided through the petition for remission process pursuant to 28 C.F.R. Part 9. If the chief of AFMLS grants the restoration request, AFMLS will forward a copy of the restoration decision to the U.S. Attorney's Office, and to the U.S. Marshals Service headquarters (and/or to the appropriate property custodian for any forfeited property being restored that is not held by the U.S. Marshals Service), which will coordinate disbursement of the net proceeds of the subject forfeiture(s) (administrative, civil, and/or criminal) after satisfaction of allowed costs and any rulings on petitions for remission or mitigation of forfeiture filed by owners, lienholders, and/or federal financial institution regulatory agencies under the FIRREA MOU to the court for satisfaction of the restitution order. Restoration decisions shall apply to the net proceeds of any and all property forfeited in related administrative, civil, and/or criminal forfeiture proceedings not yet distributed to compensate victims of the offenses underlying the forfeiture or related offenses.

E. Guidelines for imposing 12-month hold pending entry of a restitution order

In appropriate cases (usually fraud cases with forfeited proceeds), the U.S. Attorney, or his or her delegee, may place a 12-month hold on the final distribution of net proceeds of property subject to civil forfeiture or to administrative forfeiture by a DOJ seizing agency pending entry of a restitution order.⁸⁹ The U.S. Attorney's Office will enter the hold in CATS as to each asset (including frozen, indicted, restrained, or encumbered assets) and the effective date of the hold will be the date of its entry in CATS by the U.S. Attorney's Office. The hold will remain in place for up to 12 months unless it is continued by the seizing agency or AFMLS at the end of the 12-month period pursuant to section E.1 at page 81 or released by the U.S. Attorney's Office at any time pursuant to section E.2 at page 82. Once entered into CATS, the hold will prevent the seizing agency (in administrative forfeitures by DOJ seizing agencies) or the chief of AFMLS (in judicial cases) from granting petitions for

⁸⁹ The decision of the U.S. Attorney's Office to forfeit property judicially rather than administratively should not be confused with the hold, which refers only to the proceeds of a completed forfeiture.

remission or mitigation from non-owner victims. It will also prevent entry or execution of decisions on any official use or equitable sharing requests. The hold will have no effect on the forfeiture proceedings governing such property or the ability to liquidate the property once forfeited or dispose of the property as otherwise ordered by the court. Holds will effectively override all requests for retention or transfer for official use. Further, the hold shall not prevent processing and, where appropriate, payment of petitions for remission or mitigation filed by owners, lienholders (pursuant to 28 C.F.R. Part 9), and federal financial institution regulatory agencies (pursuant to the FIRREA MOU), or the payment of awards and property management expenses, and the hold will not prevent decisions to deny, withdraw, or extinguish petitions for remission or mitigation or requests for equitable sharing or official use.

In deciding whether to place a 12-month hold on proceeds of related administrative or civil forfeitures, the U.S. Attorney, or his or her delegee, should consider whether it is more efficient to compensate all victims through the restoration process or to allow the seizing agency (in administrative cases) or the chief of AFMLS (in judicial cases) to proceed with the remission process. In some cases, it might be better to use the remission process to provide the victims with at least partial compensation immediately rather than to make them wait until completion of a criminal prosecution and entry of a restitution order to obtain any compensation. On the other hand, if a victim could use the remission process to obtain a greater percentage of compensation than similarly situated victims who chose to pursue only the restitution route, then it might be better to require all victims to be compensated through the restoration process.

1. Notification

The U.S. Attorney's Office will notify, in writing, the U.S. Marshals Service and the DOJ seizing agency (in administrative cases) or the chief of AFMLS (in judicial cases) of the imposition of a 12-month hold. If the U.S. Attorney's Office wishes to place a hold on the proceeds of any non-DOJ agency's administrative forfeiture, it must notify the local SAC or other appropriate agency official in writing and obtain written concurrence. Upon entry of a hold decision, CATS will not allow decisions on non-owner victim petitions, equitable sharing, or official use requests to be entered for 12 months from the date of the hold decision, but will continue to allow entry of decisions on and payments of owner, lienholder, and federal financial institution regulatory agency petitions, property management expenses, and awards. The U.S. Attorney's Office will be responsible for monitoring the status of the hold. If the forfeited property has already been transferred to an owner, lienholder, or federal financial institution regulatory agency, placed into official use, or equitably shared, CATS will not accept entry of the hold decision and will notify the U.S. Attorney's Office.

2. Release or extension of hold period

If a restitution order is not issued within 12 months, the seizing agency headquarters (for administratively forfeited property) or the chief of AFMLS (for judicially forfeited property), after consulting with the U.S. Attorney's Office, may decide either to continue holding the property pending entry of a restitution order or to proceed with the petition for remission process for non-owner victims. Entry of a restitution order in CATS will automatically extend a hold for 60 days.

- (1) CATS will automatically release the hold if a restitution order is not issued (and entered into CATS by the U.S. Attorney's Office) or if the hold period is not extended by the seizing agency or AFMLS within 12 months from the date of the hold decision.
- (2) At any time during the hold period (e.g., when restitution is denied or the criminal case is dismissed), after consulting with the seizing agency or AFMLS, as the case may be, the U.S. Attorney's Office may release the hold on property to allow the seizing agency or AFMLS to proceed with the petition for remission process for non-owner victims (as well as equitable sharing and official use decisions).

3. Official use and equitable sharing requests

Owners, lienholders, and federal financial institution regulatory agencies (pursuant to the FIRREA MOU) (in that order) shall have priority over non-owner victims, who in turn shall have priority over official use requests and equitable sharing requests. In appropriate cases, the U.S. Attorney, or his or her delegee, may exempt specific forfeited assets from a 12-month hold to allow for official use or equitable sharing requests to be granted. Such an exemption should be granted only where there will be sufficient proceeds from other forfeited assets to fully compensate any owners, lienholders, federal financial institution regulatory agencies (pursuant to the FIRREA MOU), and non-owner victims.

Chapter 5

Use and Disposition of Seized and Forfeited Property

I. Management and Disposal of Seized Assets

A. Role of the U.S. Marshals Service

The U.S. Marshals Service shall have primary authority over the management and disposal of seized assets in its custody that are subject to forfeiture or are forfeited. Arrangements for property services or commitments pertaining to the management and disposition of such property are the responsibility of the U.S. Marshals Service. 28 C.F.R. § 0.111(i).

Prior to taking any action (e.g., in a settlement or plea agreement) concerning the management or disposition of property, the U.S. Attorney or agent in charge of the field office responsible for an administrative forfeiture case should consult with the U.S. Marshals Service or other custodial agency. Such discussions shall address the impact that such proposed action may have on the U.S. Marshals Service or other custodial agency in undertaking, continuing, or terminating custody of the property. If the interests of claimants are to be satisfied in whole or in part by payments from the proceeds of a sale of the property by the Marshals Service or other custodial agency, the proposed forfeiture order should provide specific guidance for the U.S. Marshals Service or other custodial agency concerning such payments.

II. Use of Seized Property

A. Background

Absent a final order of forfeiture affirmatively vesting title to seized property to the Government, the United States does not have title to the property. Any use of property under seizure and pending forfeiture raises issues of liability and creates the appearance of impropriety. The following general policies govern the use of seized property.

B. Use of seized property by Department of Justice personnel

Property under seizure and pending forfeiture shall not be utilized for any reason by DOJ personnel, including for official use, unless and until a final order of forfeiture is issued.

Likewise, DOJ personnel shall not make such property available for use by others, including person(s) acting in the capacity of a substitute custodian, for any purpose prior to completion of the forfeiture. However, exceptions may be granted by the U.S. Marshals Service in situations such as the seizure of a ranch or business where use of equipment under seizure is necessary to maintain the ranch or business.

C. Use of seized property where custody is retained by the state or local seizing agency

To minimize storage and management costs incurred by the DOJ, state and local agencies that present motor vehicles for federal adoptions should generally be asked to serve as substitute custodians of the property pending forfeiture.

Any use of such vehicles, including official use, by state and local law enforcement officials or others is prohibited by DOJ policy until such time as the forfeiture is completed and an equitable transfer is made.

D. Use of seized real property by occupants

As a general rule, occupants of real property seized for forfeiture should be permitted to remain in the property pursuant to an occupancy agreement pending the forfeiture.

An occupancy agreement form has been developed by the DOJ that addresses departmental concerns and includes various restrictions (e.g., maintenance and access to the property, potential for continued illegal activity, threat to health and safety, etc.).

III. Disposition of Forfeited Property

A. Forfeiture orders

The disposition of property forfeited to the United States is an executive branch decision and not a matter for the court. Consequently, preliminary and final orders of forfeiture should be drafted broadly to direct forfeiture of the property to the United States “for disposition in accordance with law.” It is also unnecessary to have the court confirm the manner and

conditions of the sale of forfeited property except in certain civil settlements. In the usual case, the U.S. Marshals Service is to determine the best method and conditions of the sale of forfeited property in its custody.

B. Disposition of forfeited property in civil and criminal cases

1. Background

The Attorney General has been given the authority under 21 U.S.C. §§ 881(e) and 853(h) and other statutes⁹⁰ to dispose of forfeited property “by sale or any other commercially feasible means” without subsequent court approval. This is generally called a “forfeiture sale” of the property. While the DOJ takes the position that forfeiture sales do not require judicial confirmation pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2001,⁹¹ at least one United States magistrate judge has concluded in a published opinion that section 2001 applies to the sale of forfeited property. *See United States v. Macia*, 157 F. Supp. 2d 1369, 1370 (S.D. Fla. 2001).

Note: Unlike the statutes cited in the preceding paragraph, the civil forfeiture statute, 18 U.S.C. § 981, contains no provision authorizing the Attorney General to dispose of forfeited property “by sale or any other commercially feasible means.” Section 981(d) incorporates those provisions of the Customs laws dealing with the disposition of forfeited property. The forfeiture provisions of the federal gambling statute, 18 U.S.C. § 1955(d), also incorporate the Customs laws.

Under 19 U.S.C. § 1609(a), Customs officers are authorized to sell forfeited property “at public auction in the same manner as merchandise abandoned to the United States is sold or otherwise dispose of the same according to law...” *See also* 19 U.S.C. § 1612(a) (providing for interlocutory sale of administratively forfeitable property “at auction under regulations to be prescribed by the Secretary of the Treasury,” and of other property pursuant to court order, without specifying the means of sale); 19 U.S.C. §§ 1491(a) and (e)(3) (providing, respectively, for sale of unclaimed merchandise and seized spirits “at public auction under such regulations as the Secretary of the Treasury shall prescribe”); *but see* section 1491(c) (providing that unclaimed merchandise, title to which has vested in the United States pursuant to section 1491(b), may be disposed of “in accordance with such regulations as the Secretary shall prescribe”).

⁹⁰ *See* 18 U.S.C. §§ 1467(g), 1963(f), and 2253(g).

⁹¹ In contrast, if an interlocutory sale is necessary before forfeiture because the property is declining in value, or for some other reason, the procedures set forth in *A Guide to Interlocutory Sales and Expedited Settlement* (2003) should be followed.

The Customs regulations provide as follows: 19 C.F.R. § 162.46(a) provides that administratively forfeited property “shall be disposed of in accordance with” sections 1609 and 1491(b). Part 162.46(c)(1) provides for sale of forfeited property “in accordance with the applicable provisions of part 127 of this chapter.” Part 162.50(a) simply refers back to part 162.46 for disposition of judicially forfeited property.

Parts 127.14 and 127.21–.29 (to which one is cross-referred by part 162.46(c)(1)) provides for the sale of unclaimed and abandoned merchandise. Part 127.14(a) provides that abandoned merchandise is to be sold as provided in parts 127.21–.29, retained for official use, destroyed, “or otherwise disposed of as authorized by the Commissioner of Customs under the law....” Parts 127.21–.29 seem to presume that the method of sale will be by auction (e.g., by reference to “catalogs,” “regular sales” to be held in each port, etc.) but they only actually say so as to certain types of “special merchandise.” Parts 127.28(d) and (h), for example, provide for quick sale by public auction of “articles liable to depreciation” and “unclaimed merchandise remaining on dock.” Part 127.27, the provision on “conduct of sale,” simply provides, “sales may be conducted by the port director, any employee designated by him or by a public auctioneer,” which could be read to presume auction sales, or could be read to mean that auctions are one option.

2. Legal analysis

Forfeiture divests an owner of property of all his or her right, title, and interest therein, and vests such right, title, and interest in the Government. In other words, because of the property’s or its owner’s involvement in criminal activity, forfeiture extinguishes all of the former owner’s interests in that criminally derived or criminally involved asset and vests title in the United States.⁹² While the relation back doctrine found in section 853(c) provides that all right, title, and interest in forfeitable property vests in the United States upon the commission of the criminal act giving rise to the forfeiture, the Government’s ownership interest therein is not confirmed to the world unless and until a final order of forfeiture is entered by a court.

Since the forfeiture process vests title to the property in the United States, a forfeiture sale is a sale by the Government of property it owns. The forfeiture statutes give the power to the Attorney General, on behalf of the United States as owner, to dispose of the property

⁹² See *United States v. A Parcel of Land, Buildings, Appurtenances and Improvements, Known as 92 Buena Vista Avenue, Rumson, New Jersey, et al.*, 507 U.S. 111, 128-130 (1993); *United States v. Grundy*, 7 U.S. (3 Cranch) 337, 350-351 (1806); cf. *Republic National Bank of Miami v. United States*, 506 U.S. 80, 89-92 (1992); *United States v. Real Property Located at 185 Hargraves Drive (In Re Newport Saving and Loan Association)*, 928 F.2d 472, 478 (1st Cir. 1991); sections 881(h), 853(c), and 18 U.S.C. § 1963(c).

however he or she deems suitable. After the final order of forfeiture, the court is not involved in the sale or disposal process.

The Attorney General's authority to dispose of forfeited property is determined by the relevant forfeiture statutes. The forfeiture statutes at issue, such as sections 881(e) and 853(h), give the Attorney General the authority to dispose of forfeited property "by sale or other commercially feasible means." It is clear from the language of the forfeiture statutes, from their legislative history, and from the cases and other authorities which have addressed this issue, that the Attorney General has complete authority to dispose of forfeited property.

IV. Attorney General's Authority to Warrant Title

A. Background

Section 2002 of the Crime Control Act of 1990, which amends 28 U.S.C. § 524(c), gives the Attorney General the authority to warrant clear title upon transfer of forfeited property. Section 524(c)(9)(A) reads as follows:

"Following the completion of procedures for the forfeiture of property pursuant to any law enforced or administered by the Department, the Attorney General is authorized, in her discretion, to warrant clear title to any subsequent purchaser or transferee of such property."

The authority of the Attorney General to dispose of forfeited real property and to execute deeds and warrant title has been delegated to the director of the U.S. Marshals Service, by 28C.F.R. § 0.111(i), and redelegated to chief deputies or deputy U.S. Marshals by 28 C.F.R. § 0.156.

The preferred deed to transfer forfeited property is a U.S. Marshal's quitclaim deed (USM-159A) executed by the U.S. Marshal. The quitclaim deed makes no warranty representations. It serves only to convey whatever right, title, and interest the Government had as of the execution date. A special warranty deed⁹³ may be used instead when the U.S. Marshal, in consultation with the U.S. Attorney, concludes that such a deed is necessary and appropriate under the facts of a particular case, as described in section IV.B below. Finally,

⁹³ The special warranty deed assures the grantee/buyer that the United States, as the current seller, has done nothing to encumber the property, nor has it conveyed any right, title, or interest in the property while the Government was the owner of the property. In effect, the special warranty deed warrants the forfeiture process.

property may be transferred by a general warranty deed,⁹⁴ but it is DOJ policy to use general warranty deeds only in exceptional circumstances as outlined in section IV.C at page 90.⁹⁵

B. Circumstances for the use of a special warranty deed and indemnification agreement

The DOJ recognizes that in some situations the use of the U.S. Marshal's quitclaim deed will not be sufficient for title company requirements to insure title for a purchaser of forfeited property. Such limited circumstances include the following situations:

- (1) The owner of the defendant property is a fugitive and the Government cannot prove the fugitive was served in the forfeiture action.
- (2) The owner of the defendant property is a fugitive and title to the property is held by a constructive trustee.
- (3) One of the owners of the defendant property is a fugitive who holds title to the property in a cotenancy with innocent owners.
- (4) The owner of the defendant property dies before or during the forfeiture process and there is some question of proper service or substitution of the successors or representatives of the deceased party.
- (5) The owner of defendant property is a United States or foreign corporation and the United States cannot prove that the corporation was properly served in the forfeiture action.
- (6) The forfeiture is subject to a pending appeal.
- (7) Such other situations in which a special warranty deed with certain indemnification provisions or a separate indemnification agreement is appropriate (e.g., jurisdictions in which title insurance is unattainable without such a deed).

⁹⁴ A general warranty deed assures the grantee/buyer that title to the property is free and clear of any and all liens and encumbrances and insures the grantee/buyer from any future claims against the property.

⁹⁵ As used in this policy, the terms "general warranty deed" and "special warranty deed" are not intended to be limiting in their application. In some states, warranty deeds are not used (e.g., in California a "grant deed" provides limited statutory warranties). The use of such state variations equivalent to a general warranty deed is satisfactory for purposes of this policy.

If such special circumstances exist, the U.S. Marshal in consultation with the U.S. Attorney may execute a special warranty deed to the buyer specifically warranting against claims arising from the applicable circumstances as listed *supra*. Such special warranty deeds are permitted by the authority delegated to the U.S. Marshal in part 0.156.

It is suggested that the language of the special warranty deed be as follows, with the insertion of the specifically applicable circumstances as listed *supra*.

The grantor covenants to specially warrant the title to the property hereby conveyed against any claim arising from... [Insert the specifically applicable circumstances here.]

Further, when such special circumstances exist, the buyer may also request that the United States provide certain indemnifications in order to obtain title insurance. These indemnification agreements establish affirmative measures to be taken by the United States, beyond the basic terms and obligations of its warranty deed, in the event that claims are later made against the property. The indemnification agreement may be included either in the terms of the special warranty deed or in a separate document which incorporates the deed by reference. In either form, indemnification agreements will be limited to the following terms:

- (1) The United States will specially warrant its title against defects or clouds arising out of the forfeiture process and hold the buyer harmless as a result of such defects in title or clouds involving the propriety of the forfeiture of the property.
- (2) In the event that a court in a final judgment rules that the United States did not acquire valid legal title to the real property through the forfeiture process and therefore was not able to convey clear title to the buyer, the United States will refund to the buyer the amount of the purchase price of the property, plus the value of any improvements made to the property by the buyer. The amount will be paid out of the Assets Forfeiture Fund, plus interest on the total amount at the current rate as provided in 28 U.S.C. § 1961 from the date of the purchase of the property by the buyer to the date of the final judgment.
- (3) The United States, by its special warranty deed, does not warrant the title of the prior owner of the property who acquired title before the forfeiture.

Requests to the Seized Assets Division of the U.S. Marshals Service for approval to convey title through a special warranty deed with indemnification must be accompanied by the following:

- (1) an explanation of the special circumstances which justify the indemnification;
- (2) a proposed indemnification agreement, whether in a separate agreement or as additional paragraphs in a special warranty deed; and
- (3) a statement of the amount of the purchase price which potentially may have to be refunded.

C. Circumstances for the use of a general warranty deed

If the buyer of the forfeited property is still unable to procure a title insurance policy, the U.S. Marshal may be authorized by a significant property decision to execute a general warranty deed.

It is the policy of the DOJ that the Attorney General's discretion to warrant clear title, through the use of a general warranty deed, will be exercised only in compelling circumstances where the financial advantage of offering a general warranty deed in the particular case, compared to the available alternatives, far outweighs both the potential cost of honoring the warranty in that case and the potential effect of increased purchaser demand for general warranty deeds in future sales of other forfeited properties. The Seized Asset Division of the U.S. Marshals Service, in the exercise of sound business judgment, shall also consider the cumulative potential liability which will accrue over time as a result of each successive use of a general warranty deed.

If one or more of the circumstances listed in section IV.B at page 88, is present, and the U.S. Marshal and the U.S. Attorney responsible for the forfeiture action deem it appropriate to warrant clear title, the U.S. Marshal and the U.S. Attorney shall request approval from the Seized Assets Division to convey title through a general warranty deed or its equivalent.

Requests to the Seized Assets Division of the U.S. Marshals Service for approval to convey title through a general warranty deed or its equivalent shall include the following:

- (1) a title report, identifying specific deficiencies and/or exceptions that are the basis of the inability to secure title insurance, and a written explanation from the responsible AUSA addressing why the deficiencies and/or exceptions have not been or cannot be corrected in order to avoid the necessity of a general warranty deed;

- (2) an explanation establishing that a special warranty deed (e.g., warranting only the forfeiture process) would not be sufficient;
- (3) a statement of, and an explanation of the basis for, the estimated financial advantage of offering a general warranty deed as compared to other options;
- (4) an explanation of the circumstances that do not permit disposition of the property by allowing the lienholder to foreclose, sell the property, recover the amount of the lien plus interest and expenses from the proceeds of the sale, and pay to the U.S. Marshal for forfeiture any remaining proceeds in return for the release of the *lis pendens* on the property.

It is suggested that the language of the general warranty deed, or its equivalent, provide as follows:

The grantor does hereby fully warrant the title to said real property, and will hold the grantee harmless against the lawful claims of all persons whomsoever.

It should be noted that the requirements of a general warranty deed may differ between jurisdictions.

D. Dispute resolution

The Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section (AFMLS) will resolve any disputes that may arise in the event the U.S. Attorney and the U.S. Marshal cannot agree on the appropriate form of deed to be used.

V. Purchase or Personal Use of Forfeited Property by Department of Justice Employees

DOJ employees are generally prohibited from purchasing property that has been forfeited to the Government and is being sold by the DOJ or its agents. This policy is intended to ensure that there is no actual or apparent use of inside information by employees wishing to purchase such property. The purpose of this policy is to protect the integrity of the asset forfeiture program.

Although we are unaware that any such purchases have occurred, this policy will avoid problems before they develop. We believe it is important to the integrity of the DOJ's

forfeiture program that we preclude even the appearance of a conflict of interest which would otherwise arise should a DOJ employee purchase forfeited property.

Under 28 C.F.R. §§ 45.735-18(a) and (b), DOJ employees are prohibited from purchasing, either directly or indirectly, or using any property if the property has been forfeited to the Government and offered for sale by the DOJ or its agents. A waiver to the aforementioned restrictions may be granted by the head of the employee's division upon a determination that two requirements are satisfied:

- (1) the purchase was not based on nonpublic information that came to the employee's attention by reason of status as a DOJ employee, i.e., that the purchase was based upon nonpublic source information; and
- (2) the employee's reason for purchasing or using the property is so compelling as to outweigh any appearance of impropriety. *See* parts 45.735-18(c)(1)-(2).

VI. Review of Official Use of Forfeited Property

Part IV.D of *The Attorney General's Guidelines on Seized and Forfeited Property* (July 1990) requires notification to the "Executive Office for Asset Forfeiture...at the time property valued at \$50,000 or greater is placed into official use." Although this requirement may be satisfied by post-transfer notification, the FBI and U.S. Marshals Service provided the then-active Executive Office for Asset Forfeiture with advance notice of and an opportunity to review such decisions. Such notification should *now* be made to AFMLS.

Law enforcement personnel should ensure that AFMLS is given advance notice of and an opportunity to review official use actions involving federal forfeited property valued at \$50,000 or more. AFMLS will endeavor to act on all such notifications within 2 weeks of receipt.

Chapter 6

Equitable Sharing

I. General Adoption Policy and Procedure

A. Adoptive seizures are encouraged

Forfeiture is one of the most effective weapons in the law enforcement arsenal and its use should be encouraged. In many areas of the nation, aggressive and effective use of forfeiture requires a willingness on the part of federal law enforcement agencies to adopt state and local seizures for federal forfeiture whenever appropriate. DOJ personnel in the field should be encouraged to adopt state and local seizures in order to immobilize criminal enterprises and to enhance cooperation among federal, state, and local agencies. This does not preclude application of established dollar thresholds nor relieve adopting officials of the duty to verify that seized property presented for adoption is forfeitable under federal law and that its seizure was based upon probable cause.

The policies and procedures set forth below are intended to ensure consistent review and handling of state and local seizures presented for federal adoption.⁹⁶

B. Federal adoption form

All state and local requests for adoption must be reported on a request for adoption of state or local seizure form.⁹⁷ The form must be completed by the requesting state or local agency, but federal personnel may, in their discretion, complete the form for the requesting state or local agency.

Information concerning any state forfeiture proceedings instituted against the property must be detailed in the request for adoption. The state or local agency must also complete the federal agency's standard federal asset seizure form as part of its adoption request. All information provided must be complete and accurate. An estimate of fair market value must be provided for each item of seized property presented for adoption and any liens and

⁹⁶ This policy does not apply to adoption of seizures by the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

⁹⁷ See Appendix F at F-1 for a copy of a request for adoption of state or local seizure form.

lienholders must be identified. Copies of any investigative reports and of any affidavits in support of warrants pertinent to the seizure shall be attached for review.⁹⁸

C. Federal investigative agency review

The adopting federal agency must review and accept or decline adoption requests promptly. The request for adoption must be accepted prior to the transfer of the property to federal custody unless exceptional circumstances exist.

Seizures presented for adoption must be reviewed by an attorney outside the chain-of-command of operational officials (e.g., the seizing agency's Office of Chief Counsel or other legal unit) unless

- (1) the seizure was based on a judicial seizure warrant; or
- (2) an arrest was made in connection with the seizure; or
- (3) drugs or other contraband were seized from the person from whom the property was seized.

Such attorney review shall verify that

- (1) the property is subject to federal forfeiture;
- (2) there is probable cause to support the seizure;
- (3) the property is not within the custody of a state court; and
- (4) there is no legal impediment to a successful forfeiture action.

Federal investigative agencies will normally secure attorney review through their own offices of chief counsel or other legal unit but may, in their discretion, request an AUSA to conduct this review. Any further review processes established in the future for federal seizures will also apply to adoptive seizures.

⁹⁸ State or local agencies may redact from investigative reports information which may disclose the identity of a confidential informant.

Preseizure planning is an essential part of the review process. Property management issues must be addressed in consultation with the U.S. Marshals Service prior to an adoption.

D. Minimum monetary thresholds

In adoptive cases, property is not generally forfeited unless the equity in the property exceeds the following levels:

Conveyances	
Vehicles	\$2,500
Vessels	\$5,000
Aircraft	\$5,000
Real property	
Land and any improvements	\$10,000 or 20 percent of the appraised value, whichever is greater
All other property	
Currency, bank accounts, monetary instruments, jewelry, etc. ⁹⁹	\$1,000

The U.S. Attorneys, in consultation with federal seizing agencies and state and local law enforcement, may institute higher or lower district-wide thresholds for judicial forfeiture cases as law enforcement or management needs require. Written notice of any higher or lower thresholds shall be provided to the chief of the Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section (AFMLS), Criminal Division.

In individual cases, an overriding law enforcement benefit may require the seizure of an asset that does not meet the thresholds. In such cases, the thresholds may be waived when forfeiture will serve a compelling law enforcement interest—e.g., forfeiture of a crack house, forfeiture of a conveyance with hidden compartments, or forfeiture of a vehicle used in alien smuggling that is seized at an international border. Any downward departure from the monetary thresholds in individual cases must be approved in writing by a supervisory-level official, and an explanation of the reason for the departure must be noted in the case file. The fact that the owner or person in possession of the property has been arrested or will be criminally prosecuted is an appropriate basis for a downward departure.

⁹⁹ Firearms may be forfeited regardless of value.

Lower thresholds may not necessarily result in increased sharing with state and local law enforcement. Since sharing is always based on net proceeds after recovery of costs, forfeiture of lower dollar-value property may result in no net proceeds to share.¹⁰⁰

E. Forfeitures generally follow the prosecution

As a general rule, if a state or local agency has seized property as part of an ongoing state criminal investigation and the criminal defendants are being prosecuted in state court, the forfeiture action should also be pursued in state court.

However, certain circumstances may make federal forfeiture appropriate. These circumstances include but are not limited to the following:

- (1) state laws or procedures are inadequate or forfeiture experience is lacking in the state system with the result that a state forfeiture action may be unfeasible or unsuccessful;
- (2) the seized asset poses unique management or disposition problems, e.g., real property or a business, requiring U.S. Marshals Service involvement;
- (3) state laws or procedures will result in a delay in forfeiture leading to significant diminution in the value of the asset or a delay in the resolution of the case that adversely affects an innocent owner or lienholder; or
- (4) the pertinent state or local prosecuting official has reviewed the case and declined to initiate forfeiture proceedings for any reason.

F. Judicial review favored

Judicial review allows a neutral and detached magistrate to assess the basis for seizure prior to adoption and protects federal enforcement personnel against potential civil suits. Preseizure judicial review is not required for adoptive, joint, or federal seizures, but federal personnel are encouraged to secure judicial review whenever practicable prior to federal seizures or the adoption of a state or local seizure. A judicial determination of probable cause is required prior to a federal adoption of seized real property.

¹⁰⁰ Net proceeds are calculated based on gross receipts from forfeiture or the sale of forfeited property *minus* (1) qualified third party interests (e.g., liens, mortgages); (2) federal case-related expenses (e.g., advertising costs, out-of-pocket investigative or litigative expenses); (3) any award paid to a federal informant; or (4) federal property management expenses (e.g., appraisal, storage, security, sale).

G. 30–day rule for presentation for federal adoption

State and local agencies have 30 calendar days from the date of seizure to request a federal adoption. Waivers of the 30-day rule may be approved by the adopting federal agency where the state or local agency requesting adoption can demonstrate the existence of circumstances justifying the delay.

H. U.S. Attorney recommendation

A U.S. Attorney may recommend in writing that a federal seizing agency adopt a particular state or local seizure. If the federal agency declines to adopt the seizure despite the recommendation of the U.S. Attorney, the agency must promptly document its reasons for declination in a memorandum and forward copies of the memorandum to AFMLS and the U.S. Attorney. AFMLS will resolve any disagreements and may authorize direct adoption of state or local seizures by U.S. Attorneys for judicial forfeiture in appropriate circumstances.

I. Notice requirements

Prior to approval of an adoption, the state or local agency must not state or imply that a federal agency is the seizing agency or has any law enforcement interest in the property. Once adoption is approved, then notice to all interested parties will be executed by the adopting federal investigative agency pursuant to federal law and policy.

Once a decision has been made to adopt the seizure of an item of property covered by the notice requirements the adopting agency must take steps to ensure that the statutory notices are served in the most expeditious manner practicable in accordance with 18 U.S.C. § 983(a)(1).

J. Retention of custody by state or local agency

To minimize storage and management costs to the DOJ, state and local agencies which present motor vehicles for federal adoption should generally be asked to serve as substitute custodians of the property pending forfeiture. Any use of such vehicles, including official use, by state and local law enforcement officials or others is prohibited by DOJ policy until such time as the forfeiture is completed and the equitable transfer is made. Adopted cash and real property must, however, be turned over to the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service. In addition, the Marshals Service must be consulted prior to the adoption of a seizure of real property.

K. Use of anticipatory seizure warrants

If a state or local law enforcement agency commences a forfeiture action under state law, no federal forfeiture action may be commenced as long as the state court has jurisdiction over the subject property. If, however, the state or local authorities determine, for whatever reason, that the state action will be terminated before it is completed, and that the property will accordingly be released, a federal agency may arrange to adopt the forfeiture by obtaining an anticipatory seizure warrant from a federal judge or magistrate. The anticipatory seizure warrant must provide that it will be executed only after the state court has relinquished control over the property.¹⁰¹

For purposes of the notice requirements in section 983(a)(1), property seized pursuant to an anticipatory seizure warrant in these circumstances is considered the subject of a federal seizure such that the period for sending notice of the forfeiture action is 60 days, commencing on the date when the anticipatory seizure warrant is executed.

II. Processing Forms DAG-71 and DAG-72

A. Referral of DAG-71 and DAG-72 forms to U.S. Attorneys' Offices

Seizing agency field offices will provide a copy of the Application of Transfer of Federally Forfeited Property (DAG-71) and the "preliminary" Decision for Transfer of Federally Forfeited Property (DAG-72) to the pertinent U.S. Attorney's Office for all (whatever the value) administrative and judicial forfeiture actions. The originals of these

¹⁰¹ See *United States v. \$174,206.00 in U.S. Currency*, 320 F.3d 658 (6th Cir. 2003) (concurrent jurisdiction doctrine does not bar federal court from exercising in rem jurisdiction over property that state court has released to the claimants after state prosecutors failed to commence a forfeiture action within the deadlines specified by state law); *United States v. \$490,920 in U.S. Currency*, 911 F. Supp. 720 (S.D.N.Y. 1996) (district court cannot exercise in rem jurisdiction until state court relinquishes it), *motion for reconsideration granted*, 937 F. Supp. 249, 252-53 (S.D.N.Y. 1996) (court may grant anticipatory seizure warrant so Government can seize property as soon as state court relinquishes it); *United States v. One Parcel Property...Lot 85*, 100 F.3d 740, 743 (10th Cir. 1996) (initiation of federal civil forfeiture action does not violate concurrent jurisdiction rule as long as property is not actually seized until after state action is dismissed); *United States v. One 1987 Jeep Wrangler*, 972 F.2d 472, 478-479 (2d Cir. 1992) (federal court may exercise jurisdiction over property under federal forfeiture law once it is released by state court and resealed; state court's order releasing property has no effect on federal forfeiture); *United States v. One Black 1999 Ford Crown Victoria Lx*, 118 F. Supp. 2d 115, 118-19 (D. Mass. 2000) (because only one court may exercise in rem jurisdiction over property at a time, federal court may not exercise jurisdiction while state forfeiture action is pending; but once state court rules that property must be released and the order is obeyed, state jurisdiction evaporates and property may be resealed and made subject to forfeiture under federal law; following *Jeep Wrangler*); *United States v. \$3,000,000 Obligation of Qatar National Bank*, 810 F. Supp. 116, 117-19 (S.D.N.Y. 1993) (federal court, though "second in time," may proceed to judgment, assert a lien that will result in seizure of the asset only upon release from state jurisdiction, but stay execution of the judgment until federal jurisdiction is perfected).

forms will be concurrently forwarded to the agency's headquarters decisionmaker. A U.S. Attorney's Office may choose not to receive the DAG-71 and/or the preliminary DAG-72 for property appraised at \$100,000 or less. Written notice of this decision should be forwarded to the seizing agency for its records.

B. Notifying the DOJ Criminal Division

Even though U.S. Attorneys have final decision authority with respect to equitable sharing in judicial forfeiture cases involving less than \$1 million, Forms DAG-71 and DAG-72, along with final orders of forfeiture, must be forwarded to the Criminal Division for processing and recordkeeping purposes. Moreover, all Form DAG-71s should be filled out completely and all Form DAG-72s should be signed by the U.S. Attorney or an official authorized by the U.S. Attorney to sign on his or her behalf. Such authorizations of persons to sign on behalf of the U.S. Attorney should be reduced to writing and a copy supplied to the Criminal Division.

III. Equitable Sharing Protocol

A. Background

The furtherance of law enforcement cooperation with state and local law enforcement agencies is one of the primary goals of the DOJ's asset forfeiture program. Equitable sharing has been a dramatic success in fostering cooperation with our state and local law enforcement colleagues.

But the explosive growth of sharing has created new management challenges. State and local agencies are increasingly dependent upon sharing proceeds. Expediting the processing of sharing requests, therefore, deserves a high priority both at headquarters and in the field.

The levels of decisionmaking authority are set forth at section IX.E of *A Guide to Equitable Sharing of Federally Forfeited Property for State and Local Law Enforcement*

Agencies (March 1994).¹⁰² All decisionmakers should ensure that every equitable share approved meets the *Guide's* standards.

All officials are cautioned not to represent that a sharing request is approved until the final decisionmaker has in fact rendered a decision. Premature announcement of a sharing approval can cause embarrassment if the proposed sharing is ultimately disapproved or substantially altered.

B. Equitable sharing check disbursement

1. Judicial cases

In cases in which the U.S. Attorney or a DOJ official is the decisionmaker, the U.S. Marshals Service will mail the check to the U.S. Attorney's office, attention "Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee (LECC) Coordinator."

If the U.S. Attorney makes an equitable sharing decision on a request from a state or local law enforcement agency from a different judicial district, the coordinator should contact the U.S. Attorney's Office in the second district to determine whether or not that U.S. Attorney wishes to present the check.

2. Administrative cases

In cases in which the federal investigative agency makes the equitable sharing decision, the U.S. Marshals Service will mail the check to that agency unless otherwise directed by the local agency head.

3. Role of law enforcement coordinating committees

Pursuant to the *Attorney General's Guidelines on Seized and Forfeited Property*, July 1990

¹⁰² On June 5, 1995, the Deputy Attorney General delegated to the Assistant Attorney General, Criminal Division, the authority to make final equitable sharing determinations in cases involving (1) forfeited property of a value of \$1 million or more, (2) multiple districts, or (3) the transfer of real property if AFMLS, the U.S. Attorney, and the federal seizing agency agree on the allocation of judicially forfeited property or AFMLS and the federal seizing agency agree on the allocation of administratively forfeited property. A copy of the June 5, 1995, memorandum delegating this authority to the Assistant Attorney General can be found in Appendix F at F-5.

“Law Enforcement Coordinating Committees shall promote and facilitate the Department of Justice forfeiture program with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies.”

Pertaining to a memorandum dated June 15, 1990, to all U.S. Attorneys from the Associate Deputy Attorney General, LECC coordinators are required to “serve as a clearinghouse for state and local inquiries about the status of pending sharing cases.”

To perform these functions, the U.S. Marshals Service shall provide advance notice to the LECC coordinator of *all* equitable sharing payments and transfers to state and local law enforcement agencies in the judicial district. We expect U.S. Attorneys’ Offices and seizing agencies to work together to ensure proper coordination of all equitable sharing activities.

C. Equitable sharing ceremonies

Equitable sharing ceremonies are meant to foster goodwill. They present a unique opportunity for federal and state and local law enforcement to bask in the collective limelight of a job well done. Such ceremonies should be inclusive and not exclusive. Officials from the U.S. Attorney’s Office, the federal seizing agencies, and the U.S. Marshals Service should routinely be included in these ceremonies.

One of the goals we must all work toward is expediting the processing of equitable sharing requests. While equitable sharing ceremonies are encouraged, they should be scheduled as quickly as possible once the cash and/or tangible property is available for sharing. Accumulating sharing checks and property for purposes of presentation is discouraged where the recipient agency does not concur—particularly where large amounts of money are involved. Not only are the funds critically important to some agencies, but the interest that can be earned on these funds is also available for law enforcement use.

Requests for expedited processing of an equitable sharing request in order to have a presentation ceremony can be extremely disruptive to the system. Please plan ceremonies sufficiently in advance to allow the processing of requests in the normal course of business.

Occasionally, travel schedules have permitted the President, the Vice President, and the Attorney General to personally present significant equitable sharing checks. U.S. Attorneys and seizing agencies should contact AFMLS *as far in advance as possible* if they are aware of an upcoming significant sharing opportunity in their district. A significant amount of staff work must be done to prepare for ceremonies involving these officials.

As a general rule, the checks presented by the President have been \$1 million or more and checks presented by the Attorney General have been \$250,000 or more.

Regardless of who presents the check, it is the responsibility of the federal seizing agency or the U.S. Attorney's Office taking the lead role in the ceremony to contact the state and local recipients and to plan the presentation.

D. Transmittal letters for equitable sharing checks

All federal components shall enclose a transmittal letter which reiterates the policies governing the use of equitable shares as set forth in section V.A of *The Attorney General's Guidelines on Seized and Forfeited Property* (July 1990).

It is important to consistently give the same message to the recipient agencies. The following points should be made:

- (1) the sharing check represents the agency's equitable share of the net proceeds;
- (2) the monies must be used for the law enforcement purposes stated in Form DAG 71;
- (3) these funds must increase and not supplant the agency's appropriated operating budget;
- (4) any interest earned on these funds must also be used for law enforcement purposes.

IV. International Sharing of Forfeited Assets

Sharing with foreign governments is an important part of our program. Agencies are urged to aggressively pursue assets located abroad. Please advise AFMLS in writing of any foreign assets that have been forfeited or are about to be forfeited under U.S. law with the assistance of a foreign country.

It is DOJ policy to share, in accordance with U.S. law and established procedure, the proceeds of successful forfeiture actions with the country or countries that facilitate the forfeiture of assets under U.S. law. Commitments to share internationally in specific cases can only be made with the approval of the Attorney General and the Department of State.

To initiate this process, the investigative agency or prosecutive office responsible for the forfeiture should send AFMLS a memorandum detailing the foreign assistance provided and recommending the amount to be shared. Representatives of foreign governments should not be asked to submit a sharing request. Be aware that, unlike with domestic sharing, there is no authority for us to insist that a foreign country use shared property in any particular manner or allocate it to any particular governmental component (e.g., a provincial law enforcement agency).

AFMLS is available to assist with the repatriation of forfeitable assets located overseas and with the international sharing of assets forfeited in the United States.

V. Weed and Seed Initiative; Transfers of Real Property

A. Background

Weed and Seed is an initiative designed to reclaim and rejuvenate embattled neighborhoods and communities. Weed and Seed uses a neighborhood focused, two-part strategy to control violent crime and to provide social and economic support to communities where high crime rates and social ills are prevalent. The initiative first removes, or “weeds,” violent criminals and drug dealers from the neighborhoods. Then the initiative prevents a reinfestation of criminal activity by “seeding” the neighborhoods with public and private services, community-based policing, and incentives for new businesses. Weed and Seed is founded on the premise that community organizations, social service providers, and criminal justice agencies must work together with community residents to regain control and revitalize crime-ridden and drug-plagued neighborhoods. Weed and Seed includes both specifically funded projects as well as cooperative initiatives not receiving targeted federal funding.

The legal authority for the transfer of seized and forfeited real property, in appropriate cases, to states, political subdivisions, and private nonprofit organizations in support of the Weed and Seed Initiative and the procedure by which such transfers are to be accomplished are described in detail *infra*. In summary, the process parallels the current sharing procedure, including use of Form DAG-71, consultation among federal, state, and local law enforcement authorities, and final approval of real property transfers by the Office of the Deputy Attorney General.

Recipients will be expected to pay any mortgages and qualified third party interests against the real property transferred. Other costs will be paid from the Assets Forfeiture Fund. No transfer will be made over the objection of a state local law enforcement agency

that is entitled to an equitable share of the net proceeds from the sale of the property to be transferred.

B. General authorization

Pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 981(e)(2) and 21 U.S.C. § 881(e)(1)(A), the Attorney General has the authority to transfer forfeited property to any federal agency, or to any state or local law enforcement agency, that participated in the seizure or forfeiture of property.

Transfers made pursuant to section 881(e)(1)(A) must serve to encourage cooperation between the recipient state or local agency and federal enforcement agencies. Limitations and conditions respecting permissible uses of transferred property are set forth in *The Attorney General's Guidelines on Seized and Forfeited Property*. Pursuant to section III.C of the *Guidelines*, this policy constitutes supplementary guidance regarding the meaning of section V.A.3 of the *Guidelines*.

C. Transfer of forfeited real property pursuant to Weed and Seed Initiative

1. Sharing requests

All requests for sharing of real property pursuant to the Weed and Seed Initiative shall be in a Form DAG-71 and must follow the established sharing procedures as outlined in *The Attorney General's Guidelines on Seized and Forfeited Property*. The appropriate official of the seizing federal investigative agency must recommend the transfer, as well as the U.S. Attorney in the particular judicial district where the property is located. Approval by the Office of the Deputy Attorney General is required for transfers of forfeited real property.

2. Transfers to state and local agencies

The participating state or local law enforcement agency, or other governmental entity permitted by applicable laws to hold property for the benefit of the law enforcement agency, will receive the initial transfer of the real property. The state or local agency will then, pursuant to prior agreement, transfer the property to the appropriate public or private nonprofit organization for use in support of one of the programs described above.

The authority of the participating state or local investigative agency to transfer forfeited real property to other state or local public agencies may vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

In each case, the issue must be addressed in the submitted DAG-71 prior to the sharing transfer to the state or local agency.

D. Mortgages and ownership interests in Weed and Seed-transferred real property

1. Mortgages

Mortgages on real property transferred pursuant to the Weed and Seed Initiative are not payable from the DOJ Assets Forfeiture Fund (AFF). Liens and mortgages shall be the responsibility of the recipient state or local community-based organization.

2. Qualified third party interests

Any secured debts or other qualified interests owed to creditors are not payable from the AFF. The payments of these interests are the responsibility of the recipient state or local agency or nonprofit organization.

E. Asset seizure, management, and case-related expenses

Expenses incurred in connection with the seizure, appraisal, or security of the property are payable from the AFF. Case-related expenses incurred in connection with normal proceedings undertaken to protect the United States' interest in seized property through forfeiture are also payable from the AFF.

F. Law enforcement concurrence

Any state or local law enforcement agency that would otherwise receive an equitable share of proceeds from the sale of a forfeited property must voluntarily agree to forego its share before a Weed and Seed transfer will be authorized.

VI. Guidelines for Administering the Permissible Use Policy

On August 13, 1997, the Attorney General approved a change to the former "pass-through policy," under which state and local law enforcement agencies that received equitably shared funds were permitted, at their discretion, to transfer up to 15 percent of the shared funds they received to private, nonprofit organizations and non-law enforcement governmental agencies for specified uses. *See Guide to Equitable Sharing of Federally*

Forfeited Property for State and Local Law Enforcement (March 1994) at section X.A.3.a. The new policy, known as the permissible use policy, was promulgated with the following revision to section X.A.3.a., found in section IV of the *Addendum to the Guide to Equitable Sharing*:

A state or local law enforcement agency or prosecutor's office may use not more than 15 percent of its shared monies for the costs associated with drug abuse treatment, drug and crime prevention education, housing and job skills programs, or other nonprofit community-based programs or activities, which are formally approved by the chief law enforcement officer (*i.e.*, chief, sheriff, or prosecutor) as being supportive of and consistent with a law enforcement effort, policy, and/or initiative. This provision requires that all expenditures be made by the law enforcement agency and does not allow for the transfer of cash.

With the approval of this permissible use policy, the Attorney General requested that guidelines be promulgated for federal, state, and local law enforcement officials to follow in qualifying, screening, and making disbursements on behalf of agencies and organizations under this new policy. As a result, AFMLS drafted guidelines, which it presented to, and revised based upon the comments of, the Attorney General's Advisory Committee of U.S. Attorneys, the State and Local Law Enforcement Asset Forfeiture Working Group, and the Federal Asset Forfeiture Working Group. AFMLS finalized the guidelines on February 26, 1998.

VII. Transfer of Property Forfeited Under the Magnuson Fisheries Conservation and Management Act

A. Background

The Magnuson Fisheries Conservation and Management Act, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1801-1882, was enacted as part of an overall effort to conserve and manage the fishery resources found off the coasts of the United States. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce, is responsible for investigating violations that occur under the Magnuson Fisheries Conservation and Management Act. The act provides that any fishing vessel used and any fish taken or retained in violation of section 1857 of the act shall be subject to forfeiture pursuant to a civil proceeding under section 1860.

Ordinarily, the property (defined as proceeds from the sale of perishable goods or a bond) seized for forfeiture pursuant to the Magnuson Fisheries Conservation and Management Act

is held in the court registry pending the outcome of the forfeiture proceeding. A recent review of the Magnuson Fisheries Conservation and Management Act has revealed that a different disposition of the proceeds is possible. The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for litigating and processing the act's forfeitures in order to facilitate the transfer of forfeited assets to the NOAA.

B. General Policy

Under the authorities contained in the Magnuson Fisheries Conservation and Management Act, the DOJ will transfer to the NOAA funds forfeited by the Attorney General for violations under the Act. Assets seized for forfeiture under the Magnuson Fisheries Conservation and Management Act should be deposited in the Seized Asset Deposit Fund with the U.S. Marshals Service. Following the forfeiture action, the funds will then be transferred by the U.S. Marshals Service to the NOAA. Where expenses have been incurred by the U.S. Marshals Service, these expenses must first be deducted before the net proceeds of forfeiture are transferred to the NOAA. If no expenses are incurred, the entire amount will be transferred to the NOAA.

Any forfeitures and requests for transfers under the Magnuson Fisheries Conservation and Management Act occurring after June 1, 1992, should be identified and processed pursuant to the following procedures. In all future cases, in addition to U.S. Marshals Service expenses, the AFF will retain 10 percent of the total net proceeds of the forfeiture. This amount represents the DOJ's share based upon its effort in forfeiting the property.

C. Transfer request procedures

To avoid the necessity of creating new forms and procedures, the transfer to the NOAA should follow established sharing request procedures as enumerated in *The Attorney General's Guidelines on Seized and Forfeited Property*, July 1990. Since forfeitures under the Magnuson Fisheries Conservation and Management Act are judicial, the local NOAA office must request the transfer of funds by submitting a Form DAG-71 to the U.S. Attorney's Office in the district where the forfeiture action is pending. In preparing the DAG-71, NOAA Administration Headquarters legal counsel will not be required to complete section VII, block B. Upon receipt of the DAG-71, the U.S. Attorney's Office shall make a decision using Form DAG-72 on forfeitures valued less than \$1 million and a recommendation on forfeitures valued \$1 million or more. The U.S. Attorney's Office does not have to consult with any other DOJ investigative agencies concerning requests made pursuant to the Magnuson Fisheries Conservation and Management Act. As with other judicial forfeitures involving sharing, the U.S. Attorney's Office shall forward the DAG-72

recommendation or decision to AFMLS for processing and tracking purposes. AFMLS will have authority for dispute resolution in sharing decisions valued under \$1 million in NOAA cases.

Following the forfeiture and sharing decisions, and deduction of expenses and the DOJ 10 percent share, a check for the proceeds should be cut and sent to the NOAA at the following address:

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
c/o Office of the General Counsel
8484 Georgia Avenue, Suite 400
Silver Spring, MD 20910

The check should also contain the following information:

case name and number _____
account number AD1000 BL2D02

The checks should be sent using certified mail. Any questions should be directed to the Assistant General Counsel of Enforcement and Litigation at 301-713-2292.

The U.S. Marshals Service should process the transfer using subject classification code 4405 (portion of forfeited proceeds to other federal agencies).

Chapter 7

Assets Forfeiture Fund

I. Transfer of Funds From the Seized Asset Deposit Fund to the Assets Forfeiture Fund

The U.S. Attorney's Office securing a forfeiture is responsible for initiating transfers from the Seized Asset Deposit Fund to the Assets Forfeiture Fund (AFF) and should provide prompt notification to the U.S. Marshals Service of the events, which should lead to a transfer from the Seized Asset Deposit Fund.

In the case of either a consent judgment or a default judgment, the U.S. Marshals Service will immediately transfer the forfeited cash to the AFF unless the U.S. Attorney determines that execution of the judgment should be delayed.

In the case of a judgment after trial or upon summary judgment, there is an automatic stay of execution of the judgment of 10 working days. If the U.S. Attorney's Office indicates that no motions or requests for additional stays have been filed, then the forfeited cash will be transferred to the AFF on the 11th working day following a summary judgment or a judgment after trial.

Chapter 8

Attorney's Fees

I. Payment of Attorney's Fees in Civil Forfeiture Cases

A. Summary

The Civil Asset Forfeiture Reform Act (CAFRA) of 2000 amended 28 U.S.C. § 2465(b) to provide for an award of attorney's fees and other litigation costs to any claimant in a civil forfeiture case who "substantially prevails." Such awards will be paid out of the Judgment Fund. Forms for request payments out of the Judgment Fund are available on Asset Forfeiture Money Laundering Online (AFML Online) and should be submitted directly to the office that handles Judgment Fund matters.

B. Discussion

Prior to the enactment of CAFRA, there was no provision for liability for attorney's fees and costs that applied specifically to civil forfeitures. Attorney's fees were awarded to prevailing non-government parties pursuant to the Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA). In EAJA, Congress provided that the non-government party could seek reimbursement of costs and legal fees if the Government's position was not substantially justified.¹⁰³

In CAFRA, Congress amended section 2465 to provide for the mandatory award of attorney's fees and other litigation costs to non-government parties who substantially prevail in a civil forfeiture proceeding, regardless of whether the Government was justified in bringing the forfeiture action. To be eligible for attorney's fees, however, the claimant must pursue the claim in court and obtain a judgment that the United States is liable for attorney's fees under section 2465.

¹⁰³ "Except as otherwise specifically provided by statute, a court shall award to a prevailing party other than the United States fees and other expenses, in addition to any costs awarded pursuant to subsection (a), incurred by that party in any civil action (other than cases sounding in tort), including proceedings for judicial review of agency action, brought by or against the United States in any court having jurisdiction of that action, unless the court finds that the position of the United States was substantially justified or that special circumstances make an award unjust." (28 U.S.C. § 2412(d)(1)(A)).

When EAJA was enacted, the primary source of funds to pay judgments against the United States was the permanent judgment appropriation. *See* 31 U.S.C. § 1304. The Judgment Fund is by law available to pay final adverse judgments (and certain compromise settlements) when “payment is not otherwise provided for.”¹⁰⁴ In the past, however, citing the need to establish an aggressive use of forfeiture and considering an EAJA award as a predictable expense incident thereto, the DOJ used its legal authority, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 524(c)(1)(A), to permit the use of Assets Forfeiture Fund (AFF) monies to pay EAJA awards arising from actions related to the forfeiture, attempted forfeiture, or seizure for forfeiture of property. The DOJ developed a policy and three-tier test to review requests for payment of EAJA awards from the AFF and these requests were submitted to the Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section (AFMLS) for review and approval.

The enactment of CAFRA provided specifically for liability for attorney’s fees and costs for a prevailing claimant in a civil proceeding. Because the provisions of section 2465 are specific to “any civil proceeding to forfeit property under any provision of civil law,” they appear to have displaced EAJA as a means for payment of attorney’s fees and costs by prevailing non-government parties in the case of civil forfeitures. Because this liability is unrelated to the strength or weakness of the Government’s case and is now a routine part of civil litigation in forfeiture cases, the awards of attorney’s fees and costs will no longer come from the AFF. Although the language of the statute is silent as to the source of funding for these payments, Congressman Henry Hyde addressed this issue. Submitted in the Congressional Record on the day CAFRA was passed was the following statement:

“In addition, this act would make the federal government liable for... attorneys fees, and pre-judgment and post-judgment interest payments on certain assets to prevailing parties in civil forfeiture proceedings.... Compensation payments could come from appropriated funds or occur without further appropriation from the Judgment Fund, or both sources.”¹⁰⁵

Since the AFF consists of non-appropriated funds, and no funds were separately appropriated to pay obligations arising under CAFRA, Congress’s intent seems clear that in civil forfeiture proceedings attorney’s fees, costs, and interest should be awarded from the Judgment Fund.

¹⁰⁴ Section 1304(a)(1).

¹⁰⁵ *Congressional Budget Office Cost Estimate: H.R. 1658 - The Civil Asset Forfeiture Reform Act of 2000*, reprinted in 146 Cong. Rec. H2040, H2047–H2049 (daily ed. Apr. 11, 2000).

C. Procedure for requesting payment of an award from the judgment fund

When there is a judgment awarding attorney's fees, interest, and costs in a civil forfeiture case, the U.S. Attorney's Office should submit a request for payment of the award to the Financial Management Service (FMS), Department of the Treasury, which manages the Judgment Fund. FMS has a Web site (<http://www.fms.treas.gov/judgefund>) on which there are links to procedures for submitting a request for an award of costs and fees and the appropriate forms. (These forms are also found on AFML Online.) In addition to the forms and instructions, FMS's Web site also contains general information about the fund. Upon submitting the appropriate forms to FMS, a courtesy copy should be forwarded to AFMLS.

II. Forfeiture of Attorney's Fees

The policy on the forfeiture of attorney's fees is set forth in the *U.S. Attorney's Manual* and the *Criminal Resource Manual*. As set forth in those sources, any action to forfeit an attorney's fee in a civil or criminal case, as well as any agreement *not* to seek forfeiture of any attorney's fee in such case, requires the approval of the Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division.

III. Payment of Attorney's Fees in Criminal Forfeiture Cases

A. Defendant's attorney's fees

1. Summary

The defendant in a criminal forfeiture action may file for an award of attorney's fees under the Hyde Amendment.¹⁰⁶ The Hyde Amendment provides that the court may award attorney's fees to defendants in criminal actions in which the Government's position was vexatious, frivolous, or in bad faith.¹⁰⁷ To prevail on a Hyde Amendment claim, the claimant must prove that (1) he or she was the prevailing party on the underlying action, (2) the Government's position was vexatious, frivolous, or in bad faith, and (3) there are no special

¹⁰⁶ "During fiscal year 1998 and in any fiscal year thereafter, the court, in any criminal case (other than a case in which the defendant is represented by assigned counsel paid for by the public) pending on or after the date of enactment of this Act [Nov. 26, 1997], may award to the prevailing party, other than the United States, a reasonable attorney's fee and other litigation expenses, where the court finds that the position of the United States was vexatious, frivolous, or in bad faith, unless the court finds that special circumstances make such an award unjust." The Hyde Amendment to the Department of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 1998, Pub. L. No. 105-119, § 617, 111 Stat. 2440, 2519 (1997), 18 U.S.C.A. § 3006A, historical and statutory notes.

¹⁰⁷ *Id.*

circumstances that would make the award unjust. This burden is heavier than the one the Government must meet under the Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA), 28 U.S.C. § 2412, for civil actions.¹⁰⁸ When a request for attorney's fees under the Hyde Amendment is made based on the criminal prosecution, it should be submitted directly to the Hyde Amendment Committee and the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys. If the request specifically addresses the criminal forfeiture, a copy should also be submitted to the chief of AFMLS. Hyde claim awards are paid from the Judgment Fund.

2. Discussion

In articulating a standard of misconduct, the Eleventh and Fourth Circuits have relied on *Black's Law Dictionary* to define the terms "vexatious," "frivolous," and "bad faith."¹⁰⁹ These courts found *vexatious* to mean "without reasonable or probable cause or excuse"; *frivolous* to mean "groundless...with little prospect of success; often brought to embarrass or annoy"; and *bad faith* to mean "not simply bad judgment or negligence, but rather it implies the conscious doing of a wrong because of dishonest purpose or moral ambiguity."¹¹⁰ The court in *United States v. Gilbert* further noted that the amendment was "targeted at prosecutorial misconduct, not prosecutorial mistake."¹¹¹

A court recently considered a defendant's claim for attorney's fees in a criminal forfeiture case where the forfeiture, but not the conviction, was found defective.¹¹² In *United States v. Pease*, the defendant sought attorney's fees in connection with an appeal of the criminal forfeiture. The Eleventh Circuit reversed the district court's grant of the Government's Rule 36 motion to amend the judgment post-conviction to include the necessary forfeiture language. In connection with the Hyde Amendment request, the district

¹⁰⁸ See *United States v. Gilbert*, 198 F.3d 1293, 1299-1302 (11th Cir. 1999) (discussing legislative history of the Hyde Amendment). In its original form, the Hyde Amendment tracked the EAJA in its burden and standard of proof, but was changed prior to enactment by switching the burden from the Government to the plaintiff and heightening the standard of misconduct that must be shown. *Id.* at 1302. See also *United States v. Wade*, 255 F.3d 833, 839 n.6 (D.D.C. 2001) (discussing in footnote that the Hyde Amendment is a heavier burden for petitioner than the EAJA standard).

¹⁰⁹ *United States v. Gilbert*, 198 F.3d 1293, 1298-99 (11th Cir. 1999); *In re 1997 Grand Jury*, 215 F.3d 430, 436 (4th Cir. 2000).

¹¹⁰ *Gilbert*, 198 F.3d at 1298-99 (quoting *Black's Law Dictionary* 668 (6th Ed. 1990); *In re 1997 Grand Jury*, 215 F.3d at 436 (quoting *United States v. Gilbert*, 198 F.3d 1293, 1298-99 (11th Cir. 1999)).

¹¹¹ *Gilbert*, 198 F.3d at 1304.

¹¹² *United States v. Pease*, No. 8:98-CR-302-T-24EAJ (M.D. Fla. July 30, 2004) (unpublished).

court found that the Government's position was not vexatious, frivolous, or in bad faith.¹¹³ The court reasoned that the lack of clarity of the governing law regarding the use of Rule 36 to amend judgments to include previously ordered forfeitures, the legal merits of the forfeiture, and the consistency of the Government's position supported a finding that the Government's position was substantially justified—not frivolous, vexatious, or in bad faith.¹¹⁴

There are no reported decisions granting a Hyde Amendment claim solely with regard to a criminal forfeiture. However, the analysis conducted by courts in granting Hyde Amendment claims generally is instructive. In *United States v. Adkinson*, the court found the Government acted in bad faith when they enjoined a party to the action knowing at the time of the indictment that there would be insufficient evidence to convict the defendants of bank fraud conspiracy at trial.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, the court found the Government's position in that case to be foreclosed by binding precedent from the start, thus making it vexatious and frivolous as well.¹¹⁶

Likewise, the court in *United States v. Holland* found the Government's position to be vexatious where the Government proceeded with a 31-count indictment concerning bank loans investigated by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) on evidence concerning civil, not criminal, wrongdoings.¹¹⁷ Moreover, the FDIC had already found the evidence insufficient to support even administrative enforcement.¹¹⁸ The court also found that the Government had insufficient evidence to prove the requisite criminal intent.¹¹⁹ Applying the test of whether a reasonable prosecutor should have concluded the evidence was insufficient to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, the court found that the Government's position in this case was vexatious.¹²⁰

¹¹³ *Id.*

¹¹⁴ *United States v. Pease*, No. 8:98-CR-302-T-24EAJ (M.D. Fla. July 30, 2004) (unpublished). The district court also denied the claimant's request for attorney's fees under EAJA, finding that the Government's position was substantially justified.

¹¹⁵ *United States v. Adkinson*, 247 F.3d 1289, 1293 (11th Cir. 2001).

¹¹⁶ *Id.*

¹¹⁷ *United States v. Holland*, 34 F. Supp. 2d 346, 353 & 364 (E.D. Va. 1999).

¹¹⁸ *Id.* at 365.

¹¹⁹ *Id.*

¹²⁰ *Id.* at 364-75.

Most courts have found a Hyde Amendment action to be civil proceeding despite arising from a criminal action; as a result, the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure apply.¹²¹ Moreover, the amendment provides that the procedures and limitations for granting an award shall be derived from those set forth in EAJA.¹²² In pertinent part, EAJA requires the parties seeking an award to file their claims within 30 days of final judgment of the underlying civil action.¹²³ EAJA also provides for the determination of reasonable attorney's fees and other expenses.¹²⁴

B. Third party petitioner's attorney's fees

1. Summary

Since CAFRA strictly applies to civil forfeiture proceedings, the third party petitioner in an ancillary proceeding to a criminal forfeiture, pursuant to 21 U.S.C. § 853(n), must assert payment for attorney's fees under EAJA. EAJA provides for the award of attorney's fees to prevailing parties in any civil action against the United States in which the Government's position was not substantially justified.¹²⁵ A third party claimant's ancillary proceeding to a criminal forfeiture is considered a "civil action" under EAJA.¹²⁶ Payment of attorney's fees awarded under EAJA are paid from the Assets Forfeiture Fund. The chief of AFMLS must approve any settlement of an EAJA claim.

¹²¹ *United States v. Holland*, 214 F.3d 523 (4th Cir. 2000); *United States v. Truesdale*, 211 F.3d 898, 902-904 (5th Cir. 2000); *United States v. Wade*, 255 F.3d 833, 839 (D.D.C. 2001). *But see United States v. Robbins*, 179 F.3d 1268, 1270 (9th Cir. 1999) (finding a Hyde Amendment action was a criminal proceeding to which the appellate rule for criminal actions applies).

¹²² "Such awards shall be granted pursuant to the procedures and limitations (but not burden of proof) provided for an award under Title 28, U.S.C. § 2412." Hyde Amendment, *supra* note 1.

¹²³ Section 2412(d)(1)(B).

¹²⁴ Section 2412(d)(2)(A).

¹²⁵ "Except as otherwise specifically provided by statute, a court shall award to a prevailing party other than the United States fees and other expenses, in addition to any costs awarded pursuant to subsection (a), incurred by that party in any civil action (other than cases sounding in tort), including proceedings for judicial review of agency action, brought by or against the United States in any court having jurisdiction of that action, unless the court finds that the position of the United States was substantially justified or that special circumstances make an award unjust." 28 U.S.C. § 2412(d)(1)(A).

¹²⁶ *United States v. Douglas*, 55 F.3d 584 (11th Cir. 1995); *United States v. McAllister*, 1998 WL 855498 (E.D. Pa. 1998); *United States v. Bachner*, 877 F. Supp. 625 (S.D. Fla 1995).

2. Discussion

EAJA requires the court to award fees upon finding (1) the applicants were the prevailing parties, (2) the Government's position was not substantially justified, and (3) no circumstances exist that would make an award unjust.¹²⁷

The general test for determining whether an applicant is a prevailing party is if the parties "succeed on any significant issue in litigation which achieves some of the benefit the parties sought in bringing suit."¹²⁸ The Supreme Court has held that a party must secure a judgment on the merits or by judicial consent decree in order to prevail under statutes awarding attorney's fees.¹²⁹ The court stated that these results create the "material alteration of the legal relationship of the parties' necessary to permit an award of attorney's fees."¹³⁰ Therefore, to meet the prevailing party requirement under EAJA, a petitioner must achieve some benefit of the litigation either through a judgment on the merits or a judicial consent decree.

In *United States v. One Rural Lot*,¹³¹ the claimants were prevailing parties where they received 60 percent of the sale proceeds from forfeited property. Likewise, the property owner in *In Re Application of Gerard Mgndichian*¹³² prevailed for EAJA purposes where the district court denied his motion for return of his motorcycles, but nonetheless ordered the administrative forfeiture proceedings void,¹³³ giving him the right to contest the reinstated forfeiture proceedings.¹³⁴

¹²⁷ *Jean v. Nelson*, 863 F.2d 759, 765 (11th Cir. 1988).

¹²⁸ *Hensley v. Eckerhart*, 461 U.S. 424, 433 (1983); *Sims v. Apfel*, 238 F.3d 597, 600 (5th Cir. 2001).

¹²⁹ *Buckhannon Board and Care Home, Inc. v. West Va. Dept. of Health and Human Resources*, 532 U.S. 598, 604-05 (2001).

¹³⁰ *Id.* at 604.

¹³¹ *United States v. One Rural Lot*, 770 F. Supp. 66 (D.P.R. 1991).

¹³² *In re Application of Gerard Mgndichian for Return of Property*, 312 F. Supp. 2d 1250 (C.D. Cal. 2003).

¹³³ *Id.*

¹³⁴ *Id.* at 1257-60.

For the Government's position to be substantially justified, the Government must show it was "justified to a degree that could satisfy a reasonable person"¹³⁵; that is, its position had a "reasonable basis both in law and fact."¹³⁶ Relevant factors that may be considered in determining whether the Government's position was reasonable include (1) the legal merits of its position, (2) the clarity of the governing law at the time the action was instituted, (3) the stage at which the litigation was resolved, and (4) the consistency of the Government's position.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ *Pierce v. Underwood*, 487 U.S. 552, 565 (1988).

¹³⁶ *Id.*

¹³⁷ *Pease*, No. 8:98-CR-302-T-24EAJ (M.D. Fla. July 30, 2004) (unpublished) (citing *Jean v. Nelson*, 863 F.2d 759, 767 (11th Cir. 1988)). See section III.A.2 at page 114.

Chapter 9

Grand Jury

I. Disclosures of Grand Jury Information Under 18 U.S.C. § 3322(a)

A. Summary

The Civil Asset Forfeiture Act (CAFRA) of 2000 amended 18 U.S.C. § 3322(a) to allow criminal AUSAs to disclose grand jury information to attorneys for the Government “for use in connection with any civil forfeiture provision of federal law.” With this amendment, Congress legislatively overruled a portion of the holding in *United States v. Sells Engineering, Inc.*, 463 U.S. 418 (1983), which interpreted Rule 6(e), Fed. R. Crim. P., to prohibit a criminal AUSA from disclosing grand jury information to a civil AUSA who was not part of the prosecution team. But the amendment to section 3322 did not make clear whether the “use” that the civil AUSA could make of the disclosed information included further disclosure to the public in the course of the litigation of a civil forfeiture case without obtaining a court order.

One interpretation of section 3322(a) is that it only permits one AUSA to disclose grand jury information to another AUSA, but still requires the second AUSA to obtain a court order before disclosing the information to the public in the course of civil litigation. The matter is a sensitive one, as the penalty for violating the grand jury disclosure rules set forth in Rule 6(e) is contempt. For that reason, prosecutors will naturally want to act with caution in this area.

Based on fundamental rules of statutory construction and the practice regarding the use of grand jury information in criminal cases, however, we conclude that the intent of section 3322 was to permit the civil AUSA not only to review and rely upon grand jury information in the preparation of civil forfeiture pleadings, but also to disclose that information in publicly filed documents and as evidence at trial.

Section 3322 does not, however, permit any AUSA to disclose grand jury information to seizing agency attorneys to use in administrative forfeiture proceedings. Seizing agency attorneys are not “attorneys for the government” as defined by Rule 1(b), of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure. Likewise, disclosures may not be made to government

contractors because they are not considered federal or government employees as defined in 5 U.S.C. § 2105.

B. Discussion

1. Issue I

May an AUSA to whom grand jury information is disclosed for use in a civil forfeiture matter disclose that information to the public in the course of the civil forfeiture case without obtaining a court order?

CAFRA¹³⁸ amended section 3322(a)¹³⁹ to allow a criminal AUSA to disclose grand jury information without obtaining a judicial order to a civil AUSA for “use in connection with any civil forfeiture provision of Federal law.” This amendment was intended to address the Supreme Court decision in *United States v. Sells Engineering*, which held that Rule 6(e) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure does not authorize automatic disclosures of grand jury information to an attorney for the Government for use in a civil proceeding. The Supreme Court interpreted Rule 6(e) to allow automatic disclosures only to those attorneys and their supervisors who conduct the criminal matters to which the grand jury materials pertain.¹⁴⁰ An attorney with only civil duties, the Court said, lacks both the prosecutor’s special role in supporting the grand jury and the prosecutor’s own crucial need to know what occurs before the grand jury.¹⁴¹ Thus, criminal AUSAs were held to have access to grand jury materials only for criminal use.

The Supreme Court refined its decision in *United States v. John Doe, Inc. I*, 481 U.S. 102 (1987), which held that civil attorneys who were members of the prosecution team may, without prior court authorization, continue to use materials or information subject to Rule 6(e) in a companion or related civil proceeding. A recent Third Circuit case, *Impounded*,

¹³⁸ CAFRA applies to any forfeiture proceeding initiated on or after August 23, 2000. See Pub. L. No. 106-185, § 10, 114 Stat. 202, 217.

¹³⁹ Section 3322(a) provides:

- (a) a person who is privy to grand jury information—
 - (1) received in the course of duty as an attorney for the government; or
 - (2) disclosed under rule 6(e)(3)(A)(ii) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure;may disclose that information to an attorney for the government for use in...connection with any civil forfeiture provision of Federal law.

¹⁴⁰ 463 U.S. at 429.

¹⁴¹ See *id.* at 431.

277 F.3d 407 (3d Cir. 2002), further lightened the restrictions of *Sells*. The Third Circuit, interpreting an exception to the general non-disclosure rule, allowed an AUSA from one district to disclose grand jury material to an AUSA in another district since the use of the grand jury information was a part of the performance of the recipient prosecutor's criminal law enforcement duties.

The CAFRA amendment to section 3322(a) expanded the holding in *John Doe, Inc. I* to allow disclosures of grand jury information to another "attorney for the government" without a court order for "use in connection with any civil forfeiture provision of federal law." Previously, under the version of section 3322 enacted as part of the Financial Institutions Reform and Recovery Act (FIRREA) of 1989, Congress had authorized such disclosure only in cases involving bank fraud. But the legislative history of CAFRA indicates that Congress recognized that *all* civil forfeiture actions are law enforcement actions, and that grand jury information therefore should be available without a court order to government attorneys in all civil forfeiture cases.¹⁴²

While it is clear that Congress intended to permit an AUSA who obtained grand jury information in connection with a criminal investigation to disclose that information to another AUSA who would be handling a related civil forfeiture matter, neither the statute nor the legislative history provides any guidance as to what the civil AUSA may do with the information once it is disclosed. In particular, it is not clear whether Congress intended to permit the civil AUSA only to review and rely upon the grand jury information while preparing a civil forfeiture case, or whether it intended that the civil AUSA would be permitted to disclose the grand jury information in publicly filed documents, such as complaints and applications for seizure warrants and restraining orders, and as evidence at trial.

A fundamental rule of statutory construction provides that the plain meaning of the words is given the greatest weight in statutory interpretation. *Browder v. United States*, 312 U.S. 335, 336 (1941). In the context of civil litigation, the plain meaning of the phrase "for use in connection with any civil forfeiture provision of federal law" would include using the information in applications for seizure warrants and court orders, in the body of the forfeiture complaint, and as evidence at trial. This comports with the dictionary definition, which suggests that information is *used* when it is "put into action or service."¹⁴³ The more limited interpretation—that one "uses" information only to inform him or herself of the facts of a case—seems contrary to common sense and experience. Moreover, the broader reading of

¹⁴² H.R. Rep. 105-358(I), 105th Cong., 1st Sess. 1997.

¹⁴³ Webster's Dictionary 1301 (10th ed. 1999).

the statute is consistent with the use that a criminal AUSA typically makes of grand jury information in a criminal case. It is well-established that a criminal AUSA who is privy to grand jury information may use it not only to prepare a case for trial, but may disclose it in the indictment and in the course of the criminal trial.

Accordingly, we conclude that just as the criminal AUSA may disclose grand jury information in an indictment or other document filed in the course of a criminal prosecution, or as evidence introduced in the course of a criminal trial, so may a civil AUSA disclose grand jury information in the course of civil litigation without obtaining a judicial disclosure order.

2. Issue II

May an AUSA (civil or criminal) who is privy to grand jury information disclose that information to agency counsel for use in connection with an administrative proceeding, or to a government contractor who is assisting in the preparation of a civil forfeiture case?

Section 3322(a) provides for automatic disclosures of grand jury information by an AUSA who is privy to that information “to an attorney for the government...for use in connection with any civil forfeiture provision of Federal law.” Rule 1(b) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure defines attorney for the Government as the Attorney General, an authorized assistant of the Attorney General, a U.S. Attorney, or an authorized assistant of a U.S. Attorney. DOJ attorneys may conduct grand jury proceedings when authorized to do so by the Attorney General. Agency or other non-DOJ attorneys may not be present unless they are appointed as special assistants.¹⁴⁴

In *In re Grand Jury Proceedings*,¹⁴⁵ the Third Circuit emphasized that the “term attorneys for the government is restrictive in its application.” “If it had been intended that attorneys for administrative agencies were to have free access to matters occurring before the grand jury,” the court said, “the rule would have so provided.” The Sixth Circuit, addressing the definition of attorney for the Government, found that an attorney for the DOJ Tax Division was not an attorney for the Government because he was not assigned to work on a particular criminal case in any “official” capacity.¹⁴⁶ Seizing agency attorneys and non-DOJ attorneys may obtain grand jury information without a disclosure order if they are appointed under

¹⁴⁴ *Federal Grand Jury Practice* (2000), Chap. 2, Sec.10 at 21.

¹⁴⁵ 309 F.2d 440, 443 (3d Cir. 1962)

¹⁴⁶ *United States v. Forman*, 71 F.3d 1214, 1218 (6th Cir. 1995)

28 U.S.C. § 515 as a Special Assistant U.S. Attorney or Special Assistant to the Attorney General.¹⁴⁷ Otherwise, they are not considered “attorneys for the Government” and cannot receive grand jury information without a court order. As a result, we conclude that section 3322 does not authorize disclosure of grand jury information to a seizing agency counsel for use in connection with an administrative proceeding.

Likewise, we conclude that section 3322 does not authorize disclose to government contractors who are assisting the civil AUSA with the preparation of the civil forfeiture case without a court order. At first glance, disclosure to the contractor paralegal or attorney who is doing the actual drafting of the document that the civil AUSA is planning to file in the civil forfeiture case would seem to fall within the scope of the use that the civil AUSA may make of the grand jury information. If the civil AUSA, for example, may disclose the grand jury information in the publicly filed civil forfeiture complaint, there would seem to be no reason he or she could not first disclose it to the contractor who is drafting the complaint. But the practice in criminal cases militates against this view.

Rule 6(e)(3)(A)(ii) allows for disclosure of grand jury information without judicial order to “such government personnel...as are deemed necessary by an attorney for the government in the performance of such attorney’s duty to enforce federal criminal law.” The term government personnel includes not only members of the prosecution support staff, such as economists, secretaries, paralegals, law clerks, and federal criminal investigators, but also employees of any federal agency who are assisting the government prosecutor.¹⁴⁸ But it does not include contractor personnel used in the asset forfeiture program.

It is true that contract personnel have been considered government personnel for purposes of Rule 6(e) in some instances. In *United States v. Lartey*,¹⁴⁹ the Second Circuit held that a retired IRS agent employed as a contractor to review financial records of the defendant, which were submitted to the grand jury, fell within the government employee exception to the grand jury secrecy rule. Relying on *In re Gruberg*¹⁵⁰ and legislative history,¹⁵¹ the court found that the exceptions to the grand jury rules were adopted to override

¹⁴⁷ *In re Perlin*, 589 F.2d 260, 267 (7th Cir. 1978) (Commodity Futures Trading Commission); *United States v. Bates*, 627 F.2d 349 (D.C. Cir. 1980) (Federal Maritime Commission); *Bradley v. Fairfax*, 634 F.2d 1126, 1129 (8th Cir. 1980) (Parole Commission hearing officer).

¹⁴⁸ *Federal Grand Jury Practice* (2000), Chap. 3, Sec.26, at 57.

¹⁴⁹ 716 F.2d 955 (2d Cir. 1983).

¹⁵⁰ 453 F. Supp 1225, 1233-34 (S.D.N.Y. 1978).

¹⁵¹ S. Rep. No. 354, 95th Cong., 1st Sess. 7 (1977), reprinted in U.S. Code Cong. & Ad. News 527, 530).

decisions highly restrictive of the use of government experts in grand jury investigations. In a similar case, the Tenth Circuit, relying on *Lartey*, held that an expert witness under contract with the Government was government personnel within the class of government personnel to whom disclosure is permissible.¹⁵²

Government contract employees, however, can easily be distinguished from the contractors in *Lartey* and similar cases. The latter were expert witnesses called to review and testify for the Government and provide “expertise not possessed by permanent employees of the United States.”¹⁵³ Contractor employees in the asset forfeiture program perform the work of paralegals, law clerks, and other support staff, which is work already performed by government employees. Nor does the work require a specialized expertise unique to the other work performed by government employees.

Therefore, even in criminal cases, a disclosure order pursuant to Rule 6(e)(3)(C)(I) must be obtained before disclosing grand jury information to a contract employee. That being so, it will remain necessary to obtain a disclosure order before a civil AUSA, who is entitled under section 3322(a) to use grand jury information in a civil forfeiture case, may disclose that information to a government contractor unless the information is first disclosed in a publicly filed document or in open court.

C. Conclusion

Under the CAFRA amendment to section 3322(a), criminal AUSAs may now disclose grand jury information to civil forfeiture AUSAs. This information may be used by the civil AUSAs in their complaints, restraining orders, and any other pleadings filed in a civil forfeiture case, and as evidence at trial, without getting a disclosure order. However, neither criminal nor civil AUSAs may disclose grand jury information to seizing agency attorneys to use in administrative forfeiture proceedings or to government contract employees who may be assisting in the preparation of a civil forfeiture case without obtaining a judicial order.

II. Presenting Forfeiture to the Grand Jury

Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 32.2(a) provides that the court may not enter a judgment of forfeiture in a criminal proceeding “unless the indictment or information contains notice to the defendant that the government will seek the forfeiture of property as part of any sentence in accordance with the applicable statute.” Fed. R. Crim. P. 32.2(a).

¹⁵² *United States v. Anderson*, 778 F.2d 602 (10th Cir. 1985).

¹⁵³ *See Lartey*, 716 F.2d at 964.

Similarly, Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 7(c)(2) provides that no criminal judgment of forfeiture may be entered “unless the indictment or the information provides notice that the defendant has an interest in property that is subject to forfeiture in accordance with the applicable statute.” Fed. R. Crim. P. 7(c)(2).

In light of these rules and related constitutional considerations, what are the best practices for AUSAs to follow in presenting forfeiture allegations and related evidence to the grand jury, and how should the grand jury’s finding of probable cause for forfeiture be memorialized and described to the district court?

A. Summary

Because forfeiture is neither an offense nor an element of an offense, but an indeterminate part of the criminal sentence not limited by any statutory maximum amount, the Constitution does not require that the grand jury find probable cause for forfeiture, either generally or with respect to particular property. Applicable statutes and rules also do not mandate such a finding by the grand jury. For several reasons, however, the best practice is to present evidence to the grand jury that permits it to find probable cause to believe that the requisite nexus exists between the charged offenses and any money judgment amount and particular property alleged to be forfeitable, and to request that such a finding be made. The grand jury’s finding with respect to forfeiture should be memorialized in the indictment, and may then be represented to the court, in support of pretrial restraining orders or for other appropriate purposes, as the grand jury’s probable cause finding on the forfeitability of the listed property and the specified money judgment amount.

B. Discussion

1. The Constitution does not require a grand jury finding of probable cause for forfeiture

The authority to charge crimes in federal court, and the limits to that authority, derive from the Constitution. The Fifth Amendment provides “No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury.” The Grand Jury Clause of the Fifth Amendment serves the “dual function of determining if there is probable cause to believe that a crime has been committed, and of protecting citizens against unfounded criminal prosecutions.” *Branzburg v. Hayes*, 408 U.S. 665, 686-687 (1972). Thus, elements of the criminal offense must be charged in the indictment, submitted to a jury, and proven by the Government beyond a reasonable doubt.

See, e.g., *Jones v. United States*, 526 U.S. 227, 232 (1999); see generally section 11.2, *Federal Grand Jury Practice* (OLE August 2000).

There is no constitutional right to have the grand jury make a probable cause determination as to criminal forfeiture because forfeiture is not an element of a substantive offense. Criminal forfeiture is, instead, part of a criminal sentence. *Libretti v. United States*, 516 U.S. 29, 38-41, 48-49 (1995). Indeed, for that reason, there is no Sixth Amendment right to jury trial on criminal forfeiture. *Id.*, 516 U.S. at 48-49.¹⁵⁴

Libretti is apparently still good law, notwithstanding recent Supreme Court decisions holding that certain facts bearing upon sentencing constitute elements of separate substantive offenses. In *Jones v. United States*, the Court held that the federal car jacking statute, which authorized increased punishment in car jackings resulting in either serious bodily injury or death, created three separate offenses rather than one offense with additional penalty provisions. *Jones*, 526 U.S. at 251-52. In *Apprendi v. New Jersey*, 530 U.S. 466, 490 (2000), the Court held that “other than the fact of a prior conviction, any fact that increases the penalty for a crime beyond the prescribed statutory maximum must be submitted to a jury, and proved beyond a reasonable doubt.”¹⁵⁵ In *Blakely v. Washington*, 124 S. Ct. 2531 (June 24, 2004), the Court applied the *Apprendi* rule to invalidate, under the Sixth Amendment, an upward departure under the Washington State sentencing guidelines system that was imposed on the basis of facts found by the court at sentencing.¹⁵⁶

The Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section (AFMLS) has taken the position that *Blakely* does not apply to criminal forfeiture for the same reasons that have persuaded the courts not to apply *Apprendi*, and because criminal forfeiture is an open-ended, indeterminate part of the defendant’s sentence, in contrast to the determinate sentencing scheme invalidated in *Blakely*. In AFMLS’s view, district courts finding facts bearing on forfeiture are not enhancing a defendant’s sentence: upon a defendant’s conviction, the forfeiture statutes themselves require forfeiture of *all* of the defendant’s assets that fall into

¹⁵⁴ As explained more fully below, the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure provide that in a case where a jury returns a guilty verdict, either the defense or the prosecution may request that the jury also determine whether the Government has established the “requisite nexus” between the property alleged to be forfeitable and the offense committed by the defendant. Fed. R. Crim. P. 32.2(b)(4).

¹⁵⁵ In response to *Jones* and *Apprendi*, the Criminal Division advised prosecutors “Any fact which increases the statutory maximum sentence (other than prior conviction) should be charged in the indictment and proved at trial, and the [trial] jury should be instructed that it is required to find the fact beyond a reasonable doubt.” USA Book, <http://10.173.2.12:80/usao/eousa/ole/usabook/narc/apprendi/0728memo.htm>.

¹⁵⁶ The DOJ has taken the position that *Blakely* does not apply to the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, a question on which the Court has granted certiorari. See USA Book, <http://10.73.2.12/usao/eousa/ole/tables/subject/blakely.htm>.

particular categories—proceeds, facilitating property, property involved in the offense. *See Quick Release*, Vol. 17, No. 7 (July 2004) at 1-2; *see also* Cassella, “Does *Apprendi v. New Jersey* Change the Standard of Proof in Criminal Forfeiture Cases?,” 89 *Kentucky Law Journal* 631 (2001).

The first court of appeals to reach and decide the issue of *Blakely*'s application to criminal forfeiture has agreed with this position. In *United States v. Messino*, 382 F.3d 704 (7th Cir. 2004), the court of appeals explained

We have previously held that *Apprendi* has no effect on criminal forfeiture proceedings because forfeiture provisions have no statutory maximum. *United States v. Vera*, 278 F.3d 672, 673 (7th Cir.2002). *Apprendi*'s statutory maximum was supplied by the statute of conviction; *Blakely*'s is external—the statutory maximum is found not in the criminal code, but instead, the sentencing guidelines. *See [United States v.] Booker*, 375 F.3d 508, 509 [(7th Cir. 2004)]. The criminal forfeiture provisions do not include a statutory maximum; they are open-ended in that *all* property representing proceeds of illegal activity is subject to forfeiture. *Vera*, 278 F.3d at 673; U.S.S.G. § 5E1.4; 21 U.S.C. § 853. Therefore, we conclude that *Blakely*, like *Apprendi*, does not apply to forfeiture proceedings.

382 F.3d at 713. The court of appeals added the following defense of the preponderance standard for criminal forfeiture:

Libretti states that “the nature of criminal forfeiture as an aspect of sentencing compels the conclusion that the right to jury verdict on forfeitability does not fall within the Sixth Amendment’s constitutional protection.” *Libretti v. United States*, 516 U.S. 29, 49 (1995). Furthermore, the Supreme Court’s decision in *Patterson* explains that, “the Due Process Clause requires the prosecution to prove beyond a reasonable doubt all of the elements included in the definition of the offense of which the defendant is charged.” *Patterson v. New York*, 432 U.S. 197, 210 (1977). Since forfeiture is not a separate substantive offense, *Libretti*, 516 U.S. at 39-40, due process is also not offended by a preponderance standard.

Messino, 382 F.3d at 713-14.

Other lower courts have uniformly held that *Blakely*'s predecessor, *Apprendi*, does not apply to criminal forfeiture because forfeiture has no statutory maximum amount. *See United*

States v. Shryock, 342 F.3d 948, 991 (9th Cir. 2003); *United States v. Keene*, 341 F.3d 78, 85 (1st Cir. 2003); *United States v. Gasanova*, 332 F.3d 297, 300-01 (5th Cir. 2003); *United States v. Najjar*, 300 F.3d 466, 485-86 (4th Cir. 2002); *United States v. Corrado*, 227 F.3d 543, 550-51 (6th Cir. 2000) (*Corrado I*); *United States v. Corrado*, 286 F.3d 934, 937 (6th Cir. 2002) (*Corrado II*) (reaffirming, in related opinion, that forfeiture is part of the defendant's sentence); *United States v. Cabeza*, 258 F.3d 1256, 1257 (11th Cir. 2001).

Accordingly, a defendant has no constitutional right to have the grand jury find probable cause for forfeiture.¹⁵⁷

2. Criminal forfeiture statutes and the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure do not require that the grand jury find probable cause for forfeiture

If the Constitution does not require the grand jury to find probable cause for forfeiture, does a statute or rule require it?

Criminal forfeiture statutes typically provide that the court, in imposing sentence on a person convicted of [the predicate] offense..., shall order that the person forfeit to the United States [specified types of property],” 18 U.S.C. § 982(a)(1), or its equivalent, “Any person convicted of a [predicate offense] shall forfeit to the United States [specified types of property],” 21 U.S.C. § 853(a). *See also* 28 U.S.C. § 2461(c) (“If a forfeiture of property is authorized in connection with a violation of an Act of Congress, and any person is charged in an indictment or information with such violation but no specific statutory provision is made for criminal forfeiture upon conviction, the government may include the forfeiture in the indictment or information in accordance with the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, and upon conviction, the court shall order the forfeiture of the property in accordance with... (21 U.S.C. § 853), other than subsection (d) of that section.”)

¹⁵⁷ Of course, the defendant *does* have a right to indictment and a grand jury finding on the elements of the substantive offense(s) that are predicates for forfeiture. As a recent reminder of the importance of charging all applicable substantive legal theories, and the effect upon forfeiture of a failure to do so, *see United States v. Iacaboni*, 363 F.3d 1, 7 (1st Cir. 2004) (reversing forfeiture judgment based on theory that assets had facilitated money laundering with intent to conceal where indictment charged only money laundering with intent to promote criminal activity). A fact that triggers an enhanced forfeiture penalty, greater than the penalty that would otherwise apply to a given offense, would also seem to qualify as an element of the substantive offense within the meaning of *Apprendi*. *See* 18 U.S.C. § 981(a)(1)(G), made applicable in criminal cases by 28 U.S.C. § 2461(c), (providing for forfeiture of *all* assets of any individual, entity, or organization engaged in certain crimes, but only if the crimes are acts of domestic or international terrorism as defined in 18 U.S.C. § 2331; *see also* 18 U.S.C. § 2332b(g)(5) (defining numerous offenses as “Federal crimes of terrorism” if they are “calculated to influence or affect the conduct of government by intimidation or coercion, or to retaliate against government conduct”).

Such criminal forfeiture statutes do not address grand jury process with respect to forfeiture.

The issue is addressed to some extent by the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure. Criminal Rule 32.2(b)(4) provides that “upon a party’s request in a case in which a [trial] jury returns a verdict of guilty, the jury must determine whether the government has established the requisite nexus¹⁵⁸ between the [allegedly forfeitable] property and the offense committed by the defendant.” Fed. R. Crim. P. 32.2(b)(4). If the defendant has a right to have the trial jury determine if the forfeiture nexus exists, then logic (or at least symmetry) would suggest that the defendant might also have a right to a grand jury probable cause finding on that issue.

However, the drafters of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure decided that only the trial jury would make this determination. While Rule 32.2(b)(4) creates a right, upon timely request, to have the trial jury determine whether the forfeiture nexus exists, no such determination is assigned to the grand jury. Both Rule 32.2(a) and Rule 7(c)(2) speak only in terms of the indictment’s providing notice of forfeiture. This distinction is by design. The 1972 Advisory Committee Note to the then-new Rule 7(c)(2) explained the following:

Under the common law, in a criminal forfeiture proceeding the defendant was apparently entitled to notice, trial, and a special jury finding on the factual issues surrounding the declaration of forfeiture which followed his criminal conviction. Subdivision (c)(2) provides for notice. Changes in rules 31 and 32 provide for a special jury finding and for a judgment authorizing the Attorney General to seize the interest or property forfeited.

Thus, the Rules Committee, well aware of common law practice, made a studied decision that Rule 7(c)(2), dealing with the contents of the indictment, would only require notice of

¹⁵⁸ *Nexus*, used in Rule 32.2 and commonly appearing in scholarly forfeiture briefs, opinions, and legal advice memoranda, is from the Latin verb *nectere*, meaning “to tie.” It simply means “a connection, tie, or link.” *Webster’s New World Dictionary* (3d College Ed. 1988). In the forfeiture context, the “requisite nexus” is the connection between the asset and the crime that must be shown to make the property forfeitable, e.g., that the property is proceeds or derived from proceeds of the crime.

forfeiture, while Rule 31, dealing with jury verdicts at trial, required only the trial jury to return a special forfeiture verdict.¹⁵⁹

This construction is supported by the 2000 Advisory Committee note upon the adoption of Rule 32.2(a). The note makes clear that an indictment alleging forfeiture need not itemize any particular forfeitable assets: “As courts have held, subdivision (a) is not intended to require that an itemized list of the property to be forfeited appear in the indictment or information itself.” Advisory Committee Note to 2000 Adoption of Fed. R. Crim. P. 32.2(a) (also noting “trend in case law” interpreting Rule 7(c)(2) as not requiring detailed description of property subject to forfeiture, or defendant’s interest in such property). Because the rules do not require that the indictment list the particular forfeitable property at all, they cannot reasonably be construed as requiring the grand jury to make findings about any such property.

3. Although the constitution, statutes, and rules do not require a grand jury finding of probable cause for forfeiture, the best practice is to request such a finding

Although neither the Constitution, nor the forfeiture statutes, nor the rules require it, it is best to ask the grand jury to find that there is probable cause to believe that the requisite nexus exists between the offenses charged in the indictment and the assets allegedly subject to criminal forfeiture, at least in cases where the indictment identifies specific forfeitable property or a specific amount due as a forfeiture money judgment.

Such a finding serves several useful purposes.

First, the finding provides a basis for restraining directly forfeitable assets identified in the indictment.¹⁶⁰ Section 853(e)(1)(A) provides for entry of a post-indictment restraining order “upon the filing of an indictment or information charging a violation...for which

¹⁵⁹ The decision to require a special forfeiture finding only by the trial jury was made even though the Rules Committee assumed in 1972—contrary to the holding of *Libretti* decades later—that the amount of the interest or property subject to criminal forfeiture was “an element of the offense to be alleged and proved.” Advisory Committee Note to 1972 Amendment to Fed. R. Crim. P. 31(e). The reference to forfeiture was deleted from Rule 31 in 2000 in light of the creation that year of Rule 32.2, covering most aspects of criminal forfeiture procedure. Rule 32.2(b) was specifically intended to replace the special verdict requirement of Rule 31(e), a requirement that generated confusion over the scope of the determination to be made by the trial jury. Rule 32.2(b) provides instead that the court, or the jury upon a request by the Government or the defendant, must determine whether the Government has established the requisite nexus for forfeiture. See Advisory Committee Note to 2000 Adoption of Fed. R. Crim. P. 32.2(b).

¹⁶⁰ Identified substitute assets may also be restrained in the Fourth Circuit. *In re Assets of Billman*, 915 F.2d 916, 919, 920-21 (4th Cir. 1990).

criminal forfeiture may be ordered...and alleging that the property with respect to which the order is sought would, in the event of conviction, be subject to forfeiture under this section.” Section 853(e)(1)(A). The legislative history of section 853 indicates that Congress intended for the grand jury’s finding in support of forfeiture to be given considerable weight:

For the purposes of issuing a restraining order, the probable cause established in the indictment or information is to be determinative of any issue regarding the merits of the government’s case on which the forfeiture is to be based.

S. Rep. No. 225, 98th Cong., 2d Sess. 203 (1984), reprinted in 1984 U.S. Code Cong. & Admin. News 3182, 3386.

Although section 853 provides that the court “may” enter a post-indictment restraining order upon the Government’s application, suggesting a certain amount of discretion, the Supreme Court in *United States v. Monsanto*, 491 U.S. 600, 612-13 (1989), made it clear that Government applications for such orders should generally be granted, ruling that it was error to import “traditional principles of equity” and equitable balancing tests into the process of issuing and reviewing forfeiture restraining orders:

This reading seriously misapprehends the nature of the provisions in question. As we have said, § 853(a) is categorical.... Under § 853(e)(1), the trial court “may” enter a restraining order if the United States requests it, but not otherwise, and it is not required to enter such an order if a bond or some other means to “preserve the availability of property described in subsection (a) of this section for forfeiture” is employed. Thus, § 853(e)(1)(A) is plainly aimed at implementing the commands of § 853(a) and cannot sensibly be construed to give the district court discretion to permit the dissipation of the very property that § 853(a) requires be forfeited upon conviction.

...Whatever discretion Congress gave the district courts in §§ 853(e) and 853(c), that discretion must be cabined by the purposes for which Congress created it: “to preserve the availability of property...for forfeiture.” We cannot believe that Congress intended to permit the effectiveness of the powerful “relation-back” provision of § 853(c), and the comprehensive “any property...any proceeds” language of § 853(a), to be nullified by any other construction of the statute.

This result may seem harsh, but we have little doubt that it is the one that the statute mandates. Section 853(c) states that “[a]ll right, title, and interest in [forfeitable] property...vests in the United States upon the commission of the act giving rise to

forfeiture.” Permitting a defendant to use assets for his private purposes that, under this provision, will become the property of the United States if a conviction occurs cannot be sanctioned.

Monsanto, 491 U.S. at 612-13.

Most circuits deciding the issue have concluded that such post-indictment restraining orders may be entered *ex parte*, with no prerestraint hearing. *United States v. Jones*, 160 F.3d 641, 647-49 (10th Cir. 1998) (pretrial restraints may be imposed *ex parte*); *United States v. Jenkins*, 974 F.2d 32, 35-36 (5th Cir. 1992) (no due process violation where post-indictment restraining order was entered *ex parte*); *United States v. Monsanto*, 924 F.2d 1186, 1192-93 (2d Cir. 1991) (unanimous en banc court on remand from Supreme Court) (strong Government interests and exigent circumstances in forfeiture context justify imposition of pretrial restraints without prerestraint hearing); *United States v. Bissell*, 866 F.2d 1343, 1352 (11th Cir. 1989) (no right to prerestraint hearing, citing *Calero-Toledo v. Pearson Yacht Leasing Co.*, 416 U.S. 663, 683 (1974) [upholding *ex parte* seizure of personal property]); *United States v. Moya Gomez*, 860 F.2d 706, 727-28 (7th Cir. 1989) (quoting legislative history to effect that post-indictment restraining order does not require prior notice or opportunity for hearing); *id.* at 730 (holding statutory scheme unconstitutional only to limited extent that it does not provide for *post-restraint* hearing before trial); *United States v. Spilotro*, 680 F.2d 612, 617 (9th Cir. 1982) (forfeiture under exigent circumstances creates exception to predeprivation hearing rule, citing *Calero-Toledo*); *but see United States v. Melrose East Subdivision*, 357 F.3d 492, 499 n.3 (5th Cir. 2004) (leaving question of prerestraint hearing in criminal cases open, but noting authority that due process does not require prerestraint hearing for post-indictment restraining orders); *United States v. Kirschenbaum*, 156 F.3d 784, 792-93 (7th Cir. 1998) (suggesting in *dicta* that issue whether due process requires prerestraint hearing is “difficult” and “close,” but not reaching issue); *United States v. Riley*, 78 F.3d 367, 370 (8th Cir. 1996) (declaring preconviction restraints “extreme” measures that may only be imposed where Government demonstrates “at a hearing” that defendant is likely guilty and property to be restrained will be subject to forfeiture upon conviction). *Cf. United States v. Hernandez-Escarsega*, 886 F.2d 1560 (9th Cir. 1989) (in deciding whether probable cause supported issuance of search warrant, magistrate judge entitled to consider that grand jury recently returned an indictment against the subjects of the search).

Second, the grand jury’s finding of a probable nexus between the property and the offense may be accorded deference in subsequent proceedings where probable cause is at issue, including challenges to pretrial restraint of assets allegedly needed to pay a defendant’s attorney’s fees. One circuit views the grand jury’s finding of probable cause as

sufficient to satisfy the Government's burden to uphold restraints under section 853(e)(1)(A) until trial. *See United States v. Bollin*, 264 F.3d 391, 421 (4th Cir. 2001) (citing *In re Assets of Billman*, 915 F.2d 915, 919 (4th Cir. 1990)). Although "the indictment itself establishes the merits of the government's case" for purposes of post-indictment restraints, other circuits recognize that in extreme situations, due process may require inquiry even into matters decided by the grand jury. *United States v. Real Property in Waterboro*, 64 F.3d 752, 755-56 (1st Cir. 1995); *see United States v. Monsanto*, 924 F.2d at 1191 (due process requires post-restraint hearing where assets needed for attorney's fees are involved).

The recent trend in the law is to continue post-indictment restraints based upon the grand jury's finding of probable cause unless and until the defendant establishes both (1) an actual need for the restrained assets for, among other important purposes, attorney's fees or living expenses, and (2) that there is some substantial evidence that the assets are not forfeitable. *See United States v. Jones*, 160 F.3d 641, 647-48 (10th Cir. 1998) (defendant challenging pretrial restraint of assets alleged to be forfeitable has initial burden of showing that she has no funds other than the restrained assets to hire private counsel or to pay living expenses, and that there is bona fide reason to believe restraining order should not have been entered); *United States v. Farmer*, 274 F.3d 800, 804-05 (4th Cir. 2001) (defendant entitled to pretrial hearing if property is seized for civil forfeiture and defendant demonstrates no other assets are available; following *Jones*).

Third, the grand jury's finding of probable cause is arguably sufficient to trigger the bar on intervention by third parties set forth in section 853(k)(2). Section 853(k)(2) prevents persons claiming interest in allegedly forfeitable property from

commenc[ing] an action at law or equity against the United States concerning the validity of his alleged interest in the property *subsequent to the filing of an indictment or information alleging that the property is subject to forfeiture* under this section.

21 U.S.C. § 853(k)(2) (emphasis added).

That the indictment alleges that property is subject to forfeiture indicates that the grand jury has made a probable cause determination. If the indictment only gives notice of forfeiture rather than alleging that particular property is forfeitable, and no explicit probable cause finding is included in the notice, then arguably the filing of the indictment would not bar collateral litigation over the property.

Fourth, that the grand jury has found probable cause to believe certain property is forfeitable, or to believe the defendant is liable for a certain forfeiture money judgment amount, increases the impact of the actual notice of forfeitability received by a hypothetical reasonable attorney or third party upon learning of the indictment. Such notice affects the ability of any such persons to continue to receive or retain forfeitable property of the defendant as “bona fide purchasers...reasonably without cause to believe that the property [is] subject to forfeiture.” See sections 853(c) and (n)(6)(B); *United States v. McCorkle*, 321 F.3d 1292, 1295 n.4 (11th Cir. 2003) (attorney may lose bona fide purchaser status as to advance fee received from client “because the client is indicted and the attorney learns additional information about his client’s guilt”); see also *Caplin & Drysdale, Chartered v. United States*, 491 U.S. 617, 632 n.10 (1989) (“the only way a lawyer could be a beneficiary of section 853(n)(6)(B)’s bona fide purchaser provision] would be to fail to read the indictment of his client”).

Fifth, the grand jury’s probable cause finding may help insulate case agents and prosecutors from subsequent liability under *Bivens*¹⁶¹ or the Hyde Amendment.¹⁶² The grand jury’s probable cause determination is at least some evidence tending to negate any inference that an action was commenced without probable cause. See, e.g., *Robinson v. Cattaraugus County*, 147 F.3d 153, 163 (2d Cir. 1998) (in malicious prosecution action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, district court did not err in instructing that grand jury’s probable cause determination was evidence that trial jury could consider in deciding whether prosecution was commenced without probable cause).

Finally, the practice of presenting forfeiture evidence to the grand jury, listing particular forfeitable assets in the indictment, and requesting that the grand jury find probable cause for forfeiture of those assets should help to defend indictments against future challenge if *Blakely* is ultimately construed or extended to apply to criminal forfeiture and to require that the facts supporting forfeiture of particular assets be charged in the indictment and proven to the trial jury beyond a reasonable doubt.

For all of these reasons, prosecutors should ask the grand jury to find probable cause to believe that the requisite nexus exists between the crimes charged and any particular property or money judgment amount alleged to be forfeitable.

¹⁶¹ *Bivens v. Six Unknown Named Agents of Federal Bureau of Narcotics*, 403 U.S. 388 (1971).

¹⁶² Pub. L. No. 105-119, § 617, 111 Stat. 2440, 2519 (1997) (reprinted in 18 U.S.C. § 3006A, historical and statutory notes).

4. It is not necessary to ask the grand jury to determine the defendant's interest in forfeitable property

A separate issue is whether the prosecutor should also ask the grand jury to find probable cause to believe that “the defendant (or some combination of defendants [charged] in the case) had an interest in the property that is forfeitable under the applicable statute.” *See* Fed. R. Crim. P. 32.2(c)(2). Unlike the forfeiture nexus, this issue is not even presented to the *trial* jury. Indeed, the court itself only reaches the issue of the defendant's interest in forfeitable property in cases where no ancillary claims to the property are filed. Moreover, unlike the nexus finding, which serves the various useful purposes outlined above, a finding of probable cause to believe that the defendant has an interest in particular property serves no comparable purpose in most cases. Therefore, it does not make sense to present this issue to the grand jury.¹⁶³

Nonetheless, in cases where the defendant has attempted to conceal an interest in property subject to forfeiture, it may be important to the grand jury's understanding of the case—and its ability to make necessary findings as to elements of charged offenses—to present evidence concerning the defendant's actual, although hidden, interest in forfeitable property. For example, in a case where the defendant acquires or transfers property in such a way as to “conceal or disguise the nature, the location, the source, the ownership, or the control” of criminal proceeds in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1956(a)(1)(B)(i), the prosecutor may be required to present evidence to the grand jury tending to show that the defendant in fact had ownership or control of the property involved in such a transaction.

In any event, because only property of the defendant can be forfeited in a criminal case, the prosecutor should make reasonable efforts to establish that any property alleged to be forfeitable, and particularly property sought to be restrained as forfeitable, is property of the defendants within the meaning of the applicable forfeiture statutes, including section 853(c), which voids purported post-crime transfers of forfeitable property other than to bona fide purchasers for value reasonably without cause to believe the property was subject to forfeiture.

¹⁶³ The present wording of Fed. R. Crim. P. 7(c)(2), to the effect that no criminal judgment of forfeiture may be entered unless the indictment or the information provides notice “that the defendant *has an interest in* property” subject to forfeiture, might raise doubts about this conclusion, if not for the Advisory Committee Notes to Rule 7(c)(2) explaining that the rule is meant to be read together with Rule 32.2, which provides that no findings need be made with respect to the defendant's interest in forfeitable property until after entry of a preliminary order of forfeiture, and even then only by the court, and only if no ancillary claims are filed. *See* Advisory Committee Notes to Fed. R. Crim. P. 7 (2000) (changes made to reflect Rule 32.2), (2002) (subsequent changes to Rule 7(c)(2) intended to be stylistic only).

5. Presenting forfeiture evidence to the grand jury

Just as most trial evidence relating to forfeiture is usually best, and most easily, presented as an integral part of the overall presentation of the Government's case-in-chief, most grand jury evidence bearing on forfeiture is best, and most easily, presented as an integral part of the evidence establishing probable cause to charge the underlying criminal offenses. Questions about assets and their links to criminal activity should be asked of all witnesses likely to have such knowledge, during both lengthy grand jury investigations and the more abbreviated presentations appropriate to cases investigated primarily outside of the grand jury.

When this practice is followed, a case agent or other government witness can be brought in shortly before an indictment is returned to summarize previous testimony and documentary evidence bearing on forfeiture. In addition to reminding the grand jury of such previously presented evidence, the summary witness should be prepared to present any additional documents and information necessary to calculate the amount of any proposed forfeiture money judgment and identify and describe any particular assets to be alleged as forfeitable in the proposed indictment. It is usually best to have previously marked asset-related documents—such as certified copies of public real estate, business, and vehicle registration and title records, authentic photographs of major assets, and stipulated or authenticated bank and other financial account statements—available for examination by the grand jury during its consideration of the proposed indictment, including the forfeiture allegations.

Even if forfeiture has not been an ongoing focus of the investigation, the evidence necessary to establish the required link between the charged offenses and the particular forfeitable assets to be listed in the indictment can usually be presented by a government agent witness in a simple and straightforward manner, not requiring much grand jury time. The focus in such a presentation, as in the summary presentation described above, should be upon (1) the facts that identify the assets with particularity, and (2) the facts that make the assets forfeitable under all applicable theories of forfeiture—e.g., facts indicating that the assets “constitute, or were derived from, proceeds” of the offenses; that the assets were “used, or intended to be used, in any manner or part, to commit, or to facilitate the commission” of the offenses; that the assets constitute “property, real or personal, involved in” the offenses or “property traceable to such property,” etc. *See*, e.g., section 853(a) and 18 U.S.C. § 982(a)(1).

6. Instructing the grand jury on forfeiture

If it is consistent with local practice to do so, the prosecutor may explain to the grand jury preliminarily that (1) forfeiture is not a substantive offense, or an element of an offense, but rather a required part of the punishment imposed upon conviction for certain criminal offenses; (2) the forfeiture allegations in the proposed indictment will put the defendant on notice that the Government is seeking to forfeit certain property, or types of property, upon the defendant's conviction; and (3) the Government will seek to forfeit substitute assets of the defendant if some act or omission of the defendant makes the directly forfeitable property unavailable.¹⁶⁴

The prosecutor should then instruct the grand jury with respect to the links that must be found to exist between the charged offenses and the assets alleged to be forfeitable. Generally, this may be done by reading and explaining the pertinent parts of the applicable forfeiture statutes, explaining how each listed asset falls within one or more of the forfeiture provisions, and explaining the basis for calculating or estimating the amount to be alleged as a forfeiture money judgment.

Finally, if the grand jurors have no questions about the forfeiture instructions, the prosecutor should ask the grand jury, during its process of considering the entire indictment, to find probable cause to believe that the listed assets have the required links to the charged offenses and that there is a factual basis for the alleged money judgment amount.

7. Memorializing and describing the grand jury's probable cause finding

As explained in section II.B.3 at page 130, there are several good reasons for asking the grand jury to find probable cause for forfeiture of particular assets. If the grand jury was actually asked to make such a finding in the course of its deliberations on the indictment, prosecutors may properly represent to the court, in connection with an application for a post-indictment restraining order or otherwise, that the grand jury has found probable cause to

¹⁶⁴ Some districts have found it useful to cover these points in an introductory presentation to the grand jury outlining forfeiture law and procedures, as part of the grand jury's orientation during the first few weeks after a new grand jury is empaneled. This can be done by the district's forfeiture AUSA, who is in the best position to cover these issues and to address the grand jurors' questions. The orientation session also provides the prosecutor with the opportunity to explain to the grand jury that forfeiting the defendant's interest in a piece of property does not end the matter, but that an ancillary proceeding is held after a preliminary order of forfeiture is entered to allow third parties who claim to have an interest in the property to petition the court to establish that interest. While that issue is of no direct concern to the grand jurors in their deliberations, it is helpful that they understand that the Government is not seeking to forfeit the property of owners with superior interests to that of the defendant or property belonging to innocent bona fide purchasers of the property.

believe that the requisite forfeiture nexus exists with respect to the money judgment amount and any other property listed in the indictment as forfeitable.

To make the grand jury's probable cause finding readily accessible for seeking and defending pretrial restraints and the other purposes described in section II.B.3 at page 130, it is a good practice to memorialize the finding in the indictment itself. There are several ways to accomplish this.

The grand jury finding as to forfeitability may be set forth in the indictment in a way that simply parallels the presentation of the other substantive charges and allegations in the indictment as to which the grand jury also found probable cause. Practices vary from district to district with respect to whether phrases like "The grand jury charges" appear only at the beginning of the indictment or repeatedly, e.g., "The grand jury further charges", at the beginning of each count. In either case, introducing the forfeiture allegations in the same way as the substantive counts makes it reasonably plain on the face of the indictment that the grand jury has made a probable cause determination with respect to the entire indictment, including the forfeiture allegations.

In a district where there is frequent litigation over pretrial restraints, the prosecutor may wish to give special emphasis to the grand jury's finding of probable cause for forfeiture of particular assets by making that finding explicit in the text of the indictment: "The grand jury further finds probable cause to believe that upon conviction of the offense[s] in violation of _____ set forth in Count[s] [##] of this Indictment/Information, the defendant[s], [NAME(S)], shall forfeit to the United States of America, pursuant to ___ U.S.C. ___, all [insert statutory language], including, without limitation, \$ _____ in United States currency and the following other particular assets: ____." If this approach is used, it should be used consistently to avoid any negative implication that a grand jury returning an indictment with no such explicit finding did *not* find probable cause for forfeiture.

In districts that use the convention of merely giving notice of forfeiture in indictments rather than alleging forfeiture in forfeiture allegations or charging forfeiture in a forfeiture count, it is best practice to include an explicit probable cause finding of forfeitability in the notice section. Doing so will counter any possible implication or argument that the forfeiture notice was merely appended to the indictment without grand jury consideration and determination of probable cause.

Appendix A

U.S. Marshals Service Policy, Preseizure Planning Guide, Trustees and Monitors, Land and Natural Resources, Sample Notice

October 9, 2003

Policy for Preseizure Real Property Seizures¹

MEMORANDUM TO: All Chief Deputy United States Marshals
All Administration Offices
All Asset Forfeiture Unit Chiefs

FROM: Katherine K Deoudes /s/
Chief
Asset Forfeiture Office

SUBJECT: Policy for Pre-Seizure Real Property Services

To clarify the conditions under which the United States Marshal Services (USMS) can or should order lien searches and/or appraisals **before a CATS number has been assigned to a particular asset**, *i.e.*, during the *pre-indictment* pre-seizure planning stage of a criminal or civil investigation, the following policy guidance is provided. These services are not intended to become a substitute for appraisals or title searches done by investigative agencies during the developmental stages of a forfeiture investigation. Rather, USMS is offering these services to investigative agencies and their respective U.S. Attorneys Offices as they make a final determination as to whether (1) sufficient equity exist to justify forfeiture, and (2) there is a sufficient nexus between the real property and the criminal activity under investigation. If you have further questions about either the policy or the procedures to be followed in ordering either service, please call Kim Butler, Real Property Program Manager, at (202) 307-9281.

¹ The following is a reprint of the U.S. Marshals Policy for preseizure real property services, dated October 9, 2003.

Purpose of the policy

The policy is intended to (1) promote uniformity in appraised values of real property assets taken into government custody, and (2) encourage the seizing agency to consult USMS about assets targeted for forfeiture during the pre-seizure planning stage of and investigation.

What services are covered by this policy?

Through the national contract with Fidelity National Asset Management Solutions, the Asset Forfeiture Office (AFO) may order the following services:

1. Lien search.

- a. Definition. A lien search is a “snap shot” of the property’s current status. The lien search includes a listing of all relevant information belonging to the current record titleholder of the property including: deeds, existing liens, judgements, mortgages, tax history, and any *lis pendens* (a notice filed with the county recorder or registrar of deeds that serves as a warning to all persons that title to the property is in litigation).
- b. Requirements. USMS must provide a minimum two of the following: Assessor’s Parcel Number (APN), full address including zip code, owner’s name, and/or full legal description. Of these four items of information, the first two are the most useful, while the legal description is least preferred.

2. Appraisals.

- a. Definition. An appraisal is the process of developing and communicating an opinion of value, usually the market value of a piece of property. The market value is the most probable price at which a property would be bought or sold by a knowledgeable person.
- b. Due to sensitive nature of ongoing investigation, AFO recommends that only a Broker’s Price Opinion (BPO) ordered for pre-seizure purposes. A BPO is a report written by a broker familiar with the area where the property is located containing an estimated value determined by comparables.

3. Other title products if necessary. The most common services offered under this category is referred to as a “chain-of-title.” Although this can become a very expensive depending upon the asset’s location, ascertaining the subject property’s history of vested titled owners is useful in cases involving money laundering during a specific time frame, or when the target of the investigation seeks to hide his interest through multiple nominees or a “straw man.” However, oftentimes this service is not required because the target’s interest is disclosed in the lien search or its accompanying back-up documentation. NOTE: All chain-of-title requests must be approved by Kim Butler.

When will USMS order real property services on behalf of the investigative agency?

A. District Utilizing the Fidelity Contract

USMS districts currently participating in the Fidelity pilot are listed below:

1. Northern California
2. Colorado
3. Connecticut
4. Middle Florida
5. Southern Florida (Transition District)
 - a. Southern Georgia
 - b. Northern Alabama
 - c. Western Kentucky
 - d. Middle North Carolina
6. Northern Georgia
7. Middle Georgia
8. Central Illinois
9. Northern Louisiana
10. Maryland (Transition District)
 - a. Delaware
 - b. Western Missouri
 - c. Western Virginia
 - d. Western Michigan
11. New Jersey
12. Southern New York
13. Eastern North Carolina
14. Puerto Rico
15. Southern Texas (Transition District)
 - a. Northern Mississippi
 - b. Western Louisiana
16. Eastern Virginia

NOTE: A "Transition District" will place orders under the Fidelity contract for those additional districts listed, and become the "custodial district" despite the property's location in another district.

Before contemplating assisting an investigative agency (IA) by providing them with an appraisal or title search during the investigative stage of a forfeiture case, the IA must consult the USMS Asset Forfeiture Unit in the district where the asset is located. After reviewing the information provided by the IA, the custodial district has the discretion to order pre-seizure real property services.

B. District Utilizing Local Contractors/Vendors

If the custodial district is not participation in the Fidelity pilot program, the following conditions must be met before AFO will order pre-seizure real property services:

1. The IA must brief the local USMS Asset Forfeiture Unit on the likelihood of the asset's forfeiture. If there are no asset forfeiture personnel dedicated at the local USMS District office, the IA may call Kim Butler at AFO for assistance.
2. If the custodial district has a local title services contract in place, the USMS district office may, at its discretion, order the appropriate products.
3. If the case involves the forfeiture of multiple assets of all types (real and personal property, businesses and/or bank accounts) in multiple districts involving several different agencies, *e.g.*, an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) case, products may be ordered through the Fidelity contract directly from AFO. Under these circumstances, please contact Peter Madriñan, AFO's Field Operations Pre-Seizure Planning Coordinator, at (202) 353-3217.

Asset Forfeiture Unit Chiefs: Please disseminate this memorandum to the appropriate personnel on your staff.

cc: All United States Marshals

Introduction

This Pre-Seizure Planning Guide is intended to provide guidance and checklists to be utilized by all components participating in the Department of Justice, Asset Forfeiture Program. The goal of these checklists is to aide in anticipating and making informed decisions about what property is being seized; how and when it is going to be seized; and, most importantly, whether it should be seized.

The checklists that are included in this guide are:

Pre-Seizure Planning Summary Sheet: This sheet is a summary of all of the assets involved in a given case. One Summary Sheet should be completed per case.

Real Property Checklist: A separate Real Property Checklist should be completed for each piece of real property. A separate Net Equity Worksheet accompanies the Real Property Checklist.

Business Checklist: A Business Checklist should be completed for each business being considered for forfeiture. The complex nature of business forfeitures may make it necessary to include information that is not explicitly mentioned in the checklist.

Conveyances: A Conveyance Checklist should be completed for the seizure of multiple and/or unique conveyances. A Net Equity Worksheet for conveyances is also included.

Personal Property: A Personal Property Checklist should be completed for unique or complex assets such as livestock, furniture/household items, precious items, collectables, and fine arts.

Given that each case is unique, you may find that the information included in these checklists do not apply to all assets in all cases, more or less information may be necessary. Therefore, use these checklists as a starting point, adding any additional information that may be useful in the forfeiture process.

The Asset Forfeiture Office

PRE-SEIZURE PLANNING SUMMARY SHEET

Date _____

POINTS OF CONTACT:

AUSA _____ Phone # _____
Asset Forfeiture AUSA _____ Phone # _____
Agency _____ Agent _____ Phone # _____
DUSM _____ Phone # _____

CASE INFORMATION:

Case Identifier: _____
Originating District: _____
Other Districts involved: _____
Task Force Case: YES NO If yes, participating agencies _____
Adoptive Case: YES NO
If yes, contact name _____ Phone # _____
Type of Case: Civil Criminal
Proposed date of seizure / Post & Walk _____
Will a TRO or Protective Order be Issued: YES NO
Proposed date of indictment/complaint/warrant of arrest in rem: _____
Is a draft copy available? YES NO *If yes, obtain a copy.*
Defendant's Name: _____
Defendant's Status: Fugitive YES NO
Type of Case: Drugs Money Laundering RICO
Other (describe) _____

ASSET INFORMATION:

Number of assets, by category, targeted for seizure – *once identified, refer to applicable form:*
_____ Real Estate _____ Business(es) _____ Personal Property _____ Other
Number of personal properties by category targeted for seizure:
_____ Vehicles _____ Aircraft _____ Cash (approx.) \$ _____
_____ Art _____ Jewelry _____ Financial Instr.
_____ Vessels _____ Collectibles _____ Other (describe)

Describe: _____

Case Identifier: _____

PRE-SEIZURE PLANNING QUESTIONNAIRE REAL PROPERTY

Complete one form per property

TYPE OF REAL PROPERTY:

- Single Family Detached Residence Apartment/Condo Unit
 Apartment/Condo Building Commercial (*type of use*)
 Vacant/Undeveloped Land Other (*describe*) _____

Location/Address: _____

Legal Description: (*attach copy if available*) _____

Title Owner: Name: _____ Phone#: _____

Address: _____

O & E/Title Report/Appraisal available? Yes No *If yes, obtain a copy.*

Has a Lis Pendens been filed? Yes No

Items to be procured by USMS: Drive-By Appraisal Title Report/Abstract
 Full Appraisal (*Only if full, unrestricted access to property is available and the actions taken by the appraisers or USMS personnel will not inhibit or reveal the investigation*).

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS:

Is there any available information that will assist the USMS regarding personal safety issues during seizure operations (pets, fences, alarms, water hazards, booby traps, children, etc.)?

REAL PROPERTY (CONT'D.)

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS:

Property Condition: Excellent Good Fair Poor

Photos Available: Yes No

Potential Contamination: Yes No

If yes, what contaminants? _____

If yes, has anyone been contacted to provide an assessment of the property? Yes No

Company Name: _____ Phone # _____

Year Built: _____

If pre-1960 and residential, has lead-based paint assessment been completed? Yes No

If yes, Company Name: _____ Phone # _____

Date _____

SPECIFIC CONCERNS *(describe briefly if applicable):*

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming pool | <input type="checkbox"/> Safe on premises | <input type="checkbox"/> Structural defects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Laboratories | <input type="checkbox"/> Historical site | <input type="checkbox"/> Incomplete construction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Live stock | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmentally protected | <input type="checkbox"/> Hazardous chemicals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other structures | <input type="checkbox"/> Association fees | <input type="checkbox"/> Known code violations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Underground tanks | <input type="checkbox"/> Other personal property | <input type="checkbox"/> Other potential liabilities |

Describe: _____

CONTENTS OF PROPERTY:

Are contents being seized? Yes No

If no, have arrangements been made to remove or destroy? Yes No

Is an inventory required? Yes No

Additional comments on contents : _____

REAL PROPERTY (CONT'D.)

OCCUPANCY:

Is the property occupied? Yes No If yes, Owners Renters

Occupants, if allowed to remain occupied, provide name, phone, and identifier (i.e., DOB, SSN)

Name: _____ Phone #: _____ Identifier: _____

Will the defendant(s) be arrested simultaneously at the time of seizure? Yes No

Following the arrest of the defendant(s), will the property be left vacant? Yes No

General remarks: _____

NET EQUITY *(If info is available, complete Net Equity Worksheet):*

Does the asset meet the minimum net equity threshold value? Yes No Unknown

If no, what law enforcement benefits are to be derived from the seizure? _____

FOLLOW-UP INFORMATION:

Will the AUSA provide or give a press release? Yes No

Next meeting scheduled? Yes No If yes, Date: _____ Time: _____

Location of next meeting: _____

Prepared by: Printed name: _____ Title: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Case AUSA's concurrence, review and approval:

Printed name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

REAL PROPERTY NET EQUITY WORKSHEET

Name of Case: U.S. v. _____

District: _____ Court Case: (Docket number) _____

1.	a. Appraised value (Date of appraisal _____) minus	\$ _____
	b. Expenses ¹ equals plus	(_____) \$ _____
	c. Income equals	\$ _____
	d. Net value	\$ _____
2.	a. Net value minus	\$ _____
	b. Liens ² equals	(_____) \$ _____
	c. U.S. equity	\$ _____
3.	a. U.S. equity divided by	\$ _____
	b. Appraised value equals	\$ _____
	c. Percentage of U.S. equity	_____ %

¹Includes advertising, maintenance (includes management fees of \$ _____/month x 12 months), sales commission, sellers' expenses to close, etc.

²Includes the total of all items, principal and interest from the date of seizure to the date this worksheet is completed.

Prepared by:

Printed Name: _____ Title: _____ Date: _____

AUSA's Signature: _____ Date: _____

PRE-SEIZURE PLANNING QUESTIONNAIRE BUSINESS

Complete one form per business

BUSINESS IDENTIFIERS:

Type of Business (i.e., restaurant, warehouse, automobile dealership, etc.): _____

Legal or Corporate Name: _____

Address: _____ Phone #: _____

Business name (Doing business as): _____

Address: _____ Phone #: _____

Is the business: Corporation Partnership Sole Proprietorship
 Joint Venture Limited Liability Company (LLC)

Describe: _____

If applicable, list all shareholders, officers, and directors:

Name: _____ Phone #: _____ Position: _____

Name: _____ Phone #: _____ Position: _____

Name: _____ Phone #: _____ Position: _____

Is business privately or publicly owned? Private Public

Is the business currently operating or idle? Operating Idle

If operating, will the business continue to operate upon the arrest of the defendant(s)?

Yes No

Status of registration with the State: Active Inactive Defunct Other

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS:

Is there any available information that will assist the USMS regarding personal safety issues during seizure operations (guard dogs, fences, weak floors, water hazards, booby traps, security personnel, open pits, heavy machinery, etc.)? List or describe:

BUSINESS (CONT'D.)

ASSET INFORMATION:

Are we seizing the legal entity? (the entire corporation with assets and liabilities) Yes No

If no, what assets are targeted for seizure? _____

Upon seizure, will the government hold a majority interest? Yes No

If not, how much? _____%

Will the business require a monitor or the appointment of a trustee? Yes No Unknown

Is the business located on leased or owned property? Leased Owned Unknown

Real Property Lessor(s) or owner(s) :

Name(s): _____ Phone#: _____

Address: _____

Current status of lease/mortgage: Current Behind

If in arrears, how many months?: _____

Will the real estate be seized as part of the business? Yes No

Type of Structure:

Stand alone building of steel and block construction

Attached structure to residence

Strip mall store

Warehouse

Other (describe): _____

Condition of Structure:

Excellent Good Fair Poor

Size of Structure: Approx. _____ Sq. footage

Known structural defects or immediate repairs identified: List and describe: _____

BUSINESS (CONT'D.)

ASSET INFORMATION (Cont'd.):

Specific concerns:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hazardous materials on site | <input type="checkbox"/> Incomplete construction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Potential contaminants | <input type="checkbox"/> Known code violations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Underground tanks | <input type="checkbox"/> Type of safes/security systems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Operable fire extinguisher system | <input type="checkbox"/> Other potential liabilities (describe) |

Describe Specific Concerns : _____

Will the locks require replacement? Yes No

Are contents of business leased or owned? Leased Owned Unknown

Real Property Lessor(s) or owner(s)

Name(s): _____ Phone#: _____

Address: _____

BUSINESS RECORDS:

List all business licenses and indicate if they are current:

Tax License: _____ Current Expired

License: _____ Current Expired

License: _____ Current Expired

Records Custodian: _____ Phone # _____

Address: _____

Corporate Attorney: _____ Phone # _____

Address: _____

Corporate Accountant: _____ Phone # _____

Address: _____

Are there any records that have been subpoenaed that will assist in determining the financial status of the business (tax returns, financial reports, etc.)? Yes No

If yes, are they available for review by the USMS? Yes No

Obtain availability date for review by the USMS: _____

Has a lien/judgment search been initiated? Yes No If yes, obtain a copy.

BUSINESS (CONT'D.)

BUSINESS RECORDS (Cont'd.):

Has a Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) search been conducted? Yes No

Is there an existing budget (balance/income statements)? Yes No

Location of existing operating/maintenance/escrow capital accounts?

List all banks and account numbers:

Bank: _____ Account # _____

Bank: _____ Account # _____

Bank: _____ Account # _____

Does the business have appropriate insurance coverage? (fire, flood, general liability, etc.):

Yes No Explain: _____

Is the business in compliance with all tax reporting requirements? (i.e., Federal, State, SS):

Federal: Yes No Explain: _____

State: Yes No Explain: _____

SS: Yes No Explain: _____

Other: Yes No Explain: _____

Will the business remain to be viable and productive post-arrest of defendant(s)?

Yes No

Post-arrest of defendant(s), will the business require government capital contribution in order to continue operations?

Yes No

Is there any known pending litigation against the business, its principals, or its employees?

Yes No If yes, explain: _____

DEFENDANT AND/OR EMPLOYEE INFORMATION:

Number of part-time and full-time employees? _____ Full-time _____ Part-time

Are the employees unionized? Yes No

If yes, name of union: _____

If yes, when will the next contract be negotiated? Date: _____

BUSINESS (CONT'D.)

DEFENDANT AND/OR EMPLOYEE INFORMATION (Cont'd.):

Will the defendant(s) be arrested simultaneously at the time of seizure? Yes No

Following the arrest of the defendant(s), will the property be left vacant? Yes No

FOLLOW-UP INFORMATION:

Next meeting scheduled? Yes No

If yes, obtain Date: _____ Time: _____

Will media coverage or public knowledge of the seizure effect negatively on the operating business?

Yes No

Will the seizure impact the local economy or population? (i.e., major community employer):

Yes No If yes, (*indicate which*) what efforts can be made to minimize this effect?

Will the AUSA provide or give a press release? Yes No

If yes, obtain name and phone number of press information officer:

Name: _____ Phone # _____

Location of next meeting: _____

NOTE: THIS QUESTIONNAIRE, ONCE COMPLETED, MUST BE FAXED TO YOUR ASSET FORFEITURE OFFICE REPRESENTATIVE.

Prepared by:

Printed name: _____ Title: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Case AUSA's concurrence, review and approval:

Printed name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Case Identifier: _____

PRE-SEIZURE PLANNING QUESTIONNAIRE CONVEYANCES

USMS District: _____ CATS Number: _____
Seizing Agency: _____ Seizure Date: _____
USMS Custody Date: _____ Seizure Location: _____

Type of Forfeiture: Administrative Civil Criminal

CONVEYANCE DESCRIPTION:

Type: Vehicle Vessel Aircraft Other
Make _____ VIN/Serial/TAG: _____
Model: _____ State of Registration: _____
Plate/Tag Number/Tail Number: _____
Conveyance Condition: Good Fair Poor Scrap
Is the conveyance operating? Yes No
For Aircraft: Are logbooks present? Yes No

VALUE INFORMATION:

Seizing Agency Appraisal: \$ _____ USMS (NADA Loan): \$ _____
First Lienholder: _____ Second Lienholder: _____
Address: _____ Address: _____
Amount: \$ _____ Amount: \$ _____

POINTS OF CONTACT:

Seizing Agent: _____ Phone #: _____
AUSA: _____ Phone #: _____
Other: _____ Phone #: _____

CUSTODY:

USMS Contractor: _____ Phone #: _____
State/Local Agency: _____ Phone #: _____
Seizing Agency: _____ Phone #: _____
Other: _____ Phone #: _____

Is Equitable Sharing Anticipated? Yes No
Placing into Official Use? Yes No

Case Identifier: _____

CONVEYANCES NET EQUITY WORKSHEET

CATS ID #: _____

Docket #: _____

Vehicle Vessel Aircraft Other

Year: _____ Make: _____

Model: _____ Color: _____

VIN #: _____

Serial #: _____

Tail #: _____

Location of Hidden Trap(s) - if any: _____

Appraised value (Date of Appraisal: _____) \$ _____

minus

Cost of Storage per month \$ _____ X 9 - \$(_____)

Lien¹ - \$(_____)

Misc. Costs (prep for sale/repairs)² - \$(_____)

Costs to Disable/Seal Hidden Traps - \$(_____)

equals

Total Net Equity = \$ _____

\$ _____ / \$ _____ = _____ %

Total Net Equity Divided by Appraised Value Equals % of U.S. Equity

¹ Includes total of all liens, principal and interest from the dates of seizure to the date this worksheet is completed.

² Includes maintenance and disposal expenses, e.g., advertising, sales commission, property manager salary, etc.

Preparer's Name: _____ Title: _____

Preparer's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Case Identifier: _____

PRE-SEIZURE PLANNING QUESTIONNAIRE PERSONAL PROPERTY

USMS District: _____ CATS Number: _____
Seizing Agency: _____ Seizure Date: _____
USMS Custody Date: _____ Seizure Location: _____

Type of Forfeiture: Administrative Civil Criminal

TYPE OF PROPERTY:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Animal | <input type="checkbox"/> Chemical/Hazardous Materials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electronic Equipment | <input type="checkbox"/> Explosives/Firearms |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Furniture/Household Items | <input type="checkbox"/> Gambling Devices |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grow Equipment | <input type="checkbox"/> Heavy Machinery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Precious Items | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>describe</i>) _____ |

Condition: Excellent Good Fair Poor

VALUE INFORMATION:

Appraised Value: \$ _____
Monthly Cost (storage): \$ _____
First Lienholder: _____ Second Lienholder: _____
Address: _____ Address: _____
Amount: \$ _____ Amount: \$ _____

POINTS OF CONTACT:

Seizing Agent: _____ Phone #: _____
AUSA: _____ Phone #: _____
Other: _____ Phone #: _____
Custodian: _____ Phone #: _____

Is Equitable Sharing Anticipated? Yes No
Placing into Official Use? Yes No

PERSONAL PROPERTY NET EQUITY WORKSHEET

Name of Case: U.S. v. _____
District: _____
Court Case: (Docket number) _____
CATS #: _____

Identification of Personal Property: _____

1.	a. Appraised value (Date of appraisal _____) minus b. Expenses ¹ equals c. Net value	\$ _____ <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 150px; margin: 0 auto;">()</div> \$ _____
2.	a. Net value minus b. Liens ² equals c. U.S. equity	\$ _____ <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 150px; margin: 0 auto;">()</div> \$ _____
3.	a. U.S. equity divided by b. Appraised value equals c. Percentage of U.S. equity	\$ _____ <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 150px; margin: 0 auto;">\$ _____</div> _____%

¹ Includes maintenance and disposal expenses, e.g., advertising, sales commission, property manager salary, etc.
² Includes total of all liens, principal and interest from the date of seizure to the date this worksheet is completed.

Prepared by:
Printed Name: _____ Title: _____ Date: _____
Supervisory Review: _____

Resources Available Through the USMS Asset Forfeiture Office

Telephone No. (202) 307-9221

Facsimile No. (202) 307-5020

BUSINESS RELATED SERVICES:

- Business Evaluations
- Internal Controls Evaluations
- Management Reviews
- Asset Valuation
- Business Management
- Drafting Court Orders
- Interpreting Court Orders
- Business Monitors / Trustees
- Formal Business Appraisals
- Operational Reviews
- Accounting Overview & Reporting
- Asset, Business Liquidation
- Cash Planning/Budgets
- Cash Flow Analysis
- Identification of Straw Owners
- Manage Trade Creditor and Inquires

REAL PROPERTY RELATED SERVICES:

- Correcting Complex Title Problems
- Title Report Analysis
- Environmental Report Analysis
- Identification of Straw Owners
- Drafting Court Orders
- Interpreting Court Orders
- Drafting Contracts, Leases, Agreements
- Appraisal Analysis
- Market Value Analysis
- Management and Disposition of Commercial Properties
- Coordination of National Auctions
- Negotiation of Complex Sales
- Brokerage Agreements for all Types of Properties

UNIQUE AND COMPLEX ASSETS:

- The Asset Forfeiture Office offers technical support and assistance in the area of unique and complex assets.

Checklist Glossary

Abstract of Title: A complete summary of all consecutive grants, conveyances, wills, records, and judicial proceedings that affect the title to a specific parcel of real property, together with a statement of all recorded liens and encumbrances affecting the property and their present status.

Administrative Declaration of Forfeiture: An administrative ruling issued by the investigative agency processing an administrative forfeiture, following publication of notice of intent to forfeit, declaring that no claims to the property had been received and that the seized property has therefore been forfeited to the United States. Such a declaration has the force and effect of a court order.

Administrative Forfeiture: The process by which property may be forfeited to the United States by the investigative agency that seized it, without judicial involvement.

Appraisal: An opinion of the value of the property prepared by a licensed appraiser.

Business: Usually a commercial or mercantile activity engaged in as a means of livelihood; a commercial or sometimes an industrial enterprise.

Case Identifier: The primary case identifier should be the CATS identification number, if one exists. If one does not exist, the case identifier may be the case name.

Civil Order of Forfeiture: In a civil case, the court order issued following a judgment for the United States declaring that the property, which is the named defendant in the case, is forfeited. The civil order of forfeiture affects “the whole world,” including unknown claimants. (See also final order of forfeiture.)

Collectible: An object that is collected by fanciers; especially one other than such traditionally collectable items as art, stamps, coins and antiques.

Commercial Real Property: Commercial real property is any vacant land that is zoned for commercial or industrial use; a structure utilized for operating a business; or a residential structure with four or more units.

Contamination: The process by which something is polluted by the infusion of or contact with dirt or foulness from an outside source (e.g., ground water contaminated by industrial wastes).

Conveyances: Aircraft, vehicles, vessels and other vehicle of transportation capable of conveying persons or property. See 21 U.S.C. § 881(a)(4).

Corporation: A legal entity created under State law, consisting of an association of one or more individuals but regarded under the law as having an existence and personality separate from such individuals. The main characteristics of a corporation are its perpetual

existence (that is, the corporation exists indefinitely and only ceases to exist if and when it is properly dissolved through legal proceedings); centralized management in the board of directors; liability of a shareholder limited to the amount of his or her investment; and free transferability of corporate shares.

Drive-by Appraisal: A preliminary opinion about a property's value by a licensed appraiser based upon an external examination of the property's condition and a public records search only.

Equitable Sharing: The process by which forfeited property or its proceeds are transferred to a State or local law enforcement agency to a degree or in an amount that bears a reasonable relationship to the degree of direct participation of the State or local agency in the law enforcement effort resulting in the forfeiture. 21 U.S.C. § 881(e)(3).

Escrow: The process by which money and/or documents are held by a disinterested third person (a stakeholder) until satisfaction of the terms and conditions of the escrow instructions (as prepared by the parties to the escrow) has been achieved.

Expenses: Items of business outlays chargeable against revenue of a specific project or period.

Final Order of Forfeiture: In a criminal case, the court order issued following the disposition of all petitions, or if no petitions are filed in a timely manner, by which the United States gains clear title to property subject to the preliminary order of forfeiture. The preliminary order of forfeiture becomes final as to the whole world only when the ancillary proceeding is concluded.

Financial Instrument: A legal document conveying a financial interest, such as checks, certificates of deposit, money orders, stocks, bonds, airline tickets, and promissory notes.

Hidden Compartments ("Traps"): A compartment, especially in a vehicle, that has been designed, fabricated, adjusted, altered, changed, or tampered with, to transport, store or conceal weapons, contraband or illegal aliens.

Joint Venture: The joining of two or more persons in a specific business enterprise, such as the development of a condominium project or a shopping center. The parties may pool their respective resources (such as money, expertise, property or equipment). There must be an agreement, express or implied, to share in the losses or profits of the venture. Joint ventures are a business form of partnership and for tax purposes are treated as partnerships. The main difference between the two is that a joint venture is a special joining of the parties for a specific project with no intention on the part of the parties to enter into any continuing partnership relationship.

Lead-Based Paint Assessment: An evaluation following an inspection of all painted surfaces in residential property. The evaluation is to determine if there are any sources of serious lead exposure (such as peeling paint and lead dust) and what actions are required to address these hazards.

Legal Description: A description of a piece of real property that is acceptable by the courts of the State where the property is located and is used in real property conveyance documents.

Lien: Qualified rights that a creditor has in certain property of his/her debtor, as security for the debt, or his/her performance of some act for the debtor.

Limited Liability Company: An entity with two or more members that may engage in any lawful business activity (subject to any limitations contained in its articles or organization and to compliance with any other applicable laws), except for the banking business, the business of issuing policies or insurance and assuming insurance risks, or the trust company business, and except for rendering some professional services. In general, a legal liability company affords its members and managers (including officers) limited liability essentially like that enjoyed by a corporate shareholder, and tax treatment essentially like that of a partnership.

Lis pendens (Latin for suit pending): A notice filed with the county recorder or registrar of deeds that serves as a warning to all persons that the title to the property is in litigation and that potential purchasers are in danger of being bound by an adverse judgment against the property. The objective of a lis pendens is to prevent a bona fide sale of the property or its refinancing pending the outcome of the forfeiture litigation.

Market Value: The price that a purchaser might be willing but not compelled to pay to purchase, and the lowest price a seller, willing to but not compelled to sell, would accept. It assumes a motivated buyer and seller, and reasonable marketing time. For vehicles, vessels, and aircraft, current NADA or BUC guidebooks may be used to determine market value.

Monitor: An individual appointed by the court who is responsible for examining the operations of a business or enterprise; and who reports his/her findings to the court as to whether the assets of a business or enterprise are dissipating and will be available for forfeiture to the United States. A monitor does not control the operations of a business or enterprise, but merely reports on his/her findings. A monitor may be responsible for approving payments, (e.g., all payments over \$10,000, payments not in the ordinary course of business), or performing other very limited oversight functions.

Net Equity: The net equity is the projected equity in an asset at the time of disposition. This amount should take into account all expenses, including maintenance and disposal of the asset.

Official Use: The transfer to a Federal agency or a State or local agency for its use when authorized by the forfeiture statute and approved by the Attorney General.

Owners and Encumbrances Report (O & E Report): A report that based upon an examination of the title to real property that tells the State who is the owner of the real property and what encumbrances (e.g., mortgages, taxes, liens, and similar matters) affect the real property. (See also title report.)

Partnership: As defined in the Uniform Partnership Act, which is in force in a majority of states, “an association of two or more persons who carry on a business for profit as co-owners.” Under this act, a partnership can hold title to property in the name of the partnership, holding by tenancy in partnership. One tax advantage to this form of ownership is that the partnership itself does not pay taxes. Its income is distributed to each partner, who is responsible for paying his or her own taxes.

Personal Property: Things that are tangible and movable; property that is not classified as real property.

Preliminary Order of Forfeiture: The order entered by the court forfeiting all the defendant’s interests and assets that the jury has found to be forfeitable in its special verdict. The order should identify specifically each forfeited asset and state that the interest of the defendant in each asset is “forfeited to the United States for disposition in accordance with law.” In addition, the order “must authorize the Attorney General to seize the interest or property subject to forfeiture on terms that the court considers proper.”

Posting: The placing of the forfeiture complaint and the warrant of arrest in rem (the arrest warrant), issued by the clerk of the court pursuant to Rule C(3) of the Supplemental Rules for Admiralty and Maritime Claims, upon the real property that is the defendant in rem in the forfeiture action. In the case of unoccupied land, the process consists of tacking the arrest warrant in a visible location on the property. Where a structure is involved, the complaint and arrest warrant is tacked on the outside of the structure.

Real Estate: The physical land at, above and below the earth’s surface with all appurtenances, including any structures; any and every interest in land whether corporeal or incorporeal, freehold or nonfreehold; for all practical purpose, the term real estate is synonymous with real property.

RICO: Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations. Criminal statute, including forfeiture provisions found at 18 U.S.C. § 1961, et seq.

Shareholder (“Stockholder”): One who holds or owns a share in a property. A “stockholder” is one who owns corporate stock reflecting his/her share of the corporation.

Sole Proprietorship: A method of owning a business in which one person owns the entire business and reports all profits and losses directly on his or her personal income tax, as contrasted with corporate, joint or partnership ownership.

Task Force Case: A case in which a combination of law enforcement agencies participate in the investigation. The law enforcement agencies represented on the task force may be composed of Federal agencies, or Federal, State and local agencies.

Temporary Restraining Order: An order of the court forbidding the defendant to act until a hearing can be held.

Title Report: A preliminary report showing the current state of the title to real property along with the recorded objections to clear the title (e.g., unpaid mortgages and easements). Unlike an abstract of title, a title report shows only the current state of the title along with the recorded objections to clear the title such as unpaid mortgages and easements. (See also Owners and Encumbrances Report.)

Trustee: An individual appointed by a court and granted the authority to manage and/or dispose of property. Trustees may be appointed before or after property has been seized or forfeited.

Uniform Commercial Code (UCC): One of the uniform laws drafted by the National Conference of Commissioner on Uniform State Laws governing commercial transactions (e.g., sale of goods, commercial paper, investment securities etc.). The UCC provides that the security interests in personal property may be filed in certain state offices, such as the county clerk's office, the Secretary of State's office, or other commercial departments in certain state offices.

Warrant of Arrest in Rem: A written order of the court, based upon a verified complaint, issued under the authority of Admiralty Rule C(3), which commands the Marshal to arrest (seize) the property named therein, and which gives the court jurisdiction over the property to be seized.

Trustees and Monitors in Forfeiture Cases:

Department of Justice Policy: Trustees and Monitors in Forfeiture Cases

I. Purpose

The purpose of the Trustee and Monitor Policy is to provide guidance to Department of Justice components on the appointment of trustees and monitors in diverse cases involving complex assets or business enterprises in Department of Justice federal forfeiture cases¹, to serve best the interests of the United States. These guidelines seek to achieve the following:

- 1) Preserve assets for the government in order to achieve the ultimate goals of separating criminals from assets which are the proceeds of, or have facilitated, criminal activity and of dismantling criminal enterprises;
- 2) Clarify the lines of authority for decision makers as to appointment of a trustee or monitor at all phases of a forfeiture case, while enhancing communication between U.S. Attorney's Offices and the U.S. Marshals Service;
- 3) Clarify responsibilities with respect to pre-seizure planning in any case in which there is the potential for the appointment of a trustee or monitor;
- 4) Provide mechanisms for dispute resolution;
- 5) Provide guidance in determining whether the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund is an appropriate source of funding for the expenses of trustees and monitors and to promote efficient use of resources.

The following principles underlie this policy:

- 1) Unless compelling circumstances exist, the United States shall seek appointment of a trustee or monitor only in cases involving complex assets and/or enterprises and where the United States will recoup its expenses.
- 2) In light of the labor intensive nature and high cost of administering a trusteeship or monitorship, trustees and monitors should be appointed only when other means of protecting the United States' interests are inadequate or inappropriate.
- 3) The least intrusive method of operating a business (in which all or a part of the enterprise or its ownership is subject to forfeiture) should be employed, particularly prior to entry of a final order of forfeiture.

¹ In cases in which the Department of Treasury is the lead investigative agency, an independent contractor handles the management and disposition of assets, including complex assets. See Appendix 1 for discussion of property management issues in Treasury cases.

II. Components' Roles and Responsibilities²

While the United States Attorneys Offices (USAO) and the United States Marshals Service (USMS) will be primarily responsible for overseeing the trustee's or monitor's activities, these components will be supported by the Office of the Deputy Attorney General (DAG), the Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section (AFMLS), the Asset Forfeiture Management Staff (AFMS), the Executive Office for the United States Attorneys (EOUSA) and the Executive Office for the United States Trustees (EOUST).

III. Statutory Authority

The authority to appoint a trustee or monitor derives from 18 U.S.C. § 1963(d) and (e) and 21 U.S.C. §§ 853(e) and (g), which permit a court to act to preserve property. 18 U.S.C. § 1964(a) and (b) grant courts broad injunctive and remedial authority in RICO cases. Although it is not explicitly stated in 21 U.S.C. § 881 and 18 U.S.C. § 981, where the government has seized an asset, in appropriate cases, the USAO may request the court to appoint a trustee or monitor.

IV. Definitions and Responsibilities of Trustees and Monitors

Historically, the terms monitor, receiver, and trustee have been used interchangeably in forfeiture cases. The key distinction between a monitor and a trustee is that only a trustee or receiver has the authority to manage an enterprise. A monitor reports findings. A receiver is a fiduciary who is responsible only to the court.

A trustee is appointed by a court and granted the authority to manage and/or dispose of property. Examples of a trustee's responsibilities include, but are not limited to, those described in the Appendix 3 to this policy. Trustees may be appointed before or after property has been seized or forfeited.

A monitor is appointed by the court and is responsible for examining the operations of a business or enterprise. A monitor also reports findings to the court as to whether the assets of a business or enterprise are dissipating and will be available for forfeiture to the United States. Monitors do not control the operations of a business or enterprise, but merely report on their findings.³ Similarly, monitors do not dispose of property. In some cases, a monitor may be responsible for approving payments, (e.g., all payments over \$10,000, payments not in the ordinary course of business), or performing other very limited oversight functions. Examples of a monitor's responsibilities include, but are not limited to, those described in Appendix 4 to this policy.

² See Appendix 2 for a more detailed explanation of each component's responsibilities.

³ See *United States v. Regan*, 858 F.2d 115, 118 (2d Cir. 1988) (monitor appointed post-indictment to conduct a review of defendant's books and records); *Vorachek v. Citizens Bank of Lankin*, 461 N.W.2d 580 (N.D. 1990) (monitor appointed for bank did not qualify as receiver subject to statutory restrictions on appointment of receiver for state chartered bank where monitor did not take possession of any fund or property but was to act as a conduit for obtaining monthly reports from bank). *But see United States v. Riley*, 78 F.3d 367 (8th Cir. 1996) (court appointed monitor with power to investigate, account and take control of funds, require reports and information and to disapprove of certain business activities.)

This policy is applicable to trustees and monitors. Occasionally, a receiver or special master may be necessary.⁴

V. Circumstances in Which a Trustee or Monitor Should be Engaged

The ultimate goal in a forfeiture case is to dismantle a criminal enterprise and to deprive a criminal of property used in or acquired as a result of illegal activity. Prior to the government obtaining custody of an asset as a result of seizure or forfeiture, the government has an interest in preserving the property for forfeiture and preventing further illegal activity.

Prior to forfeiture, the owner(s) and management of an ongoing business will usually continue to operate the business unless there is probable cause to believe that the owner(s) or management have been or are involved in criminal conduct in operating the business. Depending on the nature of the criminal conduct, a trustee or monitor may be appropriate.

In most cases, the value of an ongoing business can be preserved without appointment of a trustee or monitor. In the typical forfeiture case where property has been restrained [21 U.S.C. § 853(e) or 18 U.S.C. § 1963(g)] or seized pursuant to a criminal forfeiture warrant [21 U.S.C. § 853(f)] or civilly, the USMS has the capability with its own resources or with a property management contract to manage and to sell property, including a business.

Following seizure or preliminary order of forfeiture, the government has a greater interest in the property—in preserving it pending resolution of third party claims and in preparing it for sale or other disposition. Ordinarily, once a preliminary or final order of forfeiture is entered, a government services contract, rather than a trustee appointed under court order, can serve most functions performed by a trustee and all functions performed by a monitor. If the USMS determines it cannot manage the asset through its own or contractor resources, the USAO may request the court to appoint a trustee. In rare circumstances, it may be necessary to appoint a trustee to manage or to dispose of a forfeited business or other complex asset following entry of a final order of forfeiture because of a pending appeal or other remaining residual issues such as sale of the property or final distribution of assets.

⁴ A receiver is traditionally defined as a fiduciary appointed by the court and is responsible only to the court. A receiver assumes custody and control of property or funds and manages the property or funds pending final judicial action. Because receivers are responsible only to the court, the appointment of a receiver is discouraged and the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund is not available for payment of a receiver's fees. If a district court finds it necessary to appoint a receiver, the receiver's fees are paid by the business enterprise itself or by another source.

In certain cases it may be appropriate to appoint a special master to act as a fact finder or to resolve competing claims, *e.g.*, when there are numerous, competing petitions for remission. A special master does not monitor, manage or dispose of property. Insofar as practicable, the policy and requirements set forth herein concerning trustees shall apply to special masters. The special master's costs and fees are to be paid from the asset itself. If such costs and fees are not available from the asset, the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund may be used as a source of payment where the special master is preserving property for forfeiture. Any property recovered shall first be used to reimburse the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund for the fees and costs of the special master. See Section VIII b for a discussion of sources of funds.

The type of oversight needed depends on the stage of the case, the degree of ownership that is targeted for forfeiture, and the nature of the ownership interests (i.e., shares, partnership, etc.) For example, it is usually preferable to monitor a minority partnership or stock interest. If a trustee is appointed to protect the government's minority interest, the government may encounter great difficulties dealing with possibly hostile majority interestholders. Similarly, if the government has identified a majority interest for forfeiture, it must take into consideration the minority interests when fashioning a trusteeship or monitorship.

Alternatives to the appointment of a monitor or trustee must be considered to determine the least intrusive means of accomplishing and protecting the government's goals and interests.

These alternatives include, but are not limited to:

- 1) restraining order;
- 2) seizure or restraint of valuable assets, equipment or inventory;
- 3) performance bond;
- 4) filing of a *lis pendens*;
- 5) appointment of a property manager by contract;
- 6) interlocutory sale;
- 7) foreclosure by a lienholder;
- 8) retention of a professional to provide oversight and ensure there are not future violations (with the agreement of the business and at its own cost);
- 9) enforcement of state or local nuisance laws;
- 10) seizure of property to satisfy outstanding tax obligations; and
- 11) oversight and/or management by state or local regulatory agencies⁵; or some combination of the above.

The Department of Justice will avoid involvement in the management of businesses which require aggressive action, capital investment to remain competitive, or the assumption of considerable risk. It may be permissible to restrain or to seize such a business, if it is the only alternative for accomplishing the government's objectives. Once it is determined that continued operation of the business is not financially viable, absent compelling circumstances, the USAO will seek either to terminate the business as soon as practicable or to sell the business by interlocutory sale, with the assets of the business sold and disposed of, even if such sales may result in a loss.

Generally, a protective order should be sought any time an on-going business entity is targeted for forfeiture. This order should seek to restrain the owner(s) from further encumbering the business, dissipating its assets, or selling the business. If the protective order alone will not ensure the availability of the asset for forfeiture, the appointment of a monitor or third party should be considered. When considering a monitor, the business should be in a financial position to pay for the cost of that monitor. Appointment of a trustee will occur only when it is clearly necessary, other alternatives have been considered and rejected, and there is sufficient net equity in the asset to cover the cost. However, in some cases, compelling law enforcement or policy considerations may warrant the appointment of a trustee or monitor even though there is not or may not be sufficient equity in the enterprises to cover the cost of the trustee or monitor. In insufficient equity cases, the USAO must thoroughly document the reasons for rejecting alternatives to the appointment of a trustee or

⁵ *United States v. Riley*, 78 F.3d 367 (8th Cir. 1996).

monitor. In addition, AFMS shall be notified as soon as the USAO or USMS become aware that a business is losing money, has insufficient equity or will be sold at a loss.

VI. Prerequisites to the Selection of a Trustee or Monitor: Pre-Seizure Planning and Other Requirements

The determination as to whether to appoint a trustee or monitor can be made only after the interested components (USAO, USMS and investigative agencies) agree on a pre-seizure plan, as discussed below. The USMS Field Office is required to notify USMS Headquarters as soon as it becomes aware that a trustee or monitor appointment is being contemplated.⁶ The guidelines for pre-seizure planning require that a USAO:

- 1) contact the USMS to engage in formal pre-seizure planning prior to seizing or restraining certain types of assets, including businesses and real property. In cases involving the sort of complex assets which may require a trustee or monitor, pre-seizure planning with the USMS is mandatory;
- 2) engage in timely pre-indictment coordination with the USMS in criminal forfeiture cases;
- 3) consult with the USMS prior to the submission of any proposed orders to a court that impose any restraint, seizure, property management, or financial management requirements relating to property in USMS custody;
- 4) obtain the concurrence of AFMLS before initiating a forfeiture action against, or seeking a temporary restraining order affecting, an ongoing business;
- 5) consult with AFMLS before initiating a forfeiture action under a money laundering facilitation theory;
- 6) obtain the concurrence of AFMLS before seeking the appointment of a trustee or monitor.

Pre-seizure planning includes a financial assessment of an operating business subject to forfeiture and a determination as to whether it is in the best interest of the government to continue the operation of a business. The pre-seizure plan must develop (or include) to the extent feasible an estimate of the: 1) net equity subject to forfeiture; 2) fees and other costs of the trustee or monitor; and 3) likely duration of the trusteeship or monitorship.

With respect to businesses continuing in operation, once the government obtains access to business records and other information, a business review must be developed specifically identifying the problems faced by the business and the requirements for it to succeed. The business review must identify key historic financial data, the current operating environment (including financial activity), and projections for the next two years. Projections should address best case scenarios, worst case scenarios for the operation of the business, and exit strategies.⁷ If the business is likely to lose money or be sold at a loss the business plan should include a plan to mitigate loss or a plan for liquidation.

⁶ To eliminate delay, it is advisable that the responsible AUSA ascertain that the USMS Field Office has consulted with USMS Headquarters well before appointment of a trustee or monitor.

⁷ If necessary, the USMS and AFMS can provide contract services to assist in developing a business plan for which expenses may be paid from the Department of Justice Asset Forfeiture Fund. *See* footnote 8.

The need to maintain confidentiality before indictment, or while an indictment is sealed, may also be critical. Therefore, appropriate measures will be taken to ensure sensitive law enforcement information is protected, while consultation and coordination occurs among the involved components.

VII. Selection and Appointment of a Trustee or Monitor

a. Decision Making Authority.

To the extent possible, the selection and appointment of a trustee or monitor will be a joint decision of the USAO and USMS, regardless of the stage of the case.

The authority to select a trustee and to determine the scope of his authority lies with the USAO prior to entry of a final order of forfeiture and with the USMS after entry of a final order. The USAO also has the same authority with respect to monitors, but should consult the USMS prior to petitioning the court for the appointment of a monitor. (While the USMS does not exercise direct control of an asset in the typical monitoring relationship it will ultimately be responsible for the property.)

If the USAO or USMS are in disagreement concerning the appointment or selection of a trustee or monitor, either may elect to trigger the dispute resolution process (described in Section XIV), and should do so as soon as possible so as not to delay the appointment process.

b. Qualifications of the Trustee or Monitor.

The purpose of a trusteeship or monitorship will determine the appropriate qualifications of the trustee or monitor. For example, if the purpose is to manage a business to prevent its dissipation, a trustee with a business and accounting background should be appointed. A trustee should not provide actual law enforcement, such as that provided by federal agents or police personnel. (The Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund is not available to fund law enforcement activities.) It may be necessary, however, for a trustee to retain a consultant or provide personnel on their staff to address compliance and enforcement issues which would ordinarily be performed by a business.

The trustee or monitor (and personnel on their staff) must have expertise in the enterprise's industry. To the extent possible, the AUSA or USMS personnel responsible for the case should also become familiar with the industry or type of business or enterprise.

It is recommended that a trustee or monitor undergo a background review to ensure that nothing in the individual's past indicates an inability to act as a trustee or monitor. A background check may be conducted by the USMS or any federal investigative agency.

c. Sources For Potential Trustees and Monitors.

There are a number of sources available to the Department of Justice for identifying competent trustees and monitors. These sources include, but are not limited to, the Department of Justice Executive Office of U.S.

Trustees (EOUST) and a contract currently administered by AFMS.⁸ The USMS encourages the use of the expertise and services of the EOUST, including the use of EOUST to identify trustees from existing panels of private trustees utilized in United States bankruptcy cases and from other sources, and to provide assistance in oversight of trustees in appropriate federal forfeiture cases. Trustees and monitors are available from the private sector, particularly the local business community or accounting firms which provide business management services.

d. Federal Acquisition Regulations.

Trustees and monitors are subject to the federal procurement process. If an already existing contract is not used, then federal procurement regulations known as the Federal Acquisitions Regulations (FAR), 48 CFR 1.000 *et seq.*, must be followed. If the total cost of the trustee or monitor is estimated at under \$100,000, a simplified acquisition process is available. If the cost of a trustee or monitor is estimated at over \$100,000, FAR requires open competition involving rigorous procurement procedures which are normally not feasible in a trustee or monitor situation because of the time necessary to complete the advertising, multiple bid and interview requirements. In that case, the court order of appointment is justification for a sole source acquisition. A sole source acquisition is defined as a contract for the purchase of supplies or services that is entered into or proposed to be entered into by an agency after soliciting and negotiating with only one source.⁹ In the appropriate situation, an additional justification for a sole source acquisition may be that only one person in the area has the expertise to act as a trustee or monitor in that particular industry. A trustee or monitor may also be

⁸ Pursuant to Section 524(c) of Title 28, AFMS entered into a contract with KPMG Peat Marwick LLP that provides the Department of Justice asset forfeiture community with sources of professional and/or technical support such as attorneys, property managers and accountants.

The existing contract available for trustees and monitors has an hourly rate limitation which may exceed the potential trustee's or monitor's usual hourly rate. In the appropriate case, such as where the trustee's or monitor's duties are strictly circumscribed or involve a short term task, it is possible to hire a trustee or monitor for a "fixed price contract" through the existing contract. The trustee or monitor fixes a price for the entire job rather than being paid an hourly rate. The benefit is a negotiated total price which is known at the outset. The potential risks include that (1) the trustee may build in a large cushion into his proposal to reduce the risk of not making a profit, (2) the possibility that the trustee may shirk his duties should the job require more hours than anticipated, or (3) additional duties may be required and negotiations of the contract necessary.

Additionally, the USMS entered into a contract with the Price Waterhouse accounting firm to perform a variety of services for businesses and related assets. These services include advice for pre-seizure planning, business valuations and disposal services. This contract does not include services for business management.

Guidance on utilizing services from the KPMG Peat Marwick LLP and Price Waterhouse contracts is available from AFMS and USMS. The USMS and AFMS should receive as much advance notice as possible when services under a contract are sought. Thirty days advance notice is highly advisable although contractor services may be provided with less notice.

⁹ 48 C.F.R. 6.003.

hired through a process usually used for litigative experts and expert witnesses.¹⁰ The simplified acquisition process, sole source acquisition process and litigative expert services process can be completed quickly, in as little as a week in an emergency. The USMS is familiar with procurement regulations and will handle the process.

VIII. Payment of Monitor and Trustee Fees and Expenses

a. Availability of Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund.

AUSAs and USMS personnel should be aware that the costs of a trustee or monitor are a cost of the forfeiture action. Such costs may be paid out of the proceeds of the ongoing business or directly from the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund (28 U.S.C. § 524(c)), as discussed above. If the costs are paid directly from the Fund, the Fund is reimbursed upon sale of the asset just as any other cost of forfeiture is reimbursed (e.g., liens, maintenance, storage, etc.) prior to payment of restitution and equitable sharing. The only time the Assets Forfeiture Fund would not be reimbursed is if the sale resulted in a loss, a situation which should be avoided unless compelling circumstances exist. (See discussion below and elsewhere in this policy.)

Prior to entry of a final order of forfeiture, the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund [28 U.S.C. § 524(c)] is available to pay trustee and monitor fees when: 1) an asset has been seized for forfeiture pursuant to a civil or criminal forfeiture proceeding or is specifically identified in a forfeiture count in an indictment and is the subject of a restraining order; 2) the court declines to order payment from the proceeds of the business, or an evaluation of the business reveals there are not sufficient funds available to pay the costs of the trustee or monitor, but compelling law enforcement or policy considerations warrant the appointment of a trustee or monitor;¹¹ and 3) the services of a trustee or monitor are needed to protect the government's interests and less intrusive means for accomplishing the government's goals are unavailable. (See Section V). Prior to submitting a request for payment of trustee or monitor fees from the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund, the USAO will seek a court order requiring that the fees be paid from the operating income of the business on the grounds that the trustee or monitor is performing functions that a legitimate business would perform for itself and is an ordinary cost of business operations.¹² If the court declines to order payment of those fees from the business itself, the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund may be used to pay the fees of a trustee or

¹⁰ 48 CFR 6.302-3. The FAR states that the use of subsection 6.302-3 is appropriate when it is necessary to acquire the services of (1) an expert in any litigation or dispute involving the government in any trial, hearing, or proceeding before any court, administrative tribunal, or agency, whether or not the expert is expected to testify or (2) a neutral person, such as a mediator or arbitrator, to facilitate that the resolution of issues in an alternative dispute resolution process.

¹¹ In such cases, any equity ultimately recovered shall be first used to reimburse the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund for the expenses of the trustee or monitor.

¹² A request by the government for an order that the payment of a trustee or monitor be made from the proceeds of an ongoing business may result in an evidentiary hearing.

monitor if the conditions above have been met.¹³ (It is recommended that in such a situation the government seek an order from the court that should the government prevail at the conclusion of the proceeding, the United States may seek and obtain reimbursement of costs and expenses from the business pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 1963(f) or 21 U.S.C. § 853(g)). If the costs of the trustee or monitor are paid out of the operating income of the business over the defendant's objection, and the government does not ultimately forfeit the business, the government may be open to a claim for costs from the defendant-owner, the company itself or a third party.

Upon the entry of a preliminary or final order of forfeiture, payment of fees charged by a trustee ordinarily will be made from the proceeds of the business, unless compelling law enforcement or policy considerations warrant payment from the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund. [See Section V, 18 U.S.C. § 1963(e), and 21 U.S.C. § 853(g)].

Payment of the fees of a trustee or monitor shall be charged against the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund by the USMS. While the USMS Field Offices can directly expend funds from the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund, approval from the Chief, Asset Forfeiture Office, USMS, is required before beginning payment of any fees to a trustee or monitor. The USMS Field Office shall notify USMS Headquarters as soon as it becomes aware that a trustee or monitor appointment is being contemplated.

Payment of the fees and expenses of a trustee or monitor from the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund is contingent upon the USMS: 1) participating in the selection of the trustee or monitor; 2) overseeing the activities of the trustee where appropriate (i.e., following final order of forfeiture); 3) examining and verifying all claims for payment of a trustee where appropriate (i.e., following final order of forfeiture); 4) participating in the development of a detailed statement of work¹⁴ to assure that USMS contracting and billing requirements are met; and 5) billings submitted by the trustee or monitor in accordance with appropriate USMS billing guidelines (available from the USMS). Failure to follow Department of Justice policies applicable to pre-seizure planning and trustees and monitors may result in the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund not being available for payment.

AFMS may request copies of all restraining orders, orders of appointment, contracts, statements of duties, and other documents relevant to the responsibilities of a trustee or monitor when the fees of a trustee or monitor are being paid from the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund. Upon request, all appropriate paperwork shall be forwarded to the AFMS.

b. Additional Funding Sources

Fees for monitors and trustees may also be funded from other sources listed below.

- USAO Litigation Budget
- EOUSA Asset Forfeiture Fund Allocation

¹³ See *United States v. Paccione*, 730 F. Supp. 1237, 1238-1240 (S.D.N.Y. 1990) (court declines to order the defendant to pay monitor fees prior to a forfeiture verdict because the monitoring was designed to protect the public interest rather than the private interests of the defendant).

¹⁴ See Section IX d.

The annual appropriation from Congress for salaries and expenses of the USAOs, may serve as a source of funding when the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund is not available for payment of the fees and expenses of a trustee or monitor. USAO litigation funds, including funds designated for asset forfeiture expenses, are available to fund a broader array of litigation related activities (including a special master or other fiduciary to determine restitution claims¹⁵ or litigation support for a criminal case which identifies assets for forfeiture) than are generally available through the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund. Under 28 U.S.C. § 524(c), the latter funds are only available for directly forfeiture-related activities, such as preservation and management of assets. If the USAO's litigation funds are the source of funding for a trustee or monitor, the USAO should contact EOUSA and assume responsibility for all supervision and payment of the trustee or monitor. If a USAO depletes its litigation funds, additional appropriated funds may be available through EOUSA.

The case related expenses portion of the annual allocation from the Assets Forfeiture Fund to the USAOs may be used to pay the expenses of trustees and monitors if use of the Fund in the particular case is appropriate. The USAO should coordinate such use with EOUSA.¹⁶ These funds may only be used for direct forfeiture-related purposes.¹⁷

IX. Defining the Goals, Duties and Powers of the Trustee or Monitor

a. Defining.

The restraining order or other order appointing a trustee or monitor shall define the goals of the trustee or monitor. Prior to appointment, an initial assessment must be made to determine the purpose of and need for the trusteeship or monitorship (i.e., to prevent dissipation of the asset or to prevent the enterprise from engaging in illegal activity, or both), as well as its goals.

When the owners or management of a business have been involved in criminal conduct, one of the factors relevant to the appointment of a trustee or monitor is whether the trustee or monitor would be performing a law enforcement function appropriately performed by a federal or local law enforcement agency. The Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund is not available to pay trustee or monitor expenses incurred when a strictly law enforcement agency function is performed. However, it is appropriate for a trustee to perform enforcement and oversight functions ordinarily performed by a business in the usual course of business.¹⁸

¹⁵ The Department of Justice Asset Forfeiture Fund is not a source of funds for any fiduciary who is determining claims pursuant to a restitution order. In restitution cases, the asset itself, USAO litigation funds or agency funds may be appropriate funding sources.

¹⁶ Additionally, the USAOs are directly allocated monies each fiscal year from the Assets Forfeiture Fund (Asset Forfeiture Fund allocation), which are used only to fund contract staff travel, overtime and travel.

¹⁷ It should also be noted that neither the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund nor the USAO's Asset Forfeiture Fund allocation are available for investigative purposes, i.e., review of documents seized pursuant to a search warrant for evidence of violations of law.

¹⁸ Dismantling a criminal enterprise is an appropriate and worthy goal of forfeiture. However, it is frequently extremely difficult to dismantle a criminal enterprise through the appointment of a trustee or monitor and there may be more efficient methods for dismantling a criminal enterprise.

The theory of forfeiture under which the property is seized and the nature of the business itself will inform the goals and duties of the trustee or monitor. For example, if the business subject to forfeiture was acquired with proceeds of illegal activity and is self supporting or is subject to forfeiture as a substitute asset, the goal of the United States generally is to prevent dissipation of the business and its assets. Monitorship or trusteeship of such an asset usually requires less oversight and more often results in a profitable forfeiture than forfeiture of an enterprise used to facilitate illegal activity.

In contrast, a business used to facilitate illegal activity often requires intense oversight to prevent further illegal activity and frequently presents difficult management, safety or public relations issues to a trustee or monitor and the Department of Justice, depending on the nature of the business. Additionally, when a business which is or was facilitating illegal activity is identified for forfeiture, restrained or forfeited, the illegal funds that have supported the business disappear. Such businesses often have no real value when they are operated in a legitimate manner. Unless compelling circumstances exist, appointment of a trustee or monitor in such cases, and indeed seizure and forfeiture, should be avoided.

b. Changing Roles.

The parties to a case, and/or the case itself, may change, resulting in a corresponding change in oversight and/or management needs. Therefore, the goals of operating a business under a trusteeship or monitorship, particularly a business subject to forfeiture under a facilitation theory, must be reevaluated at regular intervals. The USAO or USMS should reevaluate the trusteeship or monitorship, at least every 6 months. Additionally, reevaluations should be completed even more frequently immediately after appointment of a trustee or monitor to determine if less or more oversight is required and to clarify, expand or contract the duties of the trustee or monitor. Ideally, the restraining order or other order of appointment should indicate when such reevaluations will occur. Finally, the longer the government is responsible for an asset, the more likely it is the goals of a trusteeship will change.

c. Restraint and Appointment Orders.

Restraining or appointment orders shall clearly define the duties and powers of trustees and monitors. Usually the restraining order provides for the appointment of a trustee or monitor and enumerates duties and powers of a trustee or monitor, but a separate order of appointment may be appropriate.

Appointment orders should also clearly grant to the trustee or monitor the authorities needed to accomplish the designated goals. Appendices 3 and 4 to this memorandum identify duties and powers typically specified in those orders, but are not meant to be exclusive enumerations of all the obligations that a trustee or monitor may owe to the U.S. District Court. The circumstances of a case may also require other functions. The duties and responsibilities in these Appendices do not supersede existing duties and responsibilities contained in current court orders or statements of work in service contracts.

The USAO should consult with (prior to final order of forfeiture) or obtain approval from (following final order of forfeiture) the USMS regarding all restraining and appointment orders setting out the duties and responsibilities of a trustee or monitor. The USMS should also be consulted or approve (depending on the stage of the case) any subsequent, significant modifications to those duties and responsibilities.

A statement of work (SOW), (described below) shall be referred to or described in the restraining order or order of appointment. As a forfeiture case progresses and more information is known, it may become appropriate for a monitor to be given management responsibilities. In such cases, appropriate modifications to the order establishing the monitorship or a new order must be obtained. When management responsibilities and authority are given to a “monitor,” the monitor becomes a trustee and the USAO should obtain a court order reflecting the change in status. Whether identified as a trustee or not, if trustee functions are performed, the trustee guidelines set forth in the policy should be followed.

d. Statement of Work

Prior to engagement of the trustee or monitor, a statement of work (SOW) shall be drafted by the USAO and USMS which describes with particularity the duties of the trustee and monitor and the staff necessary to achieve those duties. The SOW should be referred to or described in the order of appointment and modified as the duties of the trustee or monitor change. Fees and costs of the trustee or monitor and any fees and costs of staff and consultants, including hourly rates, a monthly estimate of costs and hours expected to be worked each month, and cost caps should be included in the SOW. The SOW should describe specific reporting obligations to the USAO, USMS and to the court, as appropriate; a timetable for such reporting; and the nature of the report.

e. Use of Staff, Consultants and Private Counsel by Trustees and Monitors

Consultants and administrative staff may be needed by trustees and monitors to support their work. The costs incurred in engaging additional staff shall ordinarily be charged to the business. If that is not possible, the USAO (prior to entry of a final order of forfeiture) or the USMS (following entry of a final order of forfeiture) must approve any such expenditures in advance. Staff needs, including professional and administrative staff who report directly to the trustee or monitor and outside consultants including private counsel, should be negotiated during the interview of the trustee or monitor.¹⁹

X. Reporting—Trustees and Monitors

a. Reporting Requirements

Before entry of a final order of forfeiture, a trustee will report to the USAO and to the district court. The USAO provides oversight, management, review and approval of trustee fees, expenses, activities and operations in close consultation with the USMS. The USMS will arrange for payment of fees and expenses from the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund following review and final approval of payment by the USAO. These roles may be modified upon agreement of the USAO and USMS. Although the USAO has final decision making authority at this stage of the case and the trustee reports to and obtains guidance from the USAO, it may

¹⁹ Trustee and monitor performance shall be formally evaluated on at least an annual basis, and more frequently at the outset of the appointment. The evaluation will be conducted by the USAO or USMS, depending on the stage of the case. Based on the evaluation, the USAO or USMS will determine the feasibility of maintaining the appointment, request a successor trustee or monitor, bring performance issues to the attention of the court or undertake other efforts to improve performance. Of course, an ongoing assessment of the trustee and monitors performance and informal day-to-day advice on ways to improve trustee and monitor performance is encouraged.

be appropriate, depending upon the nature of the case and reasons for the trusteeship, for the USMS to handle day-to-day reporting, as well as review of fees and expenses, with final approval by the USAO.

After entry of a final order of forfeiture, a trustee reports to the USMS and the district court. The USMS provides oversight, management, review and approval of trustee fees, expenses, activities and operations in close consultation with the USAO and will review, approve and arrange for payment of fees and expenses from the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund. These roles may be modified upon agreement of the USMS and USAO. Although the USMS has final decision making authority at this stage of the case and the trustee reports to and obtains guidance from the USMS, it may be appropriate (depending on the nature of the case and reasons for the trusteeship) for the USAO to take a more active role supervising the trustee. If the USAO is actively supervising and directing the trustee, the USAO shall also approve payment of fees and expenses.

A monitor reports to the USAO and the district court unless the USAO and USMS agree that the monitor should instead report to the USMS. The USAO will provide oversight, management, review and approval of monitor fees, expenses and activities in consultation with the USMS. The USMS will arrange for payment of fees and expenses from the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund following final approval of payment by the USAO.

Upon appointment or selection, the trustee or monitor will receive written guidance from the USAO or USMS identifying key AUSAs, USMS officials and other individuals with whom the trustee or monitor is authorized to interact on a recurring basis and from whom to receive direction or resolution of problems. It is recommended that the trustee or monitor report to one or, at most two, key personnel at the USAO and USMS, and that the USAO and USMS each designate a responsible official.

b. Reporting Issues.

The issue of to whom a trustee or monitor is responsible is complex. Trustees and monitors report to several masters. Ultimately they are responsible to the court. They are responsible to the government who has appointed them to protect and prevent dissipation of the asset. They may have fiduciary responsibilities to the defendant and owners of property identified for forfeiture until a preliminary order of forfeiture and continuing responsibilities to non-defendant owners/business enterprise and third parties. They are usually appointed at the request of the USAO, directed by the USAO and USMS, and their costs often paid by the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund or other government funds.

The responsibilities and duties of a trustee or monitor invariably result in the development of a complex web of working relationships among the court, the USAO and USMS personnel, shareholders and partners, managers and staff of the seized or forfeited business, community and industry officials, customers and others. Although it is imperative for the trustee or monitor to develop and to utilize a wide network of working relationships to perform effectively his or her duties, key government officials to whom the trustee or monitor will report must be identified for purposes of accountability and problem resolution. See Xa above.

As the USAO and USMS have a recurring obligation to direct the trustee or monitor and to approve payment of fees and expenses from government monies, the trustee or monitor has a high degree of obligation and accountability to the government. Of course, these relationships vary depending on the individual circumstances of the case and the stage of the case. Prior to preliminary order of forfeiture, if the trustee or monitor is paid from the assets of the enterprise (especially if the defendant has agreed or not objected to such

payment), the trustee or monitor may have greater accountability to the defendant. Indeed, the defendant may expect to agree to the selection of the trustee or monitor.

Because of the nature of the case, personal interest or style of the court, the court may take a greater or lesser degree of oversight of the trustee or monitor. It is not uncommon, however, for the court itself to choose a specific trustee or monitor; in that situation, the trustee or monitor may feel a greater responsibility and accountability to the court. Prior to preliminary order of forfeiture, of course, it is appropriate for a trustee or monitor to have significant responsibility to the court and to the defendant.

The obligation of a trustee to a defendant ends following a preliminary order of forfeiture unless the case is appealed. An obligation to non-defendant owners and third parties continues until those interests are resolved through the ancillary hearing process and final order of forfeiture. Similarly the court's oversight usually diminishes as the government moves toward completion of forfeiture. While a case is on appeal, the trustee should continue to report to the district court. Once the appellate process has ended and a final order of forfeiture entered, the court normally is not involved unless residual issues remain, such as final sale of the property and distribution of proceeds.

The USAO and USMS should be aware that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to direct the trustee or monitor and to control costs in a situation where the court has appointed a trustee or monitor without input from the USAO or USMS or where a trustee or monitor is only accountable to the court. The USAO and USMS must exercise some degree of control over a trustee or monitor and their costs in order for the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund to be a source of payment. The Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund is not available to fund the costs of the trustee or monitor if they are only responsible to the court or if the USAO or USMS does not have oversight over fees and costs. (See Section IV, Definitions and Responsibilities of Trustees and Monitors).

XI. Disclosure Issues

Occasionally, a defendant has contended that production of documents or information to a trustee or monitor, as required in a restraining or other court order, may tend to incriminate and therefore violate Fifth Amendment rights. Such issues must be resolved on a case by case basis. There are, however, a variety of ways to address such concerns. For example, a "wall" may be created between the criminal prosecutors and the defendants by designating a civil AUSA or forfeiture AUSA, who is not on the trial team, to receive such information from the trustee or monitor. It may not be advisable to create a wall if it blocks essential communication among AUSAs in the USAO or between the USAO and the USMS.

In appropriate cases, the USAO may agree not to use any documents or testimony received from the trustee or monitor at trial, other than for impeachment purposes. Finally, the defendant may refuse to turn over certain documents or provide information on self-incrimination grounds. The refusal to provide such required information may then be brought to the attention of the court which may compel a response. The USAO should be aware that it may be prevented from using new information developed or disclosed by a trustee or by a monitor as evidence or as a basis for new or additional criminal charges. It should be noted that corporate defendants do not have Fifth Amendment rights.

XII. Political Contributions

In some industries, legitimate political contributions are part of the ordinary course of business. Political contributions made by a business which are reviewed by a monitor are distinguishable from political contributions made or approved by a trustee on behalf of a business. In rare cases, political contributions may be permissible if the government is merely monitoring, as opposed to operating, an enterprise. As long as the proposed political contribution is clearly legal and have been made previously in the ordinary course of the business, the monitor is merely reviewing payment. The Deputy Attorney General has concluded that a trustee in a forfeiture case will not make political contributions on behalf of the business the trustee has been engaged to manage.

XIII. Indemnification

Trustees will be required to obtain insurance covering any risks against which they wish to be protected. In extraordinary circumstances, an agreement by the government to indemnify a trustee may be appropriate. However, the government will provide indemnification only if: 1) indemnity insurance is unavailable or prohibitively expensive; 2) the trustee insists upon being covered for such risks; and 3) the government determines that the circumstances of the particular case are so exceptional it is absolutely necessary to obtain the services of that particular trustee.

An indemnification agreement will be narrowly drawn and provide indemnification only for acts done at the order of the United States or its courts, but not for those acts which amount to gross, or greater, negligence, including, but not limited to, acts which are intentionally tortious, criminal, or which are unrelated to the forfeiture action.

The Deputy Attorney General shall decide if indemnification is appropriate. The request shall be submitted by the USAO or by the USMS to the DAG through AFMLS.

Monitors will be required to obtain insurance covering any risks against which they wish to be protected. The government will not indemnify a monitor.

XIV. Dispute Resolution

It is critical that the USAO and USMS consult and work closely together in addressing issues related to the propriety of engaging a trustee or monitor and the use, duties and supervision of a trustee or monitor. Dispute resolutions should be sought from AFMLS. The ODAG may review AFMLS resolutions of crucial issues or problems related to trustees or monitors. AFMLS, the USAO and the USMS are to be promptly notified, in writing, of any AFMLS resolution regarding the use of trustees or monitors which a component intends to present for review to the DAG. If the issue involves appropriate use of the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund, AFMS will be notified in writing as well. Timely resolution of disputes is critical.

XV. Resources Available

The USMS headquarters, AFMLS, AFMS, EOUSA and EOUST are available to assist in pre-seizure planning and to provide assistance and advice regarding the selection or use of trustees and monitors. For example, a team can be assembled of staff from these components to assist in determining whether a trustee or

monitor is appropriate, identify candidates to serve as a trustee or monitor and review appointment orders. Any requests for such a team will be submitted simultaneously to the USMS, AFMLS, AFMS,²⁰ and EOUSA.

APPENDIX 1: Q. & A.'S
SEIZED PROPERTY MANAGEMENT ISSUES
The Department of the Treasury

Prepared by: The Executive Office for Asset Forfeiture
Jan P. Blanton, Director
February 1998

1. How Does a Treasury law enforcement agency accomplish Real Property Pre-Seizure/Seizure Activities?

The Department of the Treasury maintains a National Seized Property contractor who may perform a variety of Pre-Seizure/Seizure Activities.

- **PRE-SEIZURE**
Business Analysis, Appraisals, Title Reports, Net Equity Analysis, Cost Benefit Analysis, and assistance in defining seized business requirements for Court Orders.
- **ACCEPTANCE**
Inventory, Video, Management Services, Employee Relations, Maintenance, Audit, Insurance, Environmental Assessments and Remediation.
- **STORAGE/OPERATION**
Conduct Business Operations, Provide ongoing business analysis and report monthly on its condition with appropriate recommendations for continued operation, Conduct Annual Audits.
- **DISPOSITION**
Clear encumbrances, Obtain clear title, Prepare Due Diligence Package to assist potential buyers, Market, Sell, Close and Disburse funds as directed.
- **UNIQUE REQUIREMENTS**
The contract provides for the contractor to provide for "Unique" requirements that may not be covered by the standard requirements noted above.

2. How are the services of the National Seized Property Contractor Secured?

- The United States Custom Service serves as the Executive Agent to the Treasury Department in the administration of this contract.

²⁰ Such a request need not be forwarded to the Asset Forfeiture Management Staff if the assistance desired does not involve financial issues or the use of the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund.

- The case agent requests the contractor's services, as required, through the Office of the U.S. Customs Fines, Penalties & Forfeitures Officer.
- 3. How is the contractor paid for his services?**
- Generally, the contractor is reimbursed for all costs in performing its services to the government, and may earn an award fee as its profit. Seized property contract funding comes from the Treasury Forfeiture Fund.
- 4. What background checks, if any, have been conducted on the contractor or his employees?**
- All contractor employees receive the same full field backgrounds as U.S. Customs Officers.
- 5. Does EG&G solely handle all responsibilities of a Trustee/Manager?**
- EG&G provides all services as directed by the Treasury agency in accordance with the terms and conditions of the contract.
 - The need for a Court appointed Trustee or Manager, other than EG&G, should be discussed with the Treasury agency and Treasury EOAF for cost/payment issues.
- 6. If special expertise is needed, does EG&G subcontract out? And if so, does USAO have any input into selection of sub? Does Treasury have any input regarding sub selection?**
- Yes, EG&G will subcontract out.
 - There is no reason an AUSA could not have input into the selection of a sub.
 - Treasury would only get involved in the selection of a sub if it was an issue of unusually high costs or the requirement to hire a sub not affiliated with the contractor.
- 7. Who directs EG&G's actions as Trustee/Manager?**
- All instructions to the contractor are directed by the case agent after the initial tasking through the U.S. Customs Service.

APPENDIX 2: Components' Roles and Responsibilities

Office of the Deputy Attorney General (DAG)

- Provide oversight and management of Department of Justice components in the Asset Forfeiture Program.
- May review decisions by AFMLS resolving disputes among Department of Justice components.

United States Attorney's Offices (USAO)

- Responsible for litigation of federal forfeiture matters including trustee and monitor matters.
- Prior to entry of a final order of forfeiture, in consultation with the USMS, represent the United States in district court proceedings to seek the appointment of trustees and monitors.
- Prior to entry of a final order of forfeiture, in consultation with the USMS, determine goals, duties and responsibilities of trustees and monitors; provide oversight of trustee and monitor performance, costs and conduct.
- Prior to a final order of forfeiture and in consultation with the USMS, determine that a monitor should be replaced by a trustee or that a trustee or monitor is no longer necessary.
- Following the entry of a final order of forfeiture, represent the interests of the United States in district court proceedings to seek the appointment of trustees.
- Final decision making authority prior to the entry of a final order of forfeiture.

United States Marshals Service (USMS)

- Responsible for the management of seized or forfeited property and property under a protective order of the court.
- Provide advice to the USAO on the need for and selection of private managers for restrained, seized or forfeited property.
- Prior to entry of a final order of forfeiture, consulted by the USAO on appointment of monitors and trustees, subject to review and approval by the court.
- After entry of a final order of forfeiture, in consultation with the USAO, select trustee to manage a business, subject to review and appointment by a court.
- In consultation with the USAO, determine goals, duties and responsibilities of trustees and monitors; provide oversight of trustee performance, conduct and costs; initiate the replacement of trustees, where appropriate.
- Final decision making authority following entry of a final order of forfeiture.

Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section (AFMLS)

- Provide advice and guidance to the USAO and the USMS regarding the appointment of monitors and trustees.
- Concur in the decision to utilize a trustee or monitor. Concur in the restraint, seizure, or forfeiture of operating businesses and consult with a USAO in forfeitures of businesses under a money laundering facilitation theory.

- Resolve disputes between the USAO, USMS and other Department of Justice components.
- Assist in interpreting 28 U.S.C. § 524(c) to determine whether payment of trustee and monitor expenses are appropriate expenditures from the Department of Justice Asset Forfeiture Fund.

Asset Forfeiture Management Staff (AFMS)

- Interpret 28 U.S.C. § 524(c) and oversee expenses paid by the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund to determine whether proposed and past uses of the Fund are consistent with law and policy.
- Reviews forfeiture program activities (pre-seizure planning, seizure, forfeiture, property management and disposition, settlements, equitable sharing, judgment enforcement, etc.) to ensure that government practices preserve the value of seized or forfeited property to the extent practical; avoid unnecessary and excessive costs; distribute public monies in accordance with law and policy; and account fully for the value of all property seized for forfeiture and costs incurred in executing program responsibilities.
- Concur in all task orders under program-wide contracts, including the use of these contracts to obtain the services of trustees or monitors.
- Approve redistributions of allocations made by the Deputy Attorney General from the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund.

Executive Office for United States Attorneys (EOUSA)

- Provide advice and guidance to USAO seeking appointment of trustees and monitors.
- Review, and where appropriate, approve funding for the services of trustees and monitors.

Executive Office for United States Trustees (EOUST)

- Upon request, provide technical expertise to develop policies, procedures and a program for the selection, appointment, management, evaluation, audit and removal of trustees and monitors in forfeiture cases.
- Upon request, refer individuals to monitor, manage and/or dispose of assets subject to forfeiture or which have been forfeited.
- In appropriate cases and upon request, provide assistance in oversight over trustees.

APPENDIX 3: Examples of Responsibilities of Trustees

- Prepare periodic reports, or reports upon request, for the USAO and USMS which are in a useful form.
- Manage, maintain, preserve, safeguard and protect the interests of the government and/or innocent third party shareholders, partners and creditors.

- Initiate any action or claim to recover assets rightfully belonging to the government's interest in a business or asset. This is to be done in consultation with the USAO and USMS.
- Manage and operate a specified business or revenue producing asset; to recommend changes, if needed, in the management of the business or asset.
- Arrange for the inventory of supplies, equipment, tools, furnishings, and other material resources associated with a business or property.
- Execute the powers and duties associated with the management of human resources of a business or revenue producing asset, to include recruitment, selection, discharge, and compensation of employees.
- Responsibility for maintaining business records appropriate to the operation of the business; ensure appropriate tax records are maintained and tax returns are filed in compliance with the law; and, ensure appropriate professional and/or trade or governmental operating licenses/permits are maintained.
- Responsibility for bringing business into full compliance with environmental and zoning laws.
- Receive, review, approve, and make all disbursements of proceeds received from a joint venture to full or limited partners; to receive, review, approve, and pay all expenses, including accounting, legal, and all other expenses related to the ongoing operations of the partnership.
- Ensure an appraisal/valuation of the business is performed.
- Set, determine, reallocate, charge, hold back, adjust, and modify distributions to any owner; to charge respective partners their appropriate share of historical, present, or future costs, distributions, reimbursements and disbursements.
- Exercise all rights, powers, voting privileges, and authority generally conferred by law, or necessity, which are advisable or consistent with accomplishing the purposes of a joint venture or partnership agreement associated with a business or revenue producing asset.
- With authorization from the USAO or USMS, employ, discharge, and fix compensation of such agents and employees, including lawyers, accountants, bankers, consultants, and other professionals who assist in accomplishing the duties and responsibilities of the trustee.
- In executing the powers granted in performance of the duties described in a court order, the trustee may rely on any resolution, certificate, statement, instrument, opinion, report, notice, request, consent, order, or other document they believe to be genuine and signed/presented by the proper party.
- Access to and/or the right to inspect, review, audit, or request surrender of all books and records of the business, asset, or partnership as the trustee deems necessary and appropriate.
- Authority to arrange and dispose of the government's interest in a business, joint venturership, partnership, corporate holding, financial instrument, or other personal or real property asset with the approval of the USAO or USMS, as appropriate.

- Access to, and the right to inspect, review, observe, appraise, and evaluate all operations and facilities of a business, at any reasonable time and consistent with state law, as the trustee, in their sole discretion, deems necessary and appropriate.
- Access to all funds contained in any and all bank accounts of the asset or those funds maintained for the purpose of operating, managing, preserving, and protecting the asset, including, but not limited to, funds designated for the payment of insurance, rent, workman's compensation, and payroll.
- Execute any and all documents on the business behalf, either personally or as power of attorney.
- Right to office space and administrative services at a business that is being monitored, or has been seized or forfeited.
- Refer all media contacts to the USAO.

The above mentioned duties or responsibilities are illustrative of the range of potential responsibilities. They can be used as a guide to establish specific responsibilities in the drafting of court orders and statements of work.

APPENDIX 4: Examples of Duties and Responsibilities of a Monitor

- To have access to and/or the right to inspect, review, audit, or request surrender of all books and records of the business, asset, or partnership as the monitor deems necessary and appropriate.
- To have access to and the right to inspect, review, observe, appraise, and evaluate all operations and facilities of a business, at any reasonable time and consistent with state law, as the monitor, in their sole discretion, deems necessary and appropriate.
- To have access to all cash receipts, check registers, deposits, bank statements, canceled checks, payable and payroll vouchers for funds contained in any and all bank accounts of the asset or those funds maintained for the purpose of operating, managing, preserving, and protecting the asset, including, but not limited to, funds designated for the payment of insurance, rent, workman's compensation, payroll, and payroll tax deposits.
- To have the right to office space and administrative services at a business that is being monitored.
- To receive, review, and approve any disbursements above a certain dollar value specified in the Order of the Court (i.e., any disbursement in excess of \$5,000).
- To evaluate cash management and determine the current cash position and projections. To determine if enough cash is generated from operations to cover expenses. To evaluate internal controls. To determine if the cash properly secured and deposited regularly. To evaluate banking relationships and identify any potential problems. To verify the bank statements reconciled monthly. To determine if controls over liquid assets prevent dissipation. To verify that excess cash invested for interest and is it FDIC insured. To identify any temporary investments, stocks, bonds, or other liquid assets.
- To evaluate the level of training and supervision of employees.

- To determine the outstanding accounts receivable balances and if they are increasing or decreasing, explain why. To evaluate the accounts receivable collection process and compare to other similar companies in the same industry.
- To identify all outstanding liabilities including vendor payable, payroll payables, taxes payable and long term liabilities such bank loans, mortgages, long term contractual commitments, or guarantees. To project the future balances and determine the effect on the business equity.
- To evaluate the physical and fiscal controls over inventory. Determine the inventory balance and if it is the proper amount for the business. To evaluate the ordering and receiving procedures for inventory. To identify the level of obsolete, spoiled, or damaged inventory. To determine if the company has the optimum amount of inventory at the right to time to provide service to customers. To determine if any inventory is on consignment or if a floor plan or any other unique inventory arrangement exists.
- To take an inventory or verify the inventory provided of furniture, fixtures, and equipment. To determine the value, age, location, condition, and costs of all property, plant, and equipment. To identify projections for replacements or new acquisitions and how the replacements or new acquisitions are to be funded. To obtain control over all the necessary titles, deeds, registrations, etc., to assure no dissipation, if provided for in court orders. To evaluate the physical security over the fixed assets. To identify any long term leased equipment and evaluate the ultimate liability.
- To evaluate the businesses' marketing and advertising program.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of operations and give an opinion as to the continued successful running of the company. To evaluate and report on any environmental issues and safety considerations.
- To determine if a budget for maintenance and repairs is used by a business and if not is a procedure in place for reporting lighting, electrical, plumbing, air conditioning, and other problems. To report on the general appearance of the facilities upon visitation.
- To evaluate the risk management of the business and determine if the business has the proper insurance coverage for fire, flood, general liability. To identify and assure that all patents, trademarks, licenses and permits are maintained. To identify and assess the risks associated with employee benefit plans, retirement, insurance, or savings plans. To identify any paid up life insurance plans, etc.
- To evaluate the quality and reliability of the businesses' accounting systems. To prepare a rolling six month comparative analysis for the businesses' balance sheet, profit and loss statement, and cash flow statement. Identify monthly changes in revenues, expenses, and the values of assets, liabilities, and owner's equity. To prepare an annual comparative analysis for the businesses' balance sheet, profit and loss statement, and cash flow statement identifying annual changes in revenues, expenses, and the value of assets, liabilities, and owner's equity. To prepare a monthly and annual report with explanations of trends identified and the possible effect on the continued success of the business.
- To determine the status of all tax and compliance reports and to verify that subject reports are timely filed. Some of these reporting requirements are as follows: (1) Federal Income Tax, (2) State Income Tax, (3) Local Income Tax, (4) Sales Tax, (5) Federal Quarterly Form 941, (6) State Quarterly Employment Tax, (7)

Local Property Tax, (8) Federal Annual Form 940, (9) State Annual Unemployment Reports, (10) Employee W-2's and W-3's, (11) Federal 1099's, (12) and state income taxes withheld from the employees' pay checks along with Social Security and Medicare taxes and the employer matching requirements are deposited timely.

- To report any extraordinary events that occur outside the normal daily operations immediately to the USMS and USAO and to the court. Some of these events may include, but are not limited to casualty losses, employee complaints such as EEOC or sexual harassment, any accident on business property, litigation, loss of key employees, major equipment failures, and any other event that seriously effects the smooth operation of the business.
 - Refer all media contacts to the USAO.
-

Land and Natural Resources Division¹

May 16, 1990

MEMORANDUM

TO: Edward S. G. Dennis, Jr.
Assistant Attorney General
Criminal Division

FROM: Richard B. Stewart /s/
Assistant Attorney General
Environment and Natural Resources Division

SUBJECT: Environmental Liability in Relation to
Federal Property Ownership: New EPA Regulation

SUMMARY

This is to advise you of a recent regulation promulgated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) concerning the hazardous substance activity reporting requirements for federal agencies when selling or transferring federal real property. The regulation implements Section 120(h) of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA or Superfund), 42 U.S.C. 9620(h). The regulation should assist the law enforcement components in the Department in establishing procedures for seizure and forfeiture of property that may be contaminated with hazardous substances.

EPA's regulation governs the notice federal agencies must give when selling or transferring real property on which hazardous substances have been stored, released or disposed of. Federal agencies must include in the contract of sale or transfer notice of any hazardous substance which "during the time the property was owned by the United States" was "stored for one year or more, known to have been released, or disposed of." The notice must include the "type and quantity of such hazardous substance and notice of the time at which such storage, release, or disposal took place, to the extent such information is available on the basis of a complete search of agency files." 55 Fed. Reg. 14212 (April 16, 1990), to be codified at 42 C.F.R. 373.1. Because the regulation focuses on hazardous substance conditions which occurred *during* the federal ownership, federal law enforcement agencies will not bear the burden of concern over waste problems created by prior owners.

The regulation constitutes a government interpretation of Section 120(h), which establishes special conditions for federal agencies when they transfer property. Many agencies, including the Department, have been concerned over their exposure to clean up and other costs under the environmental laws, in particular

¹ The following is a reprint of a memorandum from the Land and Natural Resources Division, dated May 16, 1990.

CERCLA, when they obtain real property particularly as a result of forfeiture proceedings in connection with law enforcement activities. To assist the Department in both understanding this regulation, and assessing its potential liability for environmental contamination on real property, I am providing an additional explanation of the pertinent provisions of federal environmental law.

CERCLA BACKGROUND

Liability Scheme. CERCLA establishes both funding and authority for EPA to undertake clean up of hazardous substance sites, and also structures a liability scheme under which persons who fund clean up of hazardous substances may recover their costs. EPA's funds, known as the Superfund, are generally not available for response actions on federally owned property.² As a result, federal agencies must plan and budget for clean up of hazardous substances at their own property.

The heart of CERCLA rests in its liability scheme, found primarily in Section 107, which establishes classes of persons who may be liable for clean up costs. Liable parties include (1) owners and operators of facilities; (2) certain prior owners and operators; (3) generators, i.e., those who arrange for the disposal of waste; and (4) transporters of waste. 42 U.S.C. § 9607(a). Facility is a broadly defined term, including landfills, pits, buildings, vehicles, and "any site or area where a hazardous substance has been deposited, stored, disposed of, or placed, or otherwise come to be located." 42 U.S.C. § 9601(9). Consumer products in consumer use are excluded.

Liable parties may be held liable for the costs of removal or remedial actions, natural resource damages and health assessments, as each of these terms is used in CERCLA. 42 U.S.C. § 9607(a). Generally these costs are incurred by a federal or state governmental entity, which then seeks to recover from liable parties. CERCLA also permits actions for contribution among and between liable parties. 42 U.S.C. § 9613(f)(1). In such suits, the court is to "allocate response costs among liable parties using such equitable factors as the court deems are appropriate." *id.*

Defenses Available. CERCLA recognizes few defenses. Under Section 107(b), the only defenses to liability require proof that the "release or threat of release of a hazardous substance and the damages resulting therefrom were caused solely by —

- (1)an act of God;
- (2)an act of war;
- (3)an act or omission of a third party other than an employee or agency of the defendant, or than one whose act or omission occurs in connection with a contractual relationship, existing directly or indirectly with the defendant. . ."

² See section 111(e)(3), 42 U.S.C. § 9611(e)(3), E.O. 12580 §§ 2(a), 2(e), 9(i). Short term or emergency responses, known as removal actions, may be undertaken by the Superfund at federally owned properties at the discretion of the EPA.

To invoke the CERCLA “third party” defense, the liable party must also demonstrate (1) exercise of “due care with respect to the hazardous substance concerned” and (2) taking of “precautions against foreseeable acts or omissions” of possible third parties. See 42 U.S.C. § 9607(b)(3).³

Government “innocent landowner” defense. In 1986, when Congress amended CERCLA, it supplemented the third party defense to address the so-called innocent landowner. Concerned that the contracts for sale and transfer of property would put subsequent purchasers in a “contractual relationship” that would vitiate the availability of the third party defense, Congress added detailed definitional requirements to address such circumstances. Section 101(35) defines “contractual relationship” to include land transfer arrangements with specified limitations; a party meeting these limits is, notwithstanding the land transfer, eligible to invoke the third party defense.

The conditions established in Section 101(35) for the innocent landowner defense are as follows:

- acquisition of the property “after the disposal or placement of the hazardous substance on, in, or at the facility,” and;
- either:
no knowledge of the hazardous substance, or

“The defendant is a government entity which acquired the facility by escheat, or through any other involuntary transfer or acquisition, or through the exercise of eminent domain authority by purchase or condemnation” or acquisition of the property by inheritance or bequest, but;

“if the defendant obtained actual knowledge of the release or threatened release of a hazardous substance at such facility when the defendant owned the real property and then subsequently transferred ownership of the property to another person without disclosing such knowledge” no defense under Section 107(b) will be available.

Together, Section 107(b) (3), with the definitions in Section 101(35), allows a government entity which acquires through involuntary means (this includes seizures and forfeitures, which are “involuntary” to the law enforcement violator) to invoke a defense from liability for hazardous substance contamination found on real property as a result of prior owner’s activities if that federal agency (1) exercises due care once it owns the property, (2) secures the property from other third party actions, and (3) provides notice to any transferee of those hazardous substance conditions about which it knows.⁴

Section 120 Obligations. In 1986, Congress expressed particular concern about the slow pace of clean up at major federal facilities. For the most part, the debate concerned large federal properties such as military bases and defense production facilities, nuclear and conventional. CERCLA had, since its enactment in 1980, included a waiver of sovereign immunity, subjecting federal agencies to the requirements of the federal statute. However,

³ Federal agency compliance with EPA’s section 120(h) property transfer regulations does not constitute a defense to liability for cost recovery under CERCLA. The liability regime governs when someone else *may* seek to hold a party liable for cleanup costs. The property transfer regulation, on the other hand, does effect the federal agencies’ obligation to clean up property, since the pendency of suits or claims by third parties is irrelevant to section 120 responsibilities.

⁴ Steps necessary to meet these conditions will vary from site to site.

compliance had been slow. Congress responded in 1986 with detailed provisions in Section 120, designed to assure that federal facility clean up was made subject to EPA oversight, and that federal agencies thoroughly inventoried and reported on hazardous substance practices in their operations.

The Section 120 obligations are organized around reporting of hazardous waste facilities and subsequent clean up schedules for those sites posing sufficient threat to warrant inclusion on EPA's National Priorities List. Thus Sections 120(b) and (c) require federal agencies to report to EPA, for maintenance on a Federal Agency Hazardous Waste Compliance Docket, facilities engaged in the storage, treatment or disposal of hazardous waste (see 42 U.S.C. § 3016); any information provided in permit applications or other reports required for the storage, treatment or disposal of hazardous wastes (see 42 U.S.C. §§ 3005, 3010)⁵; and any information required to be reported when notice is given of a hazardous substance release (see 42 U.S.C. § 9603). From this information, EPA is to oversee the conduct of "preliminary assessments" of the federal properties, and evaluate such facilities to determine if they should be listed on the National Priority List. 42 U.S.C. § 9620(b), (c).

For federal facilities on the National Priority List, Section 120(e) provides a detailed arrangement for conduct of appropriate remedial investigations and feasibility studies (the RI/FS) necessary to select a remedy, and schedules for the conduct of such remedial actions as are found to be needed. 42 U.S.C. § 9620(e).

Section 120(j) allows the President to issue special orders exempting Department of Defense and Department of Energy facilities from any CERCLA requirements, if necessary to protect the national security interests of the United States. There are conditions on this authority, including notification to Congress and a limitation of one year, with the authorization to extend. 42 U.S.C. § 9620(j).

Section 120(h) Requirements. Section 120(h) addresses property transferred by Federal agencies. The section, which has been construed in EPA's recent regulations, provides in brief the following: Subsection (1) requires notice in the contract of sale or transfer of hazardous substances stored, released or disposed of at federally owned property; Subsection (2) requires EPA to promulgate regulations establishing the form of the notice required; Subsection (3) requires notice in any deed transferring federal property of the hazardous substances on the property and any remedial action taken. It also provides that such deed will include a covenant that necessary remedial action has been undertaken and that the United States will conduct any additional remedial action found to be necessary after the transfer of the property.

On its face, Section 120(h) might be read to impose onerous obligations on federal property owners, resulting in a situation where the United States would be perpetually responsible for hazardous substances found on any of its properties, without regard to how long the property was held or what government function was performed at the property. It appears from the legislative history of the 1986 amendments, however, that in Section 120 Congress was principally concerned with federal facilities engaged in waste generating practices. There is no indication that Congress intended law enforcement agencies, who come to own property temporarily and in the course of punishing violations of the law, to carry the burden and expense of perpetual clean up of such properties. As a result, EPA's regulation construes Section 120(h) to provide a more reasonable reading, consistent with legislative purpose.

⁵ These basic reporting requirements are found in a companion statute, the Resource Recovery and Conservation Act, addressed briefly below.

The preamble to the regulation explains this interpretation:

EPA believes that the concern of Congress in enacting section 120(h) was with federally owned facilities whose own operations might involve storage, disposal or release of hazardous substances. The types of facilities cited in Congressional discussion of section 120 included military bases, Department of Energy nuclear production facilities, and other civilian installations. Moreover, nothing in the text or legislative history of the statute suggests that Congress meant to require agencies which had not in some manner been responsible for the storage, release or disposal of hazardous substances to unilaterally assume the obligation in section 120(h) (3) of remedying the contamination prior to sale and warranting that contamination that came to light after sale would also be corrected. In addition, section 120(h)(1) requires the notice to contain information about the type and quantity of hazardous substance stored, released, or disposed of, and the time at which such storage, release or disposal took place. It is unlikely that the agency would be expected to have such detailed information with respect to an activity which took place before the agency held the property.

Therefore, it is EPA's belief, in light of the overall statutory scheme, that section 120(h) (1) was meant to apply where the storage, release, or disposal referred to in the statute occurred during the time the property was owned by the Federal government.

55 Fed. Reg. 14210. Consistent with this interpretation, EPA's regulation requires:

...whenever any department, agency, or instrumentality of the United States enters into any contract for the sale or other transfer of real property which is owned by the United States and at which, during the time the property was owned by the United States, any hazardous substance was stored for one year or more, known to have been released, or disposed of, the head of such department, agency, or instrumentality must include in such contract notice of the type and quantity of such hazardous substance and notice of the time at which such storage, release, or disposal took place, to the extent such information is available on the basis of a complete search of agency files.

55 Fed. Reg. 14212 (emphasis added).

The regulation does not directly address the Section 120(h)(3) deed and covenant requirement. Although it could be argued that subsection (h)(3) should be read more broadly than subsection (h)(1)⁶, we believe that it should be read in consonance with subsection (h)(1). As a result, the obligation to include information in the deed, including warranties with regard to clean up, will cover only those hazardous substance activities which are subject to the notice requirement of Section 120(h)(1). On the same reasoning which supports not requiring agencies to give Section 120 (h)(1) notice of events which did not occur during their ownership, the statute does not support requiring the agencies to provide warranties for hazardous waste activities which did not occur during their ownership.

Relationship of CERCLA Notice Requirements. Although EPA's regulation limits the burden of notice required of federal agencies under Section 120(h), federal agencies must take care to assure that they can invoke the so-called "innocent landowner" defense described above. In order to do so, notice of known hazardous substance activities on federal properties must be provided prior to sale or transfer. We recommend that Departmental components establish routine practices of assembling sufficient information to give notice to prospective purchasers of those hazardous substance activities which the agency knows have occurred on the property, even where our information reflects that the hazardous substances were stored, released or disposed of prior to governmental ownership. Even though the EPA Section 120(h) regulation might permit an agency to give notice of solely those hazardous substance activities which occur during governmental ownership, Section 107(b), as clarified by Section 101(35) mandates that the governmental entity who seeks to invoke an 'innocent landowner' defense must provide notice to purchasers of known hazardous substance activities. For Section 120(h) disclosure, practices during federal ownership are sufficient; to qualify for the defense, however, any information about activities prior to federal ownership should also be disclosed.⁷

⁶ The deed must provide information about the nature of hazardous substance activity, "to the extent such information is available on the basis of a complete search of agency files." The covenant is to warrant that "(i) all remedial action necessary to protect human health and the environment with respect to any such substance remaining on the property has been taken before the date of such transfer and that any additional remedial action found to be necessary will be conducted by the United States. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 9620(h)(3)(A), (B). Since Congress again tied the federal agency's obligations to a search of its own files, using language parallel to subsection (h)(1), it is logical that the obligation to clean up and warrant the clean up applies to the same property as the obligation to give notice. A broader reading would make the United States perpetually the guarantor of the environmental health of any property that ever enters government inventories, even if the agency had no knowledge of the conditions and no obligation to provide notice. It is more likely that Congress intended governmental responsibility under subsection 120(h)(3) to cover the same property as the notice requirements of subsection 120(h)(1).

This reading also makes sense since section 120(h) does not exculpate federal agencies from CERCLA liability parties under section 107(a), even where it does not have a notice or covenant responsibility under section 120(h), although those circumstances should be rare. Thus, in the event an agency provides notice and covenants based on a complete search of its files, but additional information demonstrates other hazardous substances for which the agency is a responsible party, the agency may bear liability for cleanup costs incurred.

⁷ For example, property used as a drug lab may be seized with certain hazardous chemicals on site, which law enforcement officers will dispose of properly. Information obtained from witnesses or informants may address where other drugs were processed, where wastes or bad batches were dumped or other information about contamination at the site. The information concerning what we do with hazardous substances during our ownership is pertinent to the section 120(h) requirements. The information concerning previous disposals is pertinent to invoking the "innocent landowner" defense and should be disclosed for that reason only.

In sum, while CERCLA Section 120 addresses supplemental responsibilities for federal agencies, governmental entities must also observe their obligations under other sections of CERCLA. Departmental components should take the steps necessary to assure that they can invoke the one defense from liability which Congress made specifically available to the governmental property acquirer.⁸

RCRA BACKGROUND

While the primary purpose of this memorandum is to advise you of requirements under CERCLA, federal agencies handling hazardous substances also need to be familiar with the companion statute, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), 42 U.S.C. §§ 6901 - 6992. RCRA is designed generally to manage ongoing activities involving handling of solid and hazardous waste. A few provisions are pertinent to this memorandum's discussion of CERCLA. Broadly, while the CERCLA provisions addressed herein concerned federal real property, RCRA concerns itself with the personal property--the hazardous substances, containers, equipment or other materials.⁹

Where federal agencies have hazardous waste on their property, they will generally have to comply with RCRA in the handling and disposal of that waste. RCRA governs storage, treatment and disposal of hazardous waste, requiring entities who conduct such activities to have permits. All persons must assure that hazardous waste is stored, treated or disposed of at permitted RCRA facilities. For Department components taking property in the course of law enforcement efforts, this will generally mean securing and disposing of any hazardous waste in accordance with RCRA, usually by contracting for transport and disposal in a permitted facility. Without going through all of the details of RCRA regulation, it is important to note that storage of most hazardous wastes at a location for longer than 90 days requires that the facility be permitted as a storage facility. As you review Departmental practices, please assure that waste materials are being handled lawfully and are not maintained or disposed of at unpermitted facilities.

You should also be aware that federal agencies engaging in hazardous waste activities may be required to give notice of those activities to EPA. As summarized above, RCRA Section 3016 requires federal agencies to maintain an inventory of sites at which hazardous wastes are stored, treated or disposed. 42 U.S.C. § 6937. Under these requirements, for example, a federal entity which takes real property on which hazardous waste has been stored could, after the passage of time, itself become responsible for a RCRA storage facility, and have to give notice to EPA.

⁸ As addressed above, CERCLA subjects federal agencies to potential suit from any party who incurs costs as a result of cleaning up hazardous substance contamination. Federal agency compliance with section 120(h) is not a defense to claims by these governmental or private entities that they have spent money to clean up contamination resulting from governmental property or activities. Rather, allegations of non-compliance with the section 120(h) obligations would provide a different cause of action against the federal agency, likely arising under the "citizen's suit" provision, 42 U.S.C. § 9659(a)(1).

⁹ Under RCRA sovereign immunity has been waived to state and local regulation of solid and hazardous waste. Federal agencies must therefore comply not only with federal law, but with state and local law as well. See 42 U.S.C. § 6961.

CONCLUSION

Department components involved with property on which hazardous substances are found must consider the potential responsibility under federal environmental laws outlined in this memorandum. The recent EPA Federal Property Transfer Regulations reflect an effort to reduce the burden that CERCLA places on law enforcement agencies. As there are a multitude of specific circumstances in which the statutes and regulations are applied, we are happy to continue to work with the Department components in applying these laws.

Attachments

Notice, Covenant and Warranty¹

NOTICE [For Contract of Sale and for Deed]

This notice provides information concerning hazardous substances known or believed to have been stored, released or disposed of at [provide common identification of the property, such as a site name or street address; followed by a proper legal description]. The United States of America owned the described property as a result of deed [dated; record book entry]. The [name of agency(s)] has (have) provided the information contained herein for the time period(s) indicated based on a complete search of agency files.

This notice is to be recorded with the deed transferring title of this property to _____ pursuant to a contract or option dated [fill in date].

A. Hazardous Substances Known to have been Released, Disposed of or Stored during United States Ownership

Information provided in this part addresses the period from date of deed to [date of sale], [being the period when the [name of agency] had administrative jurisdiction over the subject land, or being the entire period in which title was vested in the United States,] based on a complete search of agency files. [repeat for other agency(s) if needed]

1. Identify any hazardous substances removed from the site for disposal.

[e.g., provide information from, summarize or attach manifests identifying any hazardous substances disposed of from site by United States or other notification of hazardous substances provided to federal, state or local agency.]

2. Identify any hazardous waste storage, treatment or disposal units on the site.

[e.g., provide information from, summarize or attach any permit or permit application or other notice provided by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency or state or local agency with responsibility for hazardous substances.]

3. Identify any other information concerning hazardous substances stored, disposed or released on the property

[e.g., summarize any information concerning hazardous substance activity reported by witnesses.]

¹ The following is a reprint of a proposed notice to be included in the contract of sale and the deed.

4. Where property was used, in whole or in part, for, or potentially affected by, continuing operations which generate hazardous substances, identify all such operations and substances

[e.g., for property on which hazardous substances were in use during United States ownership, provide information from, attach or summarize any permits, notifications, reports or documentation concerning hazardous substances prepared, filed or submitted during the time of United States ownership. Include such documentation whether prepared by the United States, its agencies, or private tenants, residents or occupants on the real property.)

B. Actual Knowledge of Hazardous Substances at Property, without regard to United States Ownership

Information in this part addresses hazardous substances which may have been stored, released or disposed of prior to United States ownership. To the extent possible, this notification also describes the source of the information. The United States cannot assure that information based on reports by other persons, indirect evidence or other sources is accurate in all respects.

1. Describe any known instances of authorized or permitted storage, disposal or release of hazardous substances at the property.

[e.g., provide information from, attach or summarize any permits, notifications, reports or documentation concerning hazardous substances issued to prior owners or prior operators and located at property]

2. Describe any known instances of unauthorized or unpermitted storage, disposal or release of hazardous substances at the property.

[e.g., indirect evidence from conditions at site, reports from informants, witnesses, evidence from state or local regulatory entities]

C. Definitions

1. "Hazardous substances" has the meaning provided in 42 U.S.C. § 101(14) and 40 C.F.R. §§ 300.6 and 302.4 and thus includes all hazardous wastes identified and listed pursuant to 40 C.F.R. part 261.

2. Descriptions of hazardous substances shall include, to the extent such information is known and is appropriate, the common name, the chemical abstracts name, the chemical abstracts number and the EPA hazardous waste number, or other information sufficient to describe the substance. Material safety data sheets should be provided to prospective buyers.

3. "Disposal" and "storage" shall have the meanings set forth in 42 U.S.C. §§ 6903(3), (33) and regulations promulgated thereunder. "Release" shall have the meaning set forth in 42 U.S.C. § 9601(22) and regulations promulgated thereunder.

COVENANT and WARRANTY [for Deed]

The United States hereby covenants and warrants that —

(i) all remedial action necessary to protect human health and the environment with respect to any such substance identified in part A of this Notice remaining on the property has been taken before the date of such transfer, and

(ii) any additional remedial action found to be necessary with respect to any such substance identified in part A of this Notice after the date of such transfer shall be conducted by the United States.

Appendix B

**There are no items for the Appendix
in Chapter 2 at this time.**

Appendix C

Redelegations of Authority

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Office of the Attorney General

28 CFR Part 0

[A.G. Order No. 1598-92]

Redelegations of Authority to United States Attorneys, Deputy Assistant Attorneys General, Section Chiefs, and Director, Asset Forfeiture Office, in the Criminal Division¹

AGENCY: Department of Justice.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: This Order is the Criminal Divisions implementation of the first increase in the settlement and compromise authority delegated to the Assistant Attorneys General since 1981. It provides a corresponding increase in the settlement and compromise authority redelegated to United States Attorneys, Deputy Assistant Attorneys General, Section Chiefs, and the Director, Asset Forfeiture Office, in the Criminal Division, to further the efficient operation of the Department of Justice.

EFFECTIVE DATE: [Insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER.]

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lee J. Radek, Director, Asset Forfeiture Office, Criminal Division, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. 20530, 202-514-1263.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This Order conforms the redelegations of the Assistant Attorney General's authority to compromise civil penalties and forfeitures and close civil claims to subpart Y, part 0, title 28 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), 0.160, 0.164, 0.165, and 0.168 as amended by the Attorney General (Order No. 1478-91, 56 FR 8923-24, March 4, 1991). Subject to limitations set forth in 0.160(c) and 0.168(a), 0.168(d) provides that redelegations of this authority by Assistant Attorneys General to United States Attorneys will include the authority: (1) to accept offers in compromise in cases involving original claims by the United States of not more than \$500,000; (2) to accept offers in compromise in cases involving original claims by the United States between \$500,000 and \$5,000,000, so long as the difference between the original claim and the proposed settlement does not exceed 15

¹ The following is a reprint of Attorney General Order No. 1598-92.

percent of the original claim; and (3) to accept offers in compromise of claims against the United States in cases where the principal amount of the proposed settlement does not exceed \$500,000.

This Order supersedes Criminal Division Directive No. 116 (48 FR 50712-13, November 3, 1983), which contains the current redelegation of the authority of the Assistant Attorney General, Criminal Division, to compromise civil penalties and forfeitures and close civil claims.

This Order is exempt from the requirements of Executive Order 12291 as a regulation related to agency organization and management. Furthermore, this Order will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities because its effect is internal to the Department of Justice. 5 U.S.C. 605(b).

List of Subjects in 28 CFR Part 0

Authority delegations (Government agencies), Organization and functions (Government agencies), Penalties, Seizures and forfeitures.

Accordingly, 28 CFR Part 0 is amended as follows:

PART 0 - ORGANIZATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

1. The authority citation for Part 0 continues to read as follows:

AUTHORITY: 5 U.S.C. 301; 28 U.S.C. 509, 510, 515-19.

2. The Appendix to Subpart Y of Part 0 is amended by removing Criminal Division Directive No. 116.

3. The Appendix to Subpart Y of Part 0 is further amended by adding Order No. [] to read as follows: [Order No.]

REDELEGATIONS OF AUTHORITY TO UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS, DEPUTY ASSISTANT ATTORNEYS GENERAL, SECTION CHIEFS, AND DIRECTOR, ASSET FORFEITURE OFFICE, IN THE CRIMINAL DIVISION

By virtue of the authority vested in me by part 0 of title 28 of the Code of Federal Regulations, as amended, particularly §§ 0.160, 0.162, 0.164, 0.168 and 0.171, it is hereby ordered as follows:

(a)(1) Each U.S. Attorney is authorized in cases delegated to the Assistant Attorney General of the Criminal Division —

(A) To accept or reject offers in compromise of —

(i) Claims in behalf of the United States in all cases (other than forfeiture cases) in which the original claim \$500,000, and in all cases in which the original claim was between \$500,000 and \$5,000,000, so long as the difference between the gross amount of the original claim and the proposed settlement does not exceed 15 percent of the original claim; and in all civil or criminal forfeiture cases, except that the U.S. Attorney shall consult with the Asset Forfeiture Office of the Criminal Division before accepting offers in compromise or plea

offers in forfeiture cases in which the original claim was \$5,000,000 or more, and in forfeiture cases in which the original claim was between \$500,000 and \$5,000,000, when the difference between the gross amount of the original forfeiture sought and the proposed settlement exceeds 15 percent of the original claim and

(ii) Claims against the United States in all cases, or in administrative actions to settle, in which the amount of the proposed settlement does not exceed \$500,000; and

(B) To close (other than by compromise or entry of judgment) claims asserted by the United States in all cases (other than forfeiture cases) in which the gross amount of the original claim does not exceed \$500,000, and in all civil or criminal forfeiture cases, except that the U.S. Attorney shall consult with the Asset Forfeiture Office of the Criminal Division before closing a forfeiture case in which the gross amount of the original forfeiture sought is \$500,000 or more.

(2) This subsection does not apply —

(A) When, for any reason, the compromise or closing of a particular claim (other than a forfeiture case) will, as a practical matter, control or adversely influence the disposition of other claims which, when added to the claim in question, total more than the respective amounts designated above;

(B) When the U.S. Attorney is of the opinion that because of a question of law or policy presented, or for any other reason, the matter should receive the personal attention of the Assistant Attorney General;

(C) When a settlement converts into a mandatory duty the otherwise discretionary authority of an agency or department to revise, amend, or promulgate regulations;

(D) When a settlement commits a department or agency to expend funds that Congress has not appropriated and that have not been budgeted for the action in question, or commits a department or agency to seek a particular appropriation or budget authorization; or

(E) When a settlement limits the discretion of a Secretary or agency administrator to make policy or managerial decisions committed to the Secretary or agency administrator by Congress or by the Constitution.

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of this Order, the Assistant Attorney General of the Criminal Division may delegate to U.S. Attorneys authority to compromise or close other cases, including those involving amounts greater than as set forth in paragraph (a) above, and up to the maximum limit of his authority, where the circumstances warrant such delegation.

(c) All other authority delegated to me by §§ 0.160, 0.162, 0.164 and 0.171 of title 28 of the Code of Federal Regulations not falling within the limitations of paragraph (a) of this Order is hereby redelegated to Section Chiefs in the Criminal Division, except that —

(1) The authority delegated to me by §§ 0.160, 0.162, 0.164 and 0.171 of that title relating to conducting, handling, or supervising civil and criminal forfeiture litigation (other than bail bond forfeiture), including acceptance or denial of petitions for remission or mitigation of forfeiture, is hereby redelegated to the Director of the Asset Forfeiture Office; and

(2) When a Section Chief or the Director of the Asset Forfeiture Office is of the opinion that because of a question of law or policy presented, or for any other reason, a matter described in paragraph (c) should receive the personal attention of a Deputy Assistant Attorney General or Assistant Attorney General, he shall refer the matter to the appropriate Deputy Assistant Attorney General or to the Assistant Attorney General.

(d) Notwithstanding any of the above redelegations, when the agency or agencies involved have objected in writing to the proposed closing or dismissal of a case, or to the acceptance or rejection of an offer in compromise, any such unresolved objection shall be referred to the Assistant Attorney General for resolution.

MAY 19, 1992

/s/

Date

Robert S. Mueller, III
Assistant Attorney General
Criminal Division

Approved:

June 5, 1992

/s/

Date

Wayne A. Budd
Associate Attorney General

Appendix D

Office of Legal Counsel Opinion, AG Order No. 1860-94

Office of Legal Counsel Opinion¹

You have asked us to reconsider our opinion that property seized by and forfeited to the United States is not subject to state or local taxation for the period between the commission of the offense that leads to the order of forfeiture and the entry of the order of forfeiture. *See Liability of the United States for State and Local Taxes on Seized and Forfeited Property*, 15 Op. O.L.C. 85 (1991) (preliminary print) (“Harrison Memorandum”). In light of the Supreme Court’s decision in *United States v. 92 Buena Vista Ave.*, 113 S. Ct. 1126 (1993), we partially reverse our opinion.

Because states and localities may not tax federal property (absent express congressional authorization),² the time at which ownership of forfeited property passes to the United States and the extent of the ownership interest that passes to the United States determine whether state and local taxes are owed. In many property transactions, the time and the extent of transfer of ownership are unambiguous and independent issues. In cases of transfers of ownership under the federal forfeiture statutes, however, the answer to the question of when ownership is transferred has been a matter of dispute, and of great consequence for the extent of the interest transferred.

The Harrison Memorandum expresses the Justice Department’s traditional view that title vests in the United States at the time of the offense. This view is based on an interpretation of the “relation back” doctrine, which provides that a judicial order of forfeiture retroactively vests title to the forfeited property in the United States as of the time of the offense that leads to forfeiture, not as of the time of the judicial order itself. *See* 21 U.S.C. § 881(h) (“[a]ll right, title, and interest in property [subject to forfeiture] shall vest in the United States upon commission of the act giving rise to forfeiture....”); 18 U.S.C. § 1963(c), 21 U.S.C. § 853(c) (substantially identical to quoted language from 21 U.S.C. § 881(h)). Under the Department’s traditional interpretation, title in forfeited property vests in the federal government at the time of the offense. The date of the judicial order of forfeiture is not significant. From the date of the offense, states and other parties are barred from acquiring interests in the property from the owner whose interests are forfeited to the United States. *See In re One 1985*

¹ The following is a reprint of the Office of Legal Counsel Opinion.

² *See, e.g., United States v. City of Detroit*, 355 U.S. 466, 469 (1958) (“[A] [s]tate cannot constitutionally levy a tax directly against the Government of the United States or its property without the consent of Congress.”); *M’Culloch v. Maryland*, 17 U.S. (4 Wheat.) 316 (1819).

Nissan, 889 F.2d 1317, 1319-20 (4th Cir. 1989); *Eggleston v. Colorado*, 873 F.2d 242, 245-48 (10th Cir. 1989), *cert. denied*, 493 U.S. 1070 (1990)(cases decided before *Buena Vista* and consistent with the Harrison Memorandum).

The Harrison Memorandum considers and rejects several possible grounds for limiting the operation of the relation back doctrine and requiring payment of state and local tax liens for the period between the offense and the forfeiture order. The two grounds of principal concern here are the “innocent owner” defense in the civil drug forfeiture statute, *see* 21 U.S.C. § 881(a) (6)³, and the “bona fide purchaser” defense in the criminal drug forfeiture statute, *see* 21 U.S.C. § 853(c), and in the forfeiture provision of the RICO statute, *see* 18 U.S.C. § 1963 (c). The Harrison Memorandum concludes that these defenses do not protect a state or locality (or anyone else) who innocently acquires a property interest after the time of the offense. The Supreme Court’s decision in *Buena Vista* forces us to reconsider this conclusion. We conclude that the Harrison Memorandum’s conclusion concerning the innocent owner defense must be reversed, but that the Harrison Memorandum’s conclusion regarding the *bona fide* purchasers defense is correct (although this latter conclusion is less certain than the Harrison Memorandum indicates and we reach it through an analysis different from that set forth in the Harrison Memorandum).

I.

The civil drug forfeiture statute provides that “no property shall be forfeited..., to the extent of the interest of an owner, by reason of any act or omission established by that owner to have been committed or omitted without the knowledge or consent of that owner.” 21 U.S.C. § 881(a) (6). The Harrison Memorandum accepted that “owner” could include a state or locality holding a tax lien on the property. *See* Harrison Memorandum, 15 Op. O.L.C. at 88 (preliminary print). The Memorandum concluded, however, that this “innocent owner” provision does not apply to asserted property interests that arise after the time of the offense because, as of the moment of the offense, the property belongs (by operation of the relation back doctrine) to the United States, and not to the person from whom a third party innocently acquires an interest.

We conclude, consistent with the Harrison Memorandum, that a state or locality holding a tax lien can be an “owner” as that term is defined in the civil forfeiture statute’s innocent owner provisions. The broad language of the statute— “[a]ll...things of value” and “[a]ll real property, including any right, title and interest” provides no reason to exclude a tax lien-holder from the definition of “owner.” 21 U.S.C. § 881(a) (6), (7). The legislative history urges a broad reading⁴. And the courts have followed, sometimes explicitly, the path suggested by

³ The conclusions with regard to section 881(a) (6), the innocent owner provision immediately at issue in *Buena Vista* and applicable to all “things of value” traceable to an exchange for a controlled substance, also apply to section 881(a) (7), which contains a nearly identical innocent owner provision applicable to real property used in a drug offense. *See* n.2, *supra*, and n.6, *infra*.

⁴ *See* Joint Explanatory Statement of Titles II and III, 95th Cong., 2d Sess. (1978), *reprinted in* 1978 U.S. Code Cong. & Admin. News 9522 (in section 881(a) (6), “[t]he term ‘owner’ should be broadly interpreted to include any person with a recognizable legal or equitable interest in the property seized”); *see also* S. Rep. No. 225, 98th Cong., 2d Sess. 195, 215 (1984), *reprinted in* 1984 U.S. Code Cong. & Admin. News 3182, 3378, 3398 (describing section 881(a) (7) as, in effect, extending section 881(a) (6) to cover real property used in a drug offense but not acquired with proceeds of prohibited drug transactions).

Congress⁵. The “innocence” requirement of an innocent owner defense would seem to be easy to satisfy in most cases. Like an innocent donee or purchaser, a state or locality holding a tax lien generally has obtained its interest without knowledge of the offense giving rise to the forfeiture.

The Harrison Memorandum’s further conclusion with regard to the innocent owner defense, however, cannot survive the ruling in *Buena Vista*. The plurality and concurring opinions reject the interpretation of the relation back doctrine set forth in the Harrison Memorandum, and agree that the innocent owner defense is available to persons who acquire interest in forfeitable property after the commission of the offense that rendered the property subject to forfeiture. The opinions differ only as to the reading of the statute that leads to this result.

The plurality and the concurrence both analyze the common law doctrine of relation back as transferring ownership of forfeited property retroactively to the date of the offense, *but only* upon the entry of a judgment of forfeiture. Until a court issues such a judgment, this retroactive vesting of ownership in the United States does not occur, and all defenses to forfeiture that an owner of the property otherwise may invoke will remain available. Thus, a person who has acquired an interest in the property may raise any such defense in a forfeiture proceeding. If that person prevails, a judgment of forfeiture will not vest (retroactively) ownership off that property interest in the United States. *Buena Vista*, 113 S. Ct. at 1135-36, 1137 (plurality opinion), 1138-39 (Scalia, J., concurring).

The plurality and the concurrence both conclude that the federal civil forfeiture statute is fully compatible with the common law, and that the statutory innocent owner clause provides a defense for a third party who innocently acquires ownership of the property after the offense and before a judgment of forfeiture. The plurality notes that section 881(h), which sets forth the relation back doctrine for the civil forfeiture statute, applies that doctrine only to “property described in subsection (a) of this section.” Subsection (a) (6) excepts, from its description of forfeitable property, the property of an innocent owner. Therefore, in the plurality’s analysis, subsection (a) places the property of an innocent owner beyond the reach of the forfeiture and relation back provisions in subsection (h). *See Buena Vista*, 113 S. Ct. at 1136-37. Accordingly, an ownership interest in forfeitable property that is transferred to an innocent person (after the offense giving rise to forfeiture) does not vest in the United States as of the time of the offense. Indeed, it does not vest in the United States at all.

⁵ *See, e.g., United States v. 717 S. Woodward St.*, 1993 U.S. App. Lexis 21051 at *15 (3d Cir. Aug. 20, 1993) (citing legislative history); *United States v. 6960 Miraflores Ave.*, 995 F.2d 1558, 1561 (11th Cir. 1993) (“Lienholders have the right to assert their claims of innocent ownership” under section 881(a), as interpreted in *Buena Vista*); *United States v. 6109 Grubb Rd.*, 886 F.2d 618, 625 n.4 (3d Cir. 1989) (cited in *Buena Vista* and citing legislative history); *see also United States v. 2350 N.W. 187 St.*, 996 F.2d 1141 (11th Cir. 1993) (*Buena Vista* analysis of section 881(a) innocent owner provisions assumed to apply where purported innocent owner is local tax lien holder).

Interpreting the civil forfeiture statute as a more straightforward codification of common law doctrine,⁶ the concurrence reads the phrase, in subsection (h), “shall vest in the United States upon commission of the act giving rise to forfeiture” as meaning “shall vest in the United States upon forfeiture, effective as of commission of the act giving rise to forfeiture.” *Buena Vista*, 113 S. Ct. at 1140 (Scalia, J., concurring).⁷ The result, of course, is the same as under the plurality’s analysis: a property interest innocently acquired after the offense is not forfeited to the United States if an owner asserts the interest in a proper and timely way, before the entry of a forfeiture judgment.

In sum, we reverse the Harrison Memorandum’s conclusion that the innocent owner defense, set forth in 21 U.S.C. § 881(a), does not protect state and local claims for tax liabilities arising between the time of an offense rendering property subject forfeiture and the issuance of a court order of forfeiture.⁸

II.

The two federal criminal forfeiture statutes addressed in the Harrison Memorandum do not contain an innocent owner defense. Those statutes, however, do provide protection for a “transferee [who] establishes in a hearing [to ‘amend’ an order of forfeiture] that he is a *bona fide* purchaser for value of [the] property [subject to criminal forfeiture] who at the time of purchase was reasonably without cause to believe that the property was subject to forfeiture...” 21 U.S.C. § 853(c); 18 U.S.C. § 1963(c) (same). The Harrison Memorandum concluded that this statutory “*bona fide* purchaser” defense is not available to a state or locality asserting a lien for tax liability incurred after the offense that made the property subject to forfeiture.

We conclude, consistent with the apparent assumption of the Harrison Memorandum, that such tax liens are “property” or an “interest” in property under the two criminal forfeiture statutes. Both statutes define property broadly, as including all “real property” and all “tangible and intangible personal property, including rights, privileges, interests, claims and securities.” 21 U.S.C. § 853(b); 18 U.S.C. § 1963(b) (same); *see also* 21 U.S.C.

⁶ The concurrence specifically rejects the plurality’s reading of the phrase, in subsection (h), “property described in subsection (a)” as meaning, in effect, “property forfeitable under subsection (a).” The concurrence stresses that subsection (h) refers to “property *described* in subsection (a),” not property deemed forfeitable under subsection (a). Since subsection (a) describes property generally and does not declare that property that cannot be forfeited is not “property,” the “property described in subsection (a)” refers to all relevant property interests, including those of innocent owners. *Buena Vista*, 113 S. Ct. at 1139 (Scalia, J., concurring).

⁷ The concurrence “acknowledge[s] that there is some textual difficulty with th[is] interpretation,” but argues, first, that the imprecision imputed to the quoted language in subsection (h) is to be expected “in a legal culture familiar with retroactive forfeiture” and, second, that the civil forfeiture statute as a whole, including subsection (d) and its adoption of forfeiture procedures applicable under 19 U.S.C. § 1602 *et seq.*, does not make sense if one rejects the concurrence’s reading of subsection (h) (and the plurality’s reading of subsections (a) and (h)). *Buena Vista*, 113 S. Ct. at 1140 (Scalia, J., concurring).

⁸ The local tax lien cases decided by lower courts since the Supreme Court’s decision in *Buena Vista* do not alter our conclusion. In *2350 N.W. 187 St.*, 996 F.2d 1141, the court vacated the judgments in two cases in which the district courts had relied on the interpretation of the relation back doctrine described in the Harrison Memorandum, and had granted summary judgment against a county invoking the innocent owner defense in 21 U.S.C. § 881(a) (6), (7) to assert liens for property taxes owed for some of the period between an offense giving rise to forfeiture and the entry of a judgment of forfeiture. The appellate court remanded the cases for further consideration in light of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Buena Vista*.

§ 853(c), (n) (6); 18 U.S.C. § 1963(c), (l) (6) (forfeiture and bona fide purchaser defense provisions referring to “interest” in such property). The legislative history and the courts’ application of this statutory language also suggest a definition of property interests broad enough to include state and local tax liens on real property.⁹

The Harrison Memorandum suggests two arguments—one based on the relation back doctrine and another based on the definition of *bona fide* purchaser—to support its conclusion that the *bona fide* purchaser defense does not extend to holders of property interests that consist of liens for state and local taxes for the period after the offense and before a judgment of forfeiture.

A.

The Harrison Memorandum’s central argument concerning the relation back doctrine addresses the bona fide purchaser defense no less than the innocent owner defense. *See* Harrison Memorandum, 15 Op. O.L.C. at 88 (preliminary print). On the interpretation set forth in the Harrison Memorandum, the United States has owned the property since the commission of the offense giving rise to the criminal forfeiture, and no one, including a *bona fide* purchaser, can later acquire any interest from the former owner.

Although the question is a closer one than in the civil forfeiture context, we conclude that the Supreme Court’s decision in *Buena Vista* rejects this argument as well.¹⁰ We recognize that the plurality’s holding is based on a reading of the civil forfeiture statute (and its innocent owner provisions) and does not address the criminal forfeiture statutes (and their *bona fide* purchaser provisions). That holding also does not require the plurality to adopt the interpretation of the common law relation back doctrine that the opinion sets forth. Nonetheless, the plurality’s discussion of the common law doctrine makes clear that it agrees with the concurrence that the relation back doctrine vests ownership retroactively in the United States only upon entry of a final judgment of forfeiture. Under that reading, if a state or locality establishes that it is a “*bona fide* purchaser” of an interest in the property by virtue of a tax lien, and does so before a court orders forfeiture, the

⁹ *See* S. Rep. No. 225 at 193, *reprinted in* 1984 U.S. Code Cong. & Admin. News at 3376 (section enacting current 18 U.S.C. § 1963(c) and 21 U.S.C. § 853(c) “allows the use of criminal forfeiture as an alternative to civil forfeiture in all drug felony cases”); *id.* at 211, *reprinted in* 1984 U.S. Code Cong. & Admin. News at 3394 (property defined as subject to criminal forfeiture under 18 U.S.C. § 1963(a) and 21 U.S.C. § 853(a) is equivalent to property subject to civil forfeiture under 21 U.S.C. § 881(a)); *United States v. Reckmeyer*, 836 F.2d 200, 205 (4th Cir. 1987) (unsecured creditor who has reduced his claim to judgment and acquired a lien could seek an amendment to a forfeiture order under 21 U.S.C. § 853(n)); *United States v. Robinson*, 721 F. Supp. 1541, 1545 (D.R.I. 1989) (a leasehold interest ordinarily is a real property interest within the definition in 21 U.S.C. § 853(b)); *see also United States v. Monsanto*, 491 U.S. 600, 606-09 (1989) (noting breadth of forfeitable property under 21 U.S.C. § 853 (a)).

¹⁰ *Cf. United States v. Harry*, 1993 U.S. Dist. Lexis 11999 at *21-27 (E.D. Iowa May 6, 1993) (drawing on *Buena Vista* discussion of innocent owners to resolve *bona fide* purchaser issue under the criminal forfeiture statute).

order of forfeiture will not extend to the lien-holder's interest and, therefor, will not vest title to that interest in the United States.¹¹

We also recognize that the concurrence in *Buena Vista* suggests that the relation back doctrine precludes a *bona fide* purchaser defense under the criminal statutes where it allows an innocent owner defense under the civil statute. As the concurrence points out, the criminal forfeiture statutes establish a procedure by which a person asserting a *bona fide* purchaser defense raises that defense *after* the court has entered an order of forfeiture. See 21 U.S.C. § 853(n); 18 U.S.C. § 1963 (l). In contrast, the civil forfeiture process (on both the plurality's and the concurrence's reading) contemplates that a person asserting an innocent owner defense will do so *before* the court enters an order of forfeiture. As the concurrence sees it, in the former case, the court order already has vested title retroactively in the United States (effective as of the date of the offense) before the "transferee" asserts a claim to be a *bona fide* purchaser. In the latter case, however, the court will not yet have issued the order vesting title retroactively when the "owner" asserts an innocent owner claim. (The concurrence argues that the civil statute's use of the term "owner" and the criminal statutes' use of "transferee" reflects this distinction and suggests its significance.) On this view, if a transferee's claim to be a *bona fide* purchaser succeeds and the court amends the order of forfeiture, the amendment does not void, retroactively, the initial retroactive vesting of title in the United States. The amendment to the initial order of forfeiture simply effects a new transfer of title to the *bona fide* purchaser, leaving undisturbed the United States' ownership from the time of the offense to the time of the amendment to the forfeiture order. See *Buena Vista*, 113 S. Ct. at 1141 (Scalia, J., concurring).

The *Buena Vista* concurrence fails to establish, however, that the criminal forfeiture statutes' *bona fide* purchaser defense does not protect liens for state and local tax liabilities incurred after the offense giving rise to the forfeiture. Only the concurrence advances the argument. The plurality does not join in it, and nothing in the dissenting opinion suggests that the dissenters would adopt the concurrence's views.

Further, the concurrence's argument reads too much into the actual, multi-step procedures by which a court adjudicates a criminal forfeiture claim. It thereby overlooks—or confuses those procedures with—the more fundamental legal (and fictional) process through which a retroactive transfer of ownership occurs. The better interpretation of the criminal forfeiture statutes is that the procedures of entering an order of forfeiture, holding a hearing at which transferees assert claims to be *bona fide* purchasers, and amending the order of forfeiture upon successful presentation of such a claim are but phases in a single (if protracted) process for determining what property interest vests, retroactively, in the United States when the court enters its final, amended order of forfeiture. The entire process is the equivalent of the single order of forfeiture in the civil context.

This interpretation fits more easily with the statutory language, especially when that language is read in light of the discussion in *Buena Vista* of common law relation back doctrine. The criminal forfeiture statutes provide that title in property subject to forfeiture "shall be ordered forfeited to the United States *unless* the transferee establishes" that he is a *bona fide* purchaser for value, and that "the United States shall have clear title to [the] property" only *following* the court's disposition of all petitions" filed by transferees asserting claims to be *bona*

¹¹ This conclusion would follow rather simply from the court's analysis in *Buena Vista* when the state or locality asserts its *bona fide* purchaser defense at or before the proceedings in which the court issues an order of forfeiture. The conclusion is less certain under the procedure set forth in the criminal forfeiture statutes, which provides for assertion of *bona fide* purchaser claims at a hearing held after the court issues an initial order of forfeiture. The remainder of this subsection addresses this issue.

fide purchasers. 21 U.S.C. § 853(c), (n)(7); 18 U.S.C. § 1963(c), (1)(7) (emphasis added). Such language would seem to suggest that the United States *never obtains* title from a *bona fide* purchaser, not that the United States first obtains title and then must give it back. Only after the entry of the final, amended order of forfeiture would ownership vest retroactively in the United States.¹²

This conclusion also avoids an incongruity that the concurrence's interpretation would create: an innocent owner (under the civil statute) would owe state and local taxes from the moment he or she acquired the property, but a *bona fide* purchaser for value (under the criminal statutes) would not owe taxes from the time he or she acquired the property until the time the court amended the order of forfeiture.

Finally, the conclusion we reach also is consistent with the statutory distinction between "owner" and "transferee." A person claiming to be a *bona fide* purchaser is nothing more than a transferee until he or she establishes to the court that he or she is a *bona fide* purchaser (whether the transferee does so after an initial forfeiture order, as the statute contemplates, or at some earlier stage). Only after the transferee has made this showing is he or she recognized as an owner (indeed, an innocent owner) of a particular type. Similarly, a person claiming to be an innocent owner is recognized as an innocent owner only after he or she proves to the court that he or she meets the standards of innocent ownership. Before that, such a person is, in the eyes of the court, merely a transferee. The civil forfeiture laws simply do not address or refer explicitly to those who assert, but have not yet established, that they are innocent owners.

For these reasons, we do not believe that the concurrence's discussion of the legal significance of the differences between the civil and criminal forfeiture statutes (which, in any case, is unnecessary to its conclusions) is correct.

B.

The Harrison Memorandum also states that state and local tax authorities cannot "qualify as *bona fide* purchasers for value" under the criminal forfeiture statutes. Harrison Memorandum, 15 Op. O.L.C. at 88 (preliminary print). The Memorandum does not set forth the basis for this conclusion. The *Buena Vista* plurality and concurrence have nothing to say about this issue and, thus, do not require a reversal of the Harrison Memorandum. Although the matter is not free from doubt, we believe that the stronger argument is that state and local tax lien-holders are not "*bona fide* purchasers."

The courts have not adopted a clear and uniform view of how to interpret "*bona fide* purchaser" under the criminal forfeiture statutes. *See, e.g., United States v. Lavin*, 942 F.2d 177, 182-89 (3d Cir. 1991) (*bona fide* purchaser acquires interest through volitional, advertent and, generally, commercial transaction; victim of embezzlement acquired interest through unwitting and inadvertent tortious action of another and therefore was not a *bona fide* purchaser); *United States v. Reckmeyer*, 836 F.2d 200, 206-08 (4th Cir. 1987) (*bona fide* purchaser includes a general, unsecured creditor of defendant who gave value to defendant in arms'-length transaction with expectation that he would receive equivalent value in the future, and whose interest must have been in some part of the forfeited property because debtor's entire estate had been forfeited); *cf. United States v. Campos*, 859 F.2d 1233, 1237-38 (6th Cir. 1988) (general, unsecured creditor is not a *bona fide* purchaser,

¹² Although the statutory language does not fit perfectly with the interpretation adopted here, somewhat imprecise drafting concerning the sequence of events leading to a retroactive vesting of title is, as the *Buena Vista* concurrence points out, perhaps to be expected in a legal culture familiar with retroactive vesting. *See Buena Vista*, 113 S. Ct. at 1140 (Scalia, J., concurring).

because he does not have a legal interest in the forfeited property); *Torres v. \$36,256.80 U.S. Currency*, 1993 U.S. Dist. Lexis 9107 at *19-23 (S.D.N.Y. July 7, 1993) (similar to *Campos*; also pointing out significance, for general, unsecured creditor, of unusual circumstance in *Reckmeyer* that entire estate had been seized); *United States v. Mageean*, 649 F. Supp. 820, 824, 829 (D. Nev. 1986) (definition of *bona fide* purchaser cannot be “stretch[ed]” to include tort claimants, but “there is no reason that a good-faith provider of goods and services,” although an unsecured creditor, “cannot be a bona fide purchaser”), *aff’d without opinion*, 822 F.2d 62 (9th Cir. 1987); see also *United States v. 3181 S.W. 138th Place*, 778 F. Supp. 1570, 1574-75 (S.D. Fla. 1991) (civil forfeiture case stating that locality is not *bona fide* purchaser by virtue of tax lien), *vacated on other grounds*, 996 F.2d 1141 (11th Cir. 1993); S. Rep. No. 225 at 201, 209, *reprinted in* 1984 U.S.C.C.A.N. at 3384, 3391.

We are aware of no case that has decided the precise question at issue here. We acknowledge that some of the claims that courts have rejected are weaker than those presented by tax liens, and that at least one court has pointed to a primary purpose of the criminal forfeiture statutes’ relation back provisions that would not be served by denying the bona fide purchaser defense to holders of liens for state and local taxes. See *Reckmeyer*, 836 F.2d at 208 (“Congress’s primary concern in adopting the relation-back provision was to make it possible for courts to void sham or fraudulent transfers that we are aimed at avoiding the consequences of forfeiture”). Nonetheless, we have found no authority that has construed *bona fide* purchaser broadly enough to encompass such a tax lien-holder.

A state or locality does provide something of value, in the form of government services, in return for the interest it acquires in property (ultimately in the form of a lien) by virtue of its taxing authority. This exchange, however, does not fit the transactional, arms’-length exchange of values contemplated in the case law and suggested by the statutory phrase “*bona fide*” purchaser for value.¹³ Therefore, we do not reverse the Harrison

¹³ See, e.g., *Lavin*, 942 F.2d at 185-86 (Congress derived *bona fide* purchaser exception “from hornbook commercial law” principle of protecting the “innocent purchaser for valuable consideration” which had developed at common law “in order to promote finality in commercial transactions and thus to...foster commerce”); *Reckmeyer*, 836 F.2d at 208 (scope of *bona fide* purchaser provision “construed liberally” is to protect “all persons who give value to the defendant in an arms’-length transaction with the expectation that they would receive equivalent value in return”).

Memorandum's conclusion that the *bona fide* purchaser provisions cannot be relied upon to require payment of state and local tax liens.¹⁴

III.

For the reasons set forth above, we reach the following conclusions: In civil forfeiture proceedings (under 21 U.S.C. § 881) the United States may—and, indeed, must—pay liens for state and local taxes accruing after the commission of the offense leading to forfeiture and before the entry of a judicial order of forfeiture, if the lien-holder establishes, before the court enters the order of forfeiture, that it is an innocent owner of the interest it asserts. In criminal forfeiture proceedings (under 18 U.S.C. § 1963 or 21 U.S.C. § 853), however, the United States may not pay such liens because state and local tax lien-holders are not *bona fide* purchasers for value of the interests they would assert, and therefore do not come within any applicable exception to a statute that, upon entry of a court's final order of forfeiture, vests full ownership retroactively in the United States as of the date of the offense.

¹⁴ The Harrison Memorandum also found that payment of liens for state and local taxes, accruing after the offense, was not within the Attorney General's discretionary authority under 28 U.S.C. § 524(c) (1) (D) ("payment of valid liens...against property that has been forfeited") or 28 U.S.C. § 524(c) (1) (E) (payments "in connection with remission or mitigation procedures relating to property forfeited"). We reach the same conclusion through a different analysis. A tax lien-holder who establishes that he or she is an innocent owner under the civil forfeiture statute or a *bona fide* purchaser under the criminal statutes is protected from the operation of the relation back doctrine, and need not rely on the Attorney General's discretionary payment of a valid lien or remission or mitigation of a forfeiture that has not occurred with respect to the lienholder's interest. See S. Rep. No. 225 at 207-08, 217, reprinted in 1984 U.S. Code Cong. & Admin. News at 3390-3391, 3400; *Lavin*, 942 F.2d at 185 (*bona fide* purchaser provisions designed to require protection previously left to discretion of Attorney General). If the tax lien-holder fails to establish that he or she is protected by one of these defenses to forfeiture, there can be no "valid lien" for taxes to be paid and no forfeited interest (in the form of tax liabilities) for the Attorney General to "remi[t] or mitigat[e]." Because ownership of the property will have vested in the United States as of the commission of the offense, state and local authorities cannot (absent a congressional waiver of immunity from state and local taxation that we do not find in 28 U.S.C. § 524 or elsewhere) levy taxes on such property after the date of the offense any more than they could levy taxes on a federal courthouse or post office.

A.G. ORDER NO. 1860-94¹

Office of the Attorney General
Washington, DC 20530

ORDER NO. 1860-94

**DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY TO RESTORE FORFEITED PROPERTY OR TAKE OTHER ACTION
TO PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF INNOCENT PERSONS IN CRIMINAL FORFEITURES**

By virtue of the authority vested in me as Attorney General of the United States, including 18 U.S.C. §§ 793(h)(3), 794(d)(3), 982(b)(1), 1467(h)(1), 1963(g)(1), 2253(h)(1), 21 U.S.C. § 853(i)(1), and 28 U.S.C. §§ 509 and 510, I hereby delegate to the Director, Asset Forfeiture Office, Criminal Division, my authority, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. §§ 793(h)(3), 794(d)(3), 982(b)(1), 1467(h)(1), 1963(g)(1), 2253(h)(1), and 21 U.S.C. § 853(i)(1), to restore forfeited property to victims or take other actions to protect the rights of innocent persons in criminal forfeitures which are in the interest of justice and which are not inconsistent with the provisions of those sections.

Date

_____/s/_____
Janet Reno
Attorney General

¹ The following is a reprint of the Attorney General's Order No. 1860-94, dated March 19, 1994.

Appendix E

**There are no items for the Appendix
in Chapter 5 at this time.**

Yes () Attach Copy No () Yes () No ()

If yes, explain circumstances: _____

Forfeitures Generally Follow the Prosecution

As a general rule, if a state or local agency has seized property as part of an ongoing state criminal investigation, and, if the criminal defendants are being prosecuted in state court, the forfeiture action should also be pursued in state court.

However, certain circumstances may make federal forfeiture appropriate. These circumstances include but are not limited to the following:

- (1) state laws or procedures are inadequate or forfeiture experience is lacking in the state system with the result that a state forfeiture action may be unfeasible or unsuccessful;
- (2) the seized asset poses unique management or disposition problems (e.g., real property or a business) requiring U.S. Marshals Service involvement;
- (3) state laws or procedures will result in a delay in forfeiture leading to significant diminution in the value of the asset or a delay in the resolution of the case that adversely affects an innocent owner or lienholder; or
- (4) the pertinent state or local prosecuting official has reviewed the case and declined to initiate forfeiture proceedings for any reason.

▪ Has a state or local prosecutor declined to proceed with forfeiture under state law?
Yes () No ()

▪ Please provide name of state or local prosecutor and declination date:

Name	Date
------	------

▪ Has another federal agency been contacted and declined to proceed with this forfeiture under federal law?
Yes () No ()

▪ Have you attached copies of pertinent investigative or arrest reports and copies of any affidavits filed in support of a seizure warrant? Yes () No ()

To be Completed by Federal Investigative Agency

- Recommend Adoption: [] Adoption is in accord with general and local policy.
- Decline Adoption: [] Reason for declination: _____

Investigative Agency Reviewing Official:

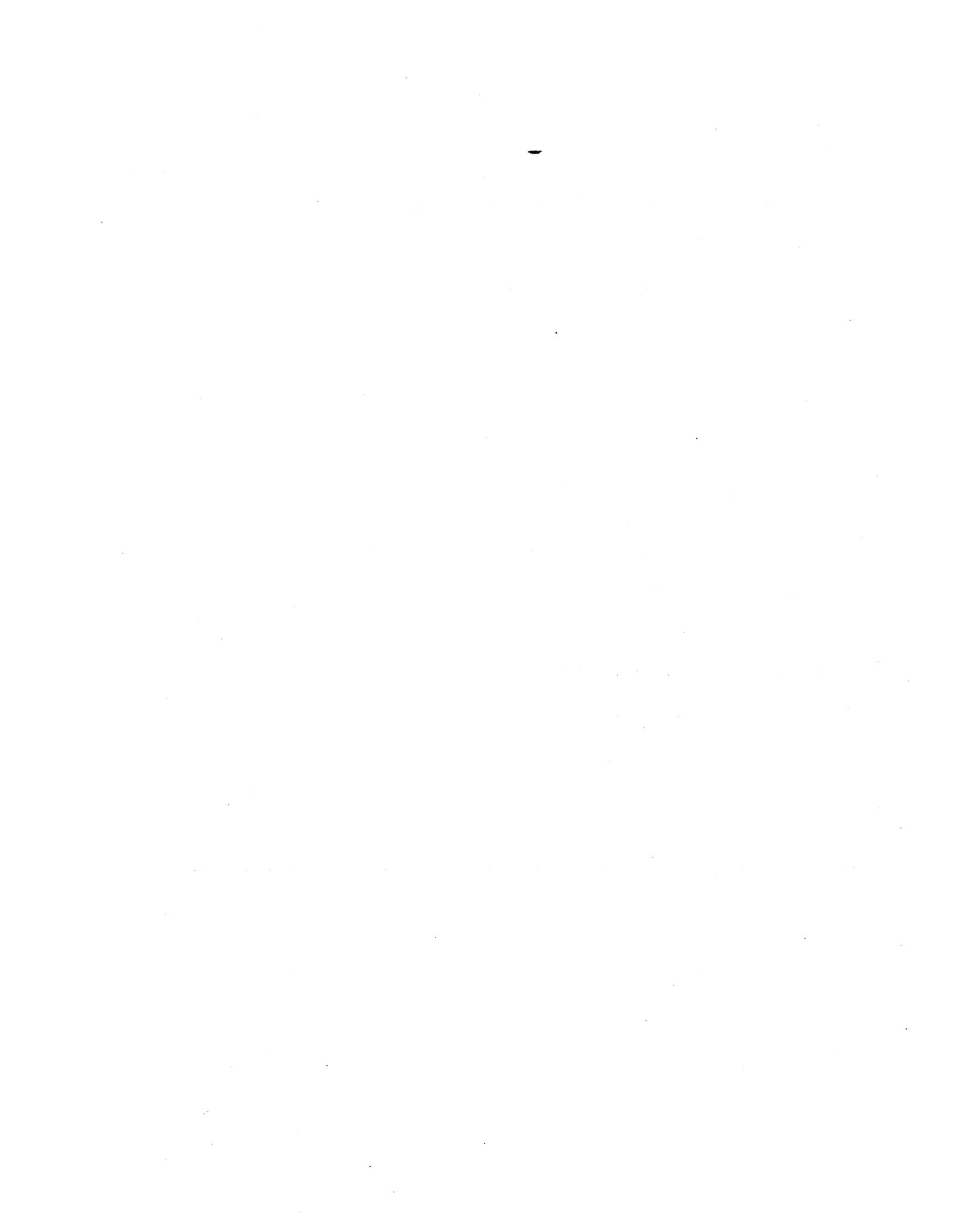
Signature Date

Immediate Probable Cause Review needed if following factors are not present:

- seizure was based on judicial warrant
- arrest made in connection with seizure
- drugs or other contraband were seized from the person from whom the property was seized

Investigative Agency Headquarters Approval:

Signature Date



Delegation of Authority to Make Final Determinations in Uncontested Equitable Sharing Requests

June 5, 1995

MEMORANDUM

TO: Assistant Attorney General, Criminal Division
 United States Attorneys
 Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation
 Administrator, Drug Enforcement Administration
 Commissioner, Immigration and Naturalization Service
 Director, United States Marshals Service

FROM: Jamie S. Gorelick
 Deputy Attorney General

SUBJECT: Delegation of Authority to Make Final Determinations in Uncontested Equitable Sharing Requests

Parts V.D.3 and 4 of The Attorney General's Guidelines on Seized and Forfeited Property (1990) provide that final determinations of equitable sharing (1) of forfeited property valued at \$1 million or greater, (2) in multi-district cases, or (3) involving the transfer of real property are to be made by the Deputy Attorney General or her designee.

I hereby delegate to the Assistant Attorney General of the Criminal Division (or her designee) the authority to make final equitable sharing determinations that otherwise would require my approval, provided the Asset Forfeiture Office (AFO) of the Criminal Division, the United States Attorney, and the federal seizing agency agree on the allocation of judicially forfeited property or that AFO and the federal seizing agency agree on the allocation of administratively forfeited property.

I will continue to make final equitable sharing determinations where there is not complete agreement among AFO, the United States Attorney, and the federal seizing agency on the sharing of judicially forfeited property or between AFO and the federal seizing agency on the sharing of administratively forfeited property.

Recommendation:

Delegation of decision-making authority to the Assistant Attorney General of the Criminal Division (or her designee) in equitable sharing cases (1) involving property valued at \$1 million or more, (2) in multi-district cases, or (3) involving the transfer of real property, provided that AFO, the United States Attorney, and the federal seizing agency agree on the allocation of judicially forfeited property or that AFO and the federal seizing agency agree on the allocation of administratively forfeited property.

APPROVE /s/ Jamie S. Gorelick

DISAPPROVE

OTHER

Appendix G

**There are no items for the Appendix
in Chapter 7 at this time.**

Appendix H

**There are no items for the Appendix
in Chapter 8 at this time.**

Appendix I

**There are no items for the Appendix
in Chapter 9 at this time.**

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Rockville, MD 20849-6000**

