that assets have been concealed or improperly transferred by the debtor; the availability of assets or income which may be realized by enforced collection proceedings.

(2) *Inability to locate debtor*. Collection action may be terminated on a claim when the debtor cannot be located, and either:

(i) There is no security remaining to be liquidated; or

(ii) The applicable statute of limitations has run and the prospects of collecting by offset, notwithstanding the bar of the statute of limitations, are too remote to justify retention of the claim.

(3) *Cost will exceed recovery*. Collection action may be terminated on a claim when it is likely that the cost of further collection action will exceed the amount recoverable thereby.

(4) *Claim legally without merit*. Collection action should be terminated immediately on a claim whenever it is determined that the claim is legally without merit.

(5) *Claim cannot be substantiated by evidence*. Collection action should be terminated when it is determined that the evidence necessary to prove the claim cannot be produced or the necessary witnesses are unavailable and efforts to reduce voluntary payment are unavailing.

(e) *Transfer of claim*. When NASA has doubt as to whether collection action should be suspended or terminated on a claim, it may refer the claim to the General Accounting Office for advice. When a significant enforcement policy is involved in reducing a statutory penalty or forfeiture to judgment, or recovery of a judgment is a prerequisite to the imposition of administrative sanctions, such as the suspension or revocation of a license or the privilege of participating in a Government sponsored program, NASA may refer such a claim for litigation even though termination of collection activity might otherwise be given consideration under paragraphs (d)(1) and (2) of this section. Claims on which NASA holds a judgment by assignment or otherwise will be referred to the Department of Justice for further action if renewal of the judgment lien or enforced collection proceedings are justified under the criteria discussed in this section.

§ 1261.417 Referral to Department of Justice (DJ) or General Accounting Office (GAO).

(a) *Prompt referral*. Except as provided in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section, claims on which aggressive collection action has been taken in accordance with § 1261.406 and which cannot be compromised, or on which collection action cannot be suspended or terminated, in accordance with §§ 1261.414 and 1261.416, shall be promptly referred to the Department of Justice for litigation.

(1) Claims for which the gross original amount is over $200,000 shall be referred to the Commercial Litigation Branch, Civil Division, Department of Justice, Washington, DC 20530.

(2) Claims for which the gross original amount is $200,000 or less shall be referred to the United States Attorney in whose judicial district the debtor can be found. Referrals should be made as early as possible, consistent with aggressive agency collection action and the observance of the regulations contained in this subpart, and in any event, well within the period for bringing a timely suit aqainst the debtor. Ordinarily, referrals should be made within 1 year of the agency's final determination of the fact and the amount of the debt.

(3) *Minimum amount*. NASA is not to refer claims of less than $600, exclusive of interest, penalties, and administrative costs, for litigation unless:

(i) Referral is important to a significant enforcement policy; or

(ii) The debtor not only has the clear ability to pay the claim but the Government can effectively enforce payment, having due regard for the exemptions available to the debtor under State and Federal law and the judicial remedies available to the Government.

(b) Claims arising from audit exceptions taken by the GAO to payments made by agencies must be referred to the GAO for review and approval prior to referral to the Department of Justice for litigation, unless NASA has been granted an exception by the GAO. Referrals shall comply with instructions, including monetary limitations,

contained in the GAO Policy and Procedures Manual for Guidance to Federal Agencies and paragraphs (e) and (f) of this section.

(c) When the merits of the claim, the amount owed on the claim, or the propriety of acceptance of a proposed compromise, suspension, or termination are in doubt, the designated official should refer the matter to the General Accounting Office for resolution and instructions prior to proceeding with collection action and/or referral to the Department of Justice for litigation.

(d) Once a claim has been referred to GAO or to the Department of Justice pursuant to this section, NASA shall refrain from having any contact with the debtor about the pending claim and shall direct the debtor to GAO or to the DJ, as appropriate, when questions concerning the claim are raised by the debtor. GAO or the DJ, as appropriate, shall be immediately notified by NASA of any payments which are received from the debtor subsequent to referral of a claim under this section.

(e) *Claims Collection Litigation Report (CCLR).* Unless an exception has been granted by the Department of Justice in consultation with the General Accounting Office, the Claims Collection Litigation Report (CCLR), which was officially implemented by NASA, effective March 1, 1983, shall be used with all referrals of administratively uncollectible claims. As required by the CCLR, the following information must be included:

(1) *Report of prior collection actions.* A checklist or brief summary of the actions previously taken to collect or compromise the claim. If any of the administrative collection actions have been omitted, the reason for their omission must be provided. GAO, the United States Attorney, or the Civil Division of the Department of Justice may return claims at their option when there is insufficient justification for the omission of one or more of the administrative collection actions enumerated in this subpart (see 4 CFR part 102).

(2) *Current address of debtor.* The current address of the debtor, or the name and address of the agent for a corporation upon whom service may be made. Reasonable and appropriate steps will be taken to locate missing parties in all cases. Referrals to the Department of Justice for the commencement of foreclosure of other proceedings, in which the current address of any party is unknown, will be accompanied by a listing of the prior known addresses of such party and a statement of the steps taken to locate that party.

(3) *Credit data.* Reasonably current credit data which indicates that there is a reasonable prospect of effecting enforced collection from the debtor, having due regard for the exemptions available to the debtor under State and Federal law and the judicial remedies available to the Government. Such credit data may take the form of:

(i) A commercial credit report;

(ii) An agency investigative report showing the debtor's assets, liabilities, income, and expenses;

(iii) The individual debtor's own financial statement executed under penalty of perjury reflecting the debtor's assets, liabilities, income, and expenses; or

(iv) An audited balance sheet of a corporate debtor.

(4) Reasons for credit data omissions. The credit data may be omitted if:

(i) A surety bond is available in an amount sufficient to satisfy the claim in full;

(ii) The forced sale value of the security available for application to the Government's claim is sufficient to satisfy the claim in full;

(iii) NASA wishes to liquidate loan collateral through judicial foreclosure but does not desire a deficiency judgment;

(iv) The debtor is in bankruptcy or receivership;

(v) The debtor's liability to the Government is fully covered by insurance, in which case NASA will furnish such information as it can develop concerning the identity and address of the insurer and the type and amount of insurance coverage; or

(vi) The status of the debtor is such that credit data is not normally available or cannot reasonably be obtained, for example, a unit of State or local government.

(f) *Preservation of evidence.* Care will be taken to preserve all files, records, and exhibits on claims referred or to be

referred to the Department of Justice for litigation. Under no circumstances should original documents be sent to the Department of Justice or the United States Attorney without specific prior approval to do so. Copies of relevant documents should be sent whenever necessary.

Subpart 1261.5—Administrative Offset of Claims

SOURCE: 52 FR 19487, May 26, 1987, unless otherwise noted.

§ 1261.500 Scope of subpart.

(a) This subpart applies to collection of claims by administrative offset under section 5 of the Federal Claims Collection Act of 1966 as amended by the Debt Collection Act of 1982 (31 U.S.C. 3716), other statutory authority, or the common law; it does not include ''Salary Offset,'' which is governed by subpart 1261.6, infra. Consistent with 4 CFR 102.3, collection by administrative offset will be undertaken by NASA on all liquidated or certain in amount claims in every instance in which such collection is determined to be feasible and not otherwise prohibited.

(b) Whether collection by administrative offset is feasible is a determination to be made by NASA on a case-by-case basis, in the exercise of sound discretion. NASA will consider not only whether administrative offset can be accomplished, both practically and legally, but also whether offset is best suited to further and protect all of the Government's interests. In appropriate circumstances, NASA may give due consideration to the debtor's financial condition; or whether offset would tend to substantially interfere with or defeat the purposes of the program authorizing the payments against which offset is contemplated. For example, under a grant program in which payments are made in advance of the grantee's performance, offset will normally be inappropriate.

(c) NASA is not authorized by 31 U.S.C. 3716 to use administrative offset with respect to:

(1) Debts owed by any State or local Government;

(2) Debts arising under or payments made under the Social Security Act, the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, or the tariff laws of the United States; or

(3) Any case in which collection of the type of debt involved by administrative offset is explicitly provided for or prohibited by another statute. However, unless otherwise provided by contract or law, debts or payments which are not subject to administrative offset under 31 U.S.C. 3716 may be collected by administrative offset under the common law or other applicable statutory authority.

§ 1261.501 Definition.

Administrative offset—the term, as defined in 31 U.S.C. 3701(a)(1), means ''withholding money payable by the United States Government to, or held by the Government for, a person to satisfy a debt the person owes the Government.''

§ 1261.502 Notification procedures.

(a) Before collecting any claims through administrative offset, a 30-day written notice must be sent to the debtor by certified mail, return receipt requested. The notice must include:

(1) The nature and amount of the debt;

(2) NASA's intention to collect by administrative offset; and

(3) An explanation of the debtor's rights under 31 U.S.C. 3716(a), or other relied upon statutory authority, which must include a statement that the debtor has the opportunity, within the 30-day notice period, to:

(i) Inspect and copy records of NASA with respect to the debt;

(ii) Request a review by NASA of its decision related to the claim; and

(iii) Enter into a written agreement with the designated official (see § 1261.402) to repay the amount of the claim. However, sound judgment should be exercised in determining whether to accept a repayment agreement in lieu of offset. The determination should balance the Government's interest in collecting the debt against fairness to the debtor. If the debt is delinquent and the debtor has not disputed its existence or amount, NASA should accept a repayment agreement in lieu of offset only if the debtor is able to establish that offset would result in undue financial hardship or