

(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;

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(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 would be against equity and good conscience.

(b) NASA may effect administrative offset against a payment to be made to a debtor prior to the completion of the procedures required by paragraph (a) of this section if:

(1) Failure to take the offset would substantially prejudice the Government's ability to collect the debt; and

(2) The time before the payment is to be made does not reasonably permit the completion of those procedures. Such prior offset must be promptly followed by the completion of those procedures. Amounts recovered by offset but later found not to be owed to the Government shall be promptly refunded.

(3) In cases where the procedural requirements of paragraph (a) of this section had previously been provided to the debtor in connection with the same debt under some other statutory or regulatory authority, such as pursuant to a notice of audit disallowance or salary offset under § 1261.603, the agency is not required to duplicate those requirements before taking administrative offset.

§ 1261.503 Agency records inspection; hearing or review.

(a) NASA shall provide the debtor with a reasonable opportunity for an "oral hearing" when:

(1) An applicable statute authorizes or requires the agency to consider waiver of the indebtedness involved, the debtor requests waiver of the indebtedness, and the waiver determination turns on an issue of credibility or veracity; or

(2) The debtor requests reconsideration of the debt and the agency determines that the question of the indebtedness cannot be resolved by review of the documentary evidence, for example, when the validity of the debt turns on an issue of credibility or veracity. Unless otherwise required by law, an oral hearing under this section is not required to be a formal evidentiary-type hearing, although significant matters discussed at the hearing should be carefully documented. See 4 CFR 102.3(c)(1). Such hearing may be an informal discussion/interview with the debtor, face-to-face meeting between debtor and cognizant NASA personnel, or written formal submission by the debtor and response by the NASA cognizant personnel with an opportunity for oral presentation. The hearing will be conducted before or in the presence of an official designated by the NASA General Counsel or designee on a case-by-case basis. The decision of the reviewing/hearing official should be communicated in writing (no particular form is required) to the affected parties, and will constitute the final administrative decision of the agency.

(b) Paragraph (a) of this section does not require an oral hearing with respect to debt collection systems in which determinations of indebtedness or waiver rarely involve issues of credibility or veracity and NASA has determined that review of the written record is ordinarily an adequate means to correct prior mistakes. In administering such a system, the agency is not required to sift through all of the requests received in order to accord oral hearings in those few cases which may involve issues of credibility or veracity. See 4 CFR 102.3(c)(2).

(c) In those cases where an oral hearing is not required or granted, NASA