

§ 274.6

(c) The owner of a seized conveyance shall be informed of the right to request a personal interview with an immigration officer and to present evidence to establish:

(1) That the conveyance was not subject to seizure; or

(2) That the conveyance is not subject to forfeiture; or

(3) That the conveyance was used in an act to which the owner was not privy, or did not consent, and the owner took all reasonable steps to prevent the illegal use of the conveyance.

If it is determined that the owner has established that paragraphs (c)(1) or (c)(2) of this section apply to the seized conveyance, that seized conveyance shall be returned to the owner as provided in paragraph (e) of this section; and if it is determined that the owner has established that paragraph (c)(3) of this section applies to the seized conveyance, that seized conveyance may be returned to the owner as provided in paragraph (d) of this section.

(d) At any time after seizure the regional commissioner may determine that it is in the best interests of justice not to pursue forfeiture of a seized conveyance which is otherwise subject to forfeiture. If such a determination is made, that seized conveyance shall be returned to the owner as provided in paragraph (e) of this section.

(e) The owner of a seized conveyance to be returned pursuant to paragraphs (c) or (d) of this section will be notified of the conditions of obtaining possession and that possession of the seized conveyance must be taken within 20 days of receipt of notice of the availability of the seized conveyance for return. If the owner has not complied with the conditions of obtaining possession and taken possession of the seized conveyance within that 20 day period, that seized conveyance shall be considered voluntarily abandoned to the United States, and the custodian shall dispose of that seized conveyance as provided in § 274.3 of this part. The conditions of obtaining possession of a seized conveyance available for return pursuant to paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section are as follows:

(1) If paragraph (c)(1) of this section applies to the seized conveyance, there

8 CFR Ch. I (1-1-04 Edition)

shall be no conditions for obtaining possession;

(2) If paragraphs (c)(2), (c)(3), or (d) of this section apply to the seized conveyance, the owner shall pay all costs and expenses of seizure and shall execute an instrument holding the United States, its agents and employees, harmless from all claims which may result from the seizure and return of the seized conveyance.

(f) If a seized conveyance being returned to the owner pursuant to this section is the subject of judicial forfeiture proceedings, the regional commissioner shall notify the United States Attorney that a determination has been made that the seized conveyance is to be returned to the owner and request that the judicial forfeiture proceedings be terminated.

§ 274.6 Proof of property interest.

The burden of proof is on a claimant to establish that the asserted property interest in a seized conveyance existed on the date of seizure of that conveyance by submission of sufficient satisfactory original documentation or certified copies of the original documentation. If the claimant fails to present documentation showing compliance with required state formalities it will be presumed that a property interest in a seized conveyance did not exist on the date of seizure of that conveyance.

§ 274.7 Appraisal.

The regional commissioner shall determine the appraised value of a seized conveyance by consulting accepted reference guides to conveyance values or experts in conveyance values. If there is no market for a conveyance at the place of seizure, the value of the conveyance in the principal market nearest the place of seizure shall be considered.

§ 274.8 Notice to owner and lienholder of seizure.

Whenever a conveyance is seized, a notice must be given to the owner and any known lienholder notifying them of the seizure of the conveyance and its consideration for forfeiture. The notice must be accompanied by copies of this part, section 274 of the Act, and the

proposed advertisement, if an advertisement is required pursuant to §274.9 of this part. The owner shall be specifically informed of the provisions of §§274.5, 274.10, 274.13, 274.14, 274.15, 274.16, and 274.17 of this part.

§ 274.9 Advertisement.

(a) If the appraised value of a seized conveyance does not exceed the monetary amount set forth in title 19 U.S.C. 1607 the regional commissioner shall cause an advertisement of the seizure to be published once a week for at least three successive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation in the federal judicial district in which the seizure occurred.

(b) The advertisement must:

(1) Describe the conveyance seized and indicate the identification number, if any;

(2) State the time and place of seizure;

(3) State that the seized conveyance is subject to forfeiture except as provided in §274.5(b) of this part;

(4) State that the Service is considering forfeiture of the seized conveyance and sale or other disposal, if declared forfeited; and

(5) State that any prospective petitioners for relief from forfeiture should submit their petitions pursuant to §§274.13, 274.14, 274.15, 274.16, and 274.17 of this part within 30 days of publication of the advertisement.

[53 FR 43187, Oct. 26, 1988, as amended at 56 FR 8686, Mar. 1, 1991]

§ 274.10 Judicial forfeiture proceedings upon claim and bond.

(a) Any person claiming ownership of a seized conveyance with an appraised value that does not exceed the monetary amount set forth in title 19 U.S.C. 1607, may obtain judicial forfeiture proceedings in United States District Court by filing a claim and a bond as follows:

(1) The claim must set forth the basis of the claimed ownership and allege why the conveyance was not subject to seizure;

(2) The claim must be filed in the office specified in the notice and the advertisement as provided in §274.8 and §274.9 of this part within 20 days of the

date of first publication of the advertisement;

(3) The claim must be accompanied by a bond in the amount of the lesser of \$5,000 or ten percent of the appraised value of the seized conveyance, but in no event less than \$250, in the form of cash or certified check; and

(4) If the bond is in the form of a check, it must be drawn payable to the Department of Justice. The costs and expenses of the judicial forfeiture proceedings will be paid from the bond, following completion of the proceedings. Any balance remaining shall be returned to the claimant.

(b) The regional commissioner may waive the bond requirement in the manner provided in §103.7(c)(1) of this chapter.

(c) The filing of a claim and a bond does not entitle the claimant to possession of the conveyance.

[53 FR 43187, Oct. 26, 1988, as amended at 56 FR 8686, Mar. 1, 1991]

§ 274.11 Administrative forfeiture.

If the appraised value of a seized conveyance does not exceed the monetary amount set forth in title 19 U.S.C. 1607, and a claim and a bond are not filed within 20 days of the date of first publication of the advertisement as provided in §274.9 of this part, the regional commissioner may declare the seized conveyance forfeited. The regional commissioner shall execute the declaration of forfeiture. The custodian shall dispose of the forfeited conveyance as provided in §274.3 of this part.

[53 FR 43187, Oct. 26, 1988, as amended at 56 FR 8686, Mar. 1, 1991]

§ 274.12 Judicial forfeiture.

If the appraised value of a seized conveyance exceeds the monetary amount set forth in title 19 U.S.C. 1607, or a claim and a bond have been filed for a seized conveyance with an appraised value that does not exceed the monetary amount set forth in title 19 U.S.C. 1607, as provided in §274.10(a) of this part, the regional commissioner shall transmit the claim and bond, as well as a copy of the advertisement as provided in §274.9 of this part and a complete statement of the facts and circumstances surrounding the seizure to