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warranted, the investigating official shall submit a report containing the findings and conclusions of such investigation to the reviewing official.

(c) Nothing in this section shall preclude or limit an investigating official's discretion to refer allegations within the Department of Justice for suit under the False Claims Act or other civil relief, or to defer or postpone a report or referral to the reviewing official to avoid interference with a criminal investigation or prosecution.

(d) Nothing in this section modifies any responsibility of an investigating official to report violations of criminal law to the appropriate component of the Department.

§ 71.5 Review by the reviewing official.

(a) If, based on the report of the investigating official under § 71.4(b), the reviewing official determines that there is adequate evidence to believe that a person is liable under § 71.3, the reviewing official shall transmit to the Assistant Attorney General, Civil Division, a written notice of the reviewing official's intention to have a complaint issued under § 71.7. Such notice shall include

- (1) A statement of the reviewing official's reasons for issuing a complaint;
- (2) A statement specifying the evidence that support the allegations of liability;
- (3) A description of the claims or statements upon which the allegations of liability are based;
- (4) An estimate of the amount of money, or the value of property, services, or other benefits, requested or demanded in violation of § 71.3 of this part;
- (5) A statement of any exculpatory or mitigating circumstances that may relate to the claims or statements known by the reviewing official or the investigating official; and
- (6) A statement that there is a reasonable prospect of collecting an appropriate amount of penalties and assessments.

§ 71.6 Prerequisites for issuing a complaint.

(a) The reviewing official may issue a complaint under § 71.7 only if

(1) The Assistant Attorney General, Civil Division, approves the issuance of a complaint in a written statement described in 31 U.S.C. 3803(b)(1), and

(2) In the case of allegations of liability under § 71.3(a) with respect to a claim, the reviewing official determines that, with respect to such claim or a group of related claims submitted at the same time such claim is submitted (as defined in paragraph (b) of this section), the amount of money, or the value of property or services, demanded or requested in violation of § 71.3(a) does not exceed \$150,000.

(b) For the purposes of this section, a related group of claims submitted at the same time shall include only those claims arising from the same transaction (e.g., grant, loan, application, or contract) that are submitted simultaneously as part of a single request, demand, or submission.

(c) Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit the reviewing official's authority to join in a single complaint against a person claims that are unrelated or were not submitted simultaneously, regardless of the amount of money, or the value of property or services, demanded or requested.

§ 71.7 Complaint.

(a) On or after the date the Assistant Attorney General, Civil Division, approves the issuance of a complaint in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 3803(b)(1), the reviewing official may serve a complaint on the defendant, as provided in § 71.8.

(b) The complaint shall state the following:

- (1) The allegations of liability against the defendant, including the statutory basis for liability, an identification of the claims or statements that are the basis for the alleged liability, and the reasons why liability allegedly arises from such claims or statements;
- (2) The maximum amount of penalties and assessments for which the defendant may be held liable;
- (3) Instructions for filing an answer to request a hearing, including a specific statement of the defendant's right to request a hearing by filing an answer and to be represented by a representative; and

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(4) The fact that failure to file an answer within 30 days of service of the complaint will result in the imposition of the maximum amount of penalties and assessments without right to appeal, as provided in § 71.10.

(c) At the same time the reviewing official serves the complaint, he or she shall serve the defendant with a copy of these regulations.

§ 71.8 Service of complaint.

(a) Service of a complaint must be made by certified or registered mail or by delivery in any manner authorized by Rule 4(d) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. Service is complete upon receipt.

(b) Proof of service, stating the name and address of the person on whom the complaint was served, and the manner and date of service, may be made by

(1) Affidavit of the individual serving the complaint by delivery;

(2) A United States Postal Service return receipt card acknowledging receipt; or

(3) Written acknowledgment of receipt by the defendant or his or her representative.

§ 71.9 Answer.

(a) The defendant may request a hearing by filing an answer with the reviewing official within 30 days of service of the complaint. An answer shall be deemed to be a request for hearing.

(b) In the answer, the defendant

(1) Shall admit or deny each of the allegations of liability made in the complaint;

(2) Shall state any defense on which the defendant intends to rely;

(3) May state any reasons why the defendant contends that the penalties and assessments should be less than the statutory maximum; and

(4) Shall state the name, address, and telephone number of the person authorized by the defendant to act as defendant's representative, if any.

(c) If the defendant is unable to file an answer meeting the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section within the time provided, the defendant may, before the expiration of 30 days from service of the complaint, file with the reviewing official a general answer de-

nying liability and requesting a hearing, and a request for an extension of time within which to file an answer meeting the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section. The reviewing official shall file promptly with the ALJ the complaint, the general answer denying liability, and the request for an extension of time as provided in § 71.11. For good cause shown, the ALJ may grant the defendant up to 30 additional days within which to file an answer meeting the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section.

§ 71.10 Default upon failure to file an answer.

(a) If the defendant does not file an answer within the time prescribed in § 71.9(a), the reviewing official may refer the complaint to the ALJ.

(b) Upon the referral of the complaint, the ALJ shall promptly serve on the defendant in the manner prescribed in § 71.8, a notice that an initial decision will be issued under this section.

(c) The ALJ shall assume the facts alleged in the complaint to be true and, if such facts establish liability under § 71.3, the ALJ shall issue an initial decision imposing the maximum amount of penalties and assessments allowed under the statute.

(d) Except as otherwise provided in this section, by failing to file a timely answer the defendant waives any right to further review of the penalties and assessments imposed under paragraph (c) of this section and the initial decision shall become final and binding upon the parties 30 days after it is issued.

(e) If, before such an initial decision becomes final, the defendant files a motion with the ALJ seeking to reopen on the grounds that extraordinary circumstances prevented the defendant from filing an answer, the initial decision shall be stayed pending the ALJ's decision on the motion.

(f) If, on such motion, the defendant can demonstrate extraordinary circumstances excusing the failure to file a timely answer, the ALJ shall withdraw the initial decision in paragraph (c) of this section, if such a decision