

having jurisdiction over the transaction in question. The request shall contain a complete statement setting forth a description of the transaction, the specific questions presented, the applicable law, and an argument for the conclusions advocated. The statement must also specify whether, to the knowledge of the person submitting the statement, the same transaction, or one identical to it, has ever been considered, or is currently being considered, by any Customs Service office. In addition, the statement should indicate at which port or ports of entry identical or substantially identical merchandise has been entered.

(4) *Review of requests by importers and others.* All requests submitted by importers and other persons under paragraph (b)(3) of this section, will be reviewed by the field office to which they are submitted. In the event a difference of opinion exists as to the description of the transaction or as to the point or points at issue, the person submitting the request will be so advised in writing. If agreement cannot be reached, both the statements of the person submitting the request and the field office will be forwarded to the Headquarters Office for consideration.

(5) *Refusal by Headquarters Office to furnish advice.* The Headquarters Office may refuse to consider the questions presented to it in the form of a request for internal advice whenever (i) the Headquarters Office determines that the period of time necessary to give adequate consideration to the questions presented would result in a withholding of action with respect to the transaction, or in any other situation, that is inconsistent with the sound administration of the Customs and related laws, and (ii) the questions presented can subsequently be raised by the importer or other interested party in the form of a protest filed in accordance with the provisions of part 174 of this chapter.

(6) *Effect of advice received from the Headquarters Office.* Advice furnished by the Headquarters Office in response to a request therefor represents the official position of the Customs Service as to the application of the Customs laws to the facts of a specific transaction. If the field office believes that

the advice furnished by the Headquarters Office should be reconsidered, it shall promptly request such reconsideration. Otherwise, the advice furnished by the Headquarters Office will be applied by the field office in its disposition of the Customs transaction in question.

(7) *Publication.* Within 90 days after issuing an internal advice memorandum, the Customs Service shall publish the decision in the Customs Bulletin or otherwise make it available for public inspection. Disclosure is governed by 31 CFR part 1 and 19 CFR part 103.

(8) *Judicial review of importers' requests.* A refusal by the Headquarters Office to consider the questions raised by an importer in the form of a request for internal advice may be appealed to the Court of International Trade if the importer demonstrates to the Court that he would be irreparably harmed unless given an opportunity to obtain judicial review prior to the importation of the merchandise.

[T.D. 75-186, 40 FR 31929, July 30, 1975, as amended by T.D. 78-394, 43 FR 49792, Oct. 25, 1978; T.D. 80-285, 45 FR 80106, Dec. 3, 1980; T.D. 84-149, 49 FR 28699, July 16, 1984; T.D. 85-90, 50 FR 21431, May 24, 1985; T.D. 89-74, 54 FR 31517, July 31, 1989; T.D. 02-49, 67 FR 53496, Aug. 16, 2002]

§ 177.12 Modification or revocation of interpretive rulings, protest review decisions, and previous treatment of substantially identical transactions.

(a) *General.* An interpretive ruling, which includes an internal advice decision, issued under this part, or a holding or principle covered by a protest review decision issued under part 174 of this chapter, if found to be in error or not in accord with the current views of Customs, may be modified or revoked by an interpretive ruling issued under this section. In addition, an interpretive ruling issued under this section may have the effect of modifying or revoking the treatment previously accorded by Customs to substantially identical transactions. A modification or revocation under this section must be carried out in accordance with the notice procedures set forth in paragraph (b) or paragraph (c) of this section except as otherwise provided in

paragraph (d) of this section, and the modification or revocation will take effect as provided in paragraph (e) of this section.

(b) *Interpretive rulings or protest review decisions.* Customs may modify or revoke an interpretive ruling or holding or principle covered by a protest review decision that has been in effect for less than 60 calendar days by simply giving written notice of the modification or revocation to the person to whom the original ruling was issued or whose current transaction was the subject of the internal advice decision or, in the case of a protest review decision, to the person identified on the Customs Form 19 as the protestant or to any other person designated to receive notice of denial of a protest under §174.30(b) of this chapter. However, when Customs contemplates the issuance of an interpretive ruling that would modify or revoke an interpretive ruling or holding or principle covered by a protest review decision which has been in effect for 60 or more calendar days, the following procedures will apply:

(1) *Publication of proposed action.* A notice proposing the modification or revocation and inviting public comment on the proposal will be published in the *Customs Bulletin*. The notice will refer to all previously issued interpretive rulings or protest review decisions that Customs has identified as being the subject of the proposed action and will invite any member of the public who has received another interpretive ruling or protest review decision involving the issue that is the subject of the proposed action to advise Customs of that fact. Interested parties will have 30 calendar days from the date of publication of the notice to submit written comments on the proposed modification or revocation and to advise Customs in writing that they are recipients of an affected interpretive ruling or protest review decision that was not identified in the notice.

(2) *Notice of final action.* In the absence of extraordinary circumstances, within 30 calendar days after the close of the public comment period, any submitted comments will be considered and a final modifying or revoking notice or notice of other appropriate final action on the proposed modification or

revocation will be published in the *Customs Bulletin*. In addition, a written decision will be issued to the person to whom, or on whose transaction, the original interpretive ruling was issued or, in the case of a protest review decision, to the person identified on the Customs Form 19 as the protestant or to any other person designated to receive notice of denial of a protest under §174.30(b) of this chapter. Publication of a final modifying or revoking notice in the *Customs Bulletin* will have the effect of modifying or revoking any interpretive ruling or holding or principle covered by a protest review decision that involves merchandise or an issue that is substantially identical in all material respects to the merchandise or issue that is the subject of the modification or revocation, including an interpretive ruling or holding or principle covered by a protest review decision that is not specifically identified in the final modifying or revoking notice.

(c) *Treatment previously accorded to substantially identical transactions—(1) General.* The issuance of an interpretive ruling that has the effect of modifying or revoking the treatment previously accorded by Customs to substantially identical transactions must be in accordance with the procedures set forth in paragraph (c)(2) of this section. The following rules will apply for purposes of determining under this section whether a treatment was previously accorded by Customs to substantially identical transactions of a person:

(i) There must be evidence to establish that:

(A) There was an actual determination by a Customs officer regarding the facts and issues involved in the claimed treatment;

(B) The Customs officer making the actual determination was responsible for the subject matter on which the determination was made; and

(C) Over a 2-year period immediately preceding the claim of treatment, Customs consistently applied that determination on a national basis as reflected in liquidations of entries or reconciliations or other Customs actions with respect to all or substantially all of that person's Customs transactions

involving materially identical facts and issues;

(ii) The determination of whether the requisite treatment occurred will be made by Customs on a case-by-case basis and will involve an assessment of all relevant factors. In particular, Customs will focus on the past transactions to determine whether there was an examination of the merchandise (where applicable) by Customs or the extent to which those transactions were otherwise reviewed by Customs to determine the proper application of the Customs laws and regulations. For purposes of establishing whether the requisite treatment occurred, Customs will give diminished weight to transactions involving small quantities or values, and Customs will give no weight whatsoever to informal entries and to other entries or transactions which Customs, in the interest of commercial facilitation and accommodation, processes expeditiously and without examination or Customs officer review;

(iii) Customs will not find that a treatment was accorded to a person's transactions if:

(A) The person's own transactions were not accorded the treatment in question over the 2-year period immediately preceding the claim of treatment;

(B) The issue in question involves the admissibility of merchandise;

(C) The person made a material false statement or material omission in connection with a Customs transaction or in connection with the review of a Customs transaction and that statement or omission affected the determination on which the treatment claim is based; or

(D) Customs advised the person regarding the manner in which the transactions should be presented to Customs and the person failed to follow that advice; and

(iv) The evidentiary burden as regards the existence of the previous treatment is on the person claiming that treatment. The evidence of previous treatment by Customs must include a list of all materially identical transactions by entry number (or other Customs assigned number), the quantity and value of merchandise covered

by each transaction (where applicable), the ports of entry, the dates of final action by Customs, and, if known, the name and location of the Customs officer who made the determination on which the claimed treatment is based. In addition, in cases in which an entry is liquidated without any Customs review (for example, the entry is liquidated automatically as entered), the person claiming a previous treatment must be prepared to submit to Customs written or other appropriate evidence of the earlier actual determination of a Customs officer that the person relied on in preparing the entry and that is consistent with the liquidation of the entry.

(2) *Notice procedures*—(i) When Customs has reason to believe that a contemplated interpretive ruling would have the effect of modifying or revoking the treatment previously accorded by Customs to substantially identical transactions, notice of the intent to modify or revoke that treatment will be published in the *Customs Bulletin* either as a separate action or in connection with a proposed modification or revocation of an interpretive ruling or holding or principle covered by a protest review decision under paragraph (b)(1) of this section. The notice will give interested parties 30 calendar days from the date of publication of the notice to submit written comments on the proposed modification or revocation and will invite any member of the public whose substantially identical transactions have been accorded the same treatment to advise Customs in writing of that fact, supported by appropriate details regarding those transactions, within that 30-day period. Within 30 calendar days after the close of the public comment period, any submitted comments will be considered, notice of the final interpretive ruling or other final action on the proposed modification or revocation will be published in the *Customs Bulletin*. Written confirmation of the applicability of a final modification or revocation will be sent to each person identified as having had substantially identical transactions that were accorded the same treatment.

(ii) If Customs is not aware prior to issuance that a contemplated interpretive ruling would have the effect of modifying or revoking the treatment previously accorded by Customs to substantially identical transactions, the interpretive ruling will be issued and generally will be effective as provided in §177.9. However, Customs will, upon written application by a person claiming that the interpretive ruling has the effect of modifying or revoking the treatment previously accorded by Customs to his substantially identical transactions, consider delaying the effective date of the interpretive ruling with respect to that person, and continue the treatment previously accorded the substantially identical transactions, pending completion of the procedures set forth in paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section.

(d) *Exceptions to notice requirements—*
 (1) *Publication and issuance not required.* The publication and issuance requirements set forth in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section are inapplicable in circumstances in which a Customs position is modified, revoked or otherwise materially affected by operation of law or by publication pursuant to other legal authority or by other appropriate action taken by Customs in furtherance of an order, instruction or other policy decision of another governmental agency or entity pursuant to statutory or delegated authority. Such circumstances include, but are not limited to, the following:

(i) Adoption or amendment of a statutory provision, including any change to the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States;

(ii) Promulgation of a treaty or other international agreement under the foreign affairs function of the United States;

(iii) Issuance of a Presidential Proclamation or Executive Order, or issuance of a decision or policy determination pursuant to authority delegated by the President;

(iv) Subject to the provisions of §152.16 of this chapter, the rendering of a judicial decision which has the effect of overturning the Customs position;

(v) Publication of a decision in the FEDERAL REGISTER as a result of a petition by a domestic interested party

pursuant to 19 U.S.C. 1516 (see part 175 of this chapter);

(vi) Publication of an interim or final rule in the FEDERAL REGISTER in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 553;

(vii) Publication of a final interpretative rule in the FEDERAL REGISTER in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 553 following public notice and comment procedures; and

(viii) Publication of a final ruling in the FEDERAL REGISTER in accordance with 19 U.S.C. 1315(d) and §177.10(c) relating to change of established and uniform practice.

(2) *Publication not required.* In the following circumstances a final modifying or revoking ruling will be issued to the person entitled to it under paragraph (b) or (c) of this section but *Customs Bulletin* publication under paragraph (b) or (c) of this section is not required:

(i) The modifying ruling corrects a clerical error; or

(ii) The modifying or revoking ruling is directed to a ruling issued under subpart I of part 181 of this chapter relating to advance rulings under the North American Free Trade Agreement.

(e) *Effective date and application to transactions—*(1) *Rulings or decisions in effect for less than 60 days.* If an interpretive ruling or holding or principle covered by a protest review decision that is modified or revoked under this section had been in effect for less than 60 calendar days, the modifying or revoking interpretive ruling:

(i) Will be effective on its date of issuance with respect to the specific transaction covered by the modifying or revoking interpretive ruling; and

(ii) Will be applicable to merchandise entered, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on and after its date of issuance.

(2) *Rulings or decisions in effect for 60 or more days.* If an interpretive ruling or holding or principle covered by a protest review decision that is modified or revoked under this section had been in effect for 60 or more calendar days, the modifying or revoking notice will, provided that liquidation of the entry in question has not become final, apply to merchandise entered, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption:

(i) Sixty calendar days after the date of publication of the final modifying or revoking notice in the *Customs Bulletin* under paragraph (b)(2) of this section; or

(ii) At the option of any person with regard to that person's transaction, on and after the date of publication of the final modifying or revoking notice in the *Customs Bulletin* under paragraph (b)(2) of this section.

(3) *Previous treatment accorded to substantially identical transactions.* A final notice that modifies or revokes the treatment previously accorded by Customs to substantially identical transactions:

(i) Will be effective with respect to transactions that are substantially identical to the transaction described in the modifying or revoking notice 60 calendar days after the date of publication of the final modifying or revoking notice in the *Customs Bulletin* under paragraph (b)(2) or paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section; and

(ii) Provided that liquidation of the entry in question has not become final, will apply to merchandise entered, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption:

(A) Sixty calendar days after the date of publication of the final modifying or revoking notice in the *Customs Bulletin* under paragraph (b)(2) or paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section; or

(B) At the option of a person who makes a valid claim regarding previous treatment, on and after the date of publication of the final modifying or revoking notice in the *Customs Bulletin* under paragraph (b)(2) or paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section.

[T.D. 02-49, 67 FR 53497, Aug. 16, 2002; 67 FR 54733, Aug. 26, 2002]

§ 177.13 Inconsistent customs decisions.

(a) *Generally.* Certain decisions made by Customs officials at one field location which are inconsistent with decisions being made by Customs officials at another location may be brought to the attention of Customs Headquarters for resolution by a petition filed by an interested party. The types of decisions which may be the subject of such a petition, a description of the parties who qualify as interested parties, and the

period of time in which the petition may be filed are set forth below.

(1) *Inconsistent decisions subject to petition.* The decisions which may be the subject of a petition include:

(i) Decisions described in section 514(a) of the Tariff Act of 1930, as amended (19 U.S.C. 1514(a)), made with respect to the same, or substantially similar, merchandise; and

(ii) Repeated decisions to conduct intensified inspections or examinations of merchandise at ports of entry.

(2) *Interested Parties.* The following parties shall be considered interested parties entitled to file a petition under this section:

(i) Parties described in section 514(c)(1) of the Tariff Act of 1930, as amended (19 U.S.C. 1514(c)(1)), as eligible to file a protest under section 514;

(ii) A port authority; and

(iii) An "interested party," as described in section 516(a)(2) of the Tariff Act of 1930, as amended (19 U.S.C. 1516(a)(2)).

(3) *Time for filing.* In the case of decisions described in section 514(a) of the Tariff Act, the petition must be filed within the time prescribed by section 514(c)(2), for filing a protest with respect to the later (or latest) of the decisions which are the subject of the petition. In the case of repeated decisions to conduct intensified inspections or examinations of merchandise at ports of entry, the petition must be filed within ninety (90) days of the later (or latest) such decision.

(b) *Petition—(1) Form.* The petition shall be in the form of a letter addressed to the Office of Regulations and Rulings, U.S. Customs Service, Washington, DC 20229-0001. Three copies of the petition should be submitted, if possible.

(2) *Content.* The petition should contain a complete description of the inconsistent decisions complained of, including the ports of entry (or other Customs office) where the decisions were made, entry numbers, and the dates (or approximate dates) such decisions were made. The information set forth in the petition must be sufficient to demonstrate the inconsistency of the decisions described and that the merchandise, or circumstances in