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or other information shall not be released without approval of the Regional Counsel.

(b) Request for medical records, documents, reports, or other information shall be handled in accordance with the provisions of §1.511(a)(2) of this chapter.

[38 FR 5470, Mar. 1, 1973, as amended 42 FR 41415, Aug. 17, 1977. Redesignated at 61 FR 27784, June 3, 1996, as amended at 64 FR 47112, Aug. 30, 1999]

### § 14.603 Disposition of claims.

*Setoff for cost of unauthorized medical treatment.* In any tort claim administratively settled or compromised where the claimant owes the Department of Veterans Affairs for unauthorized medical treatment, there will be included in the tort claim award the amount of the claimant's indebtedness to the Government. The amount of the indebtedness is for credit to the appropriation account from which the services were provided. The voucher prepared for settlement of the claim will specify the amount to be deposited to the credit of the designated account and that the balance of the award be paid to the claimant.

[42 FR 41416, Aug. 17, 1977, as amended at 43 FR 2722, Jan. 19, 1978. Redesignated and amended at 61 FR 27784, June 3, 1996]

### § 14.604 Filing a claim.

(a) Each person who inquires as to the procedure for filing a claim against the United States, predicated on a negligent or wrongful act or omission of an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs acting within the scope of his or her employment, will be furnished a copy of SF 95, Claim for Damage, Injury, or Death. The claimant will be advised to submit the executed claim directly to the Regional Counsel having jurisdiction of the area wherein the occurrence complained of took place. He or she will also be advised to submit the information prescribed by 28 CFR 14.4 to the extent applicable. If a claim is presented to the Department of Veterans Affairs which involves the actions of employees or officers of other agencies, it will be forwarded to the Department of Veterans Affairs General Counsel, for appropriate action in accord with 28 CFR 14.2.

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(b) A claim shall be deemed to have been presented when the Department of Veterans Affairs receives from a claimant, his or her duly authorized agent or legal representative, an executed SF 95, or other written notification of an incident, together with a claim for money damages, in a sum certain, for damage to or loss of property or personal injury or death: *Provided, however,* That before compromising or settling any claim, an executed SF 95 shall be obtained from the claimant.

(c) A claim presented in compliance with paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section may be amended by the claimant at any time prior to final Department of Veterans Affairs action or prior to the exercise of the claimant's option under 28 U.S.C. 2675(a). Amendments shall be submitted in writing and signed by the claimant or his or her duly authorized agent or legal representative. Upon the timely filing of an amendment to a pending claim, the Department of Veterans Affairs shall have 6 months in which to make a final disposition of the claim as amended and the claimant's option under 28 U.S.C. 2675(a) shall not accrue until 6 months after the filing of the amendment.

(Authority: 28 U.S.C. 1346(b)(1), 2401(b), 2671-2680; 38 U.S.C. 512, 515; 28 CFR part 14, appendix to part 14)

[42 FR 41414, Aug. 17, 1977, as amended at 61 FR 27784, June 3, 1996; 64 FR 47112, Aug. 30, 1999]

### § 14.605 Suits against Department of Veterans Affairs employees arising out of a wrongful act or omission or based upon medical care and treatment furnished in or for the Veterans Health Administration.

(a)(1) Section 2679 of title 28 U.S.C., provides that no suit will lie against a Federal employee, or the employee's estate, for damage to property, personal injury, or death resulting from his or her wrongful act or omission while acting within the scope of his or her office or employment with the Federal Government. An action against the United States under 28 U.S.C. 2671-2680 is the exclusive remedy under these circumstances.

(2) Section 7316 of title 38 U.S.C., provides that (i) where there is remedy

against the United States under 28 U.S.C. 2671-2680, or (ii) where proceedings for compensation or other benefits from the United States are provided by law, and the availability of such benefits precludes a remedy under 28 U.S.C. 2671-2680 (as is the case, for example, in the Federal Employees' Compensation Act, 5 U.S.C. 8101, *et seq.*), such recourse is the exclusive remedy for property damage, personal injury, or death allegedly occurring as a result of malpractice or negligence committed by a physician, dentist, nurse, physician's assistant, dentist's assistant, pharmacist or paramedical (for example, medical and dental technicians, nursing assistants, and therapists), or other supporting personnel, while furnishing medical care and treatment in the exercise of duties in or for the Veterans Health Administration. Accordingly, a malpractice or negligence suit for property damage, personal injury, or death will not lie against such personnel under the circumstances set forth in this subparagraph.

(b) The Department of Justice will defend any civil action or proceeding brought in any court against persons referred to in paragraph (a) (1) or (2) of this section under the circumstances set forth therein. Accordingly, when a suit is filed against any employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs as a result of a wrongful act or omission arising out of employment with the Government, or as a result of furnishing medical or dental care and treatment in or for the Veterans Health Administration, the employee shall immediately forward a copy of all papers served on him or her to the Regional Counsel having jurisdiction over the area in which the employee works. The employee will also promptly forward to the appropriate Regional Counsel a signed statement indicating whether he or she desires the Department of Justice to provide representation, and to otherwise protect his or her interests as provided for by law. Even though there may not have been service, if an employee learns that a suit arising from either of the above-described circumstances has been filed against him or her, the employee shall immediately so advise the appropriate

Regional Counsel, provide the Regional Counsel with a brief description of the facts involved, and state whether he or she desires Federal intervention.

(c) Upon receipt of notice that suit has been filed against an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs who is entitled to protection under 28 U.S.C. 2679 or 38 U.S.C. 7316, the Regional Counsel having jurisdiction over the place where the employee works will conduct a preliminary investigation, which will include an affidavit by the employee's supervisor as to whether the defendant-employee was acting in the scope of his or her employment at the time of the incident, and a request from the defendant-employee for representation. The affidavit will contain a factual description of the employee's duties and responsibilities at the time of the incident and should describe the incident in question. Upon receipt of such information, the Regional Counsel will make a preliminary determination as to whether such suit comes within the provisions of either 28 U.S.C. 2679 or 38 U.S.C. 7316. The Regional Counsel will refer the matter to the appropriate U.S. Attorney with a recommendation as to whether the employee is eligible for protection under 28 U.S.C. 2679 or 38 U.S.C. 7316. The U.S. Attorney will decide whether the Department of Veterans Affairs employee is eligible for the protection. The Regional Counsel will submit to the General Counsel a preliminary report in duplicate containing the information furnished the U.S. Attorney. In all such cases, the Regional Counsel will conduct a complete investigation of the facts and law. Two copies of the investigation report will be sent to the General Counsel and one copy will be sent to the appropriate U.S. Attorney. The General Counsel, through the Regional Counsel, will keep the employee advised of the action being taken concerning the suit. In the event that the U.S. Attorney or the Department of Justice determines that the employee is not eligible for immunization pursuant to one of the aforementioned provisions, the General Counsel's office, through the Regional Counsel, will advise the employee and will call to his

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or her attention the discretionary conditional indemnification provisions of section 7316(e) of title 38 U.S.C.

(d) Where a civil action is commenced in a State court against a Department of Veterans Affairs employee, and the matter is within the purview of either 28 U.S.C. 2679, or 38 U.S.C. 7316, the Department of Justice will be asked to remove such suit to the appropriate Federal District Court before trial, where it will be deemed an action against the United States. The defendant employee will be dismissed from the suit. After such removal, the United States has available all defenses to which it would have been entitled if the action had originally been commenced against the United States in the proper Federal District Court. Should a Federal District Court determine that the Department of Veterans Affairs employee whose acts or omissions gave rise to the suit was not acting within the scope of his or her office or employment, and therefore not eligible for immunization as provided for in the aforementioned section, the case will be remanded to the State court from which it was removed, the employee will be reinstated as the defendant, and the United States will be dismissed from the suit. Where the employee has been reinstated as the defendant under such circumstances, in order to protect any rights which he or she may have under 38 U.S.C. 7316(e), he or she shall immediately notify the General Counsel, through the local Regional Counsel. Through the Regional Counsel, the General Counsel will call the employee's attention to the discretionary conditional indemnification provisions of section 7316(e).

(e) Under the authority of 38 U.S.C. 7316(e), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may pay for monetary damages sustained by or assessed against an individual (or his or her estate) described in paragraph (a)(2) of this section, as the result of any suit instituted against such individual which is not cognizable under the provisions of 28 U.S.C. 2671-2680 because the individual was assigned to a foreign country, the said individual was detailed to a State or political division thereof, or the cause of action was specifically excluded under the provisions of 28 U.S.C.

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2680(h); *Provided*, That the amount of damages sustained is reasonable when compared with similar cases, litigated or settled, and the United States was given a reasonable opportunity to defend such individual and to participate in settlement negotiations.

(Authority: 28 U.S.C. 2671-2680; 38 U.S.C. 512, 515, 7316; 28 CFR part 14, appendix to part 14)

[42 FR 41417, Aug. 17, 1977. Redesignated and amended at 61 FR 27784, June 3, 1996; 64 FR 47112, Aug. 30, 1999]

### ADMINISTRATIVE SETTLEMENT OF TORT CLAIMS ARISING IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

#### § 14.615 General.

(a) *Authority*. Section 515(b), title 38 U.S.C., provides that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may pay tort claims, in the manner authorized in the first paragraph of section 2672 of title 28 U.S.C., when such claims arise in foreign countries in connection with Department of Veterans Affairs operations abroad.

(b) *Action by claimant*. Claims for property loss or damage may be filed by the owner of the property or his or her duly authorized agent or legal representative. If the property was insured and the insurer is subrogated, in whole or in part, and if both the owner and the insurer desire to file a claim for their respective losses they should join in one claim. Claims for personal injury may be filed by the injured person or his or her agent or legal representative. Claims for death may be filed by the personal representative of the decedent or any other legally qualified person. When filed by an agent or legal representative, the claim must show the title or capacity of the person representing the claimant and be accompanied by evidence of the appointment of such person as agent, legal representative, executor/executrix, administrator/administratrix, guardian, or other fiduciary.

(c) *Time for filing*. A claim may not be allowed under 38 U.S.C. 515(b) unless it is presented to the Secretary or his or