

COMMITTEE FOR PURCHASE FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND OR SEVERELY DISABLED

Procurement List; Proposed Additions

AGENCY: Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled.

ACTION: Proposed additions to procurement list.

SUMMARY: The Committee has received a proposal to add to the Procurement List services to be furnished by nonprofit agencies employing persons who are blind or have other severe disabilities.

COMMENTS MUST BE RECEIVED ON OR BEFORE: February 2, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, Crystal Gateway 3, Suite 310, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, Virginia 22202-4302.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Beverly Milkman (703) 603-7740.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This notice is published pursuant to 41 U.S.C. 47(a)(2) and 41 CFR 51-2.3. Its purpose is to provide interested persons an opportunity to submit comments on the possible impact of the proposed actions.

If the Committee approves the proposed additions, all entities of the Federal Government (except as otherwise indicated) will be required to procure the services listed below from nonprofit agencies employing persons who are blind or have other severe disabilities. I certify that the following action will not have a significant impact on a substantial number of small entities. The major factors considered for this certification were:

1. The action will not result in any additional reporting, recordkeeping or other compliance requirements for small entities other than the small organizations that will furnish the services to the Government.

2. The action will result in authorizing small entities to furnish the services to the Government.

3. There are no known regulatory alternatives which would accomplish the objectives of the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act (41 U.S.C. 46-48c) in connection with the services proposed for addition to the Procurement List. Comments on this certification are invited. Commenters should identify the statement(s) underlying the certification on which they are providing additional information.

The following services have been proposed for addition to Procurement

List for production by the nonprofit agencies listed:

Operation of Individual Equipment Element Store and HAZMART, Dover Air Force Base, Delaware

NPA: Blind Industries & Services of Maryland, Baltimore, Maryland
Provision of Customized Recognition and Award Program (50% of the total Government Requirement)

NPA: The Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc., Seattle, Washington

Beverly L. Milkman,

Executive Director.

[FR Doc. 99-34049 Filed 12-30-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6353-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

International Trade Administration

[A-570-853]

Notice of Preliminary Determination of Sales at Less Than Fair Value: Bulk Aspirin From the People's Republic of China

AGENCY: Import Administration, International Trade Administration, Department of Commerce.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 3, 2000.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Blanche Ziv, Rosa Jeong or Ryan Langan, Import Administration, International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, 14th Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20230; telephone: (202) 482-4207, (202) 482-3853, and (202) 482-1279, respectively.

The Applicable Statute

Unless otherwise indicated, all citations to the Tariff Act of 1930, as amended ("the Act"), are references to the provisions effective January 1, 1995, the effective date of the amendments made to the Act by the Uruguay Round Agreements Act ("URAA"). In addition, unless otherwise indicated, all citations to the Department of Commerce ("Department") regulations are to 19 CFR Part 351 (April 1, 1998).

Preliminary Determination

We preliminarily determine that bulk aspirin ("aspirin") from the People's Republic of China ("PRC") is being, or is likely to be, sold in the United States at less than fair value ("LTFV"), as provided in section 733 of the Act. The estimated margins of sales at LTFV are shown in the "Suspension of Liquidation" section of this notice.

Case History

Since the initiation of this investigation on June 23, 1999 (64 FR

33463) ("*Notice of Initiation*"), the following events have occurred:

On June 15, 1999, we received an entry of appearance by counsel on behalf of Jilin Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd. ("Jilin"), a producer/exporter of the subject merchandise. On June 16, 1999, we received an entry of appearance by counsel on behalf of Shandong Xinhua Pharmaceutical Factory ("Shandong"), a producer/exporter of the subject merchandise.

On July 19, 1999, the United States International Trade Commission ("ITC") notified the Department of its affirmative preliminary injury determination in this case.

On July 26, 1999, the Department issued an antidumping questionnaire to the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation ("MOFTEC"), the Embassy of the PRC, and the China Chamber of Commerce for Medicine and Health with instructions to forward the questionnaire to all producers/exporters of the subject merchandise. Also on July 26, 1999, the Department issued the antidumping questionnaire to Jilin and Shandong.

On September 3, 1999, the Department invited interested parties to provide publicly available information for valuing the factors of production and to comment on the surrogate country selection. We received responses on October 4, 1999, and additional comments on October 8 and 12, 1999.

On August 24 and 30, and September 3 and 7, 1999, the Department received questionnaire responses from Jilin and Shandong. We issued supplemental questionnaires on September 10, 1999, to which we received responses on October 4, 1999.

On October 8, 1999, pursuant to section 733(c)(1)(A) of the Act, Rhodia, Inc., the petitioner, made a timely request to postpone the issuance of the preliminary determination in this investigation. We granted this request and, on October 21, 1999, we postponed the preliminary determination until no later than December 21, 1999 (*See* 64 FR 56738).

On December 1, 1999, the petitioner submitted additional surrogate value information and preliminary determination comments. On December 6, 1999, Jilin filed corrections to its reported factor data. In addition, between December 6 and 16, 1999, Jilin filed several submissions objecting to the petitioner's submission of new surrogate value information. Shandong provided clarifications to its reported factor data on December 6, 1999.

Scope of Investigation

For purposes of this investigation, the product covered is bulk acetylsalicylic acid, commonly referred to as bulk aspirin, whether or not in pharmaceutical or compound form, not put up in dosage form (tablet, capsule, powders or similar form for direct human consumption). Bulk aspirin may be imported in two forms, as pure ortho-acetylsalicylic acid or as mixed ortho-acetylsalicylic acid. Pure ortho-acetylsalicylic acid can be either in crystal form or granulated into a fine powder (pharmaceutical form). This product has the chemical formula $C_9H_8O_4$. It is defined by the official monograph of the United States Pharmacopoeia ("USP") 23. It is classified under the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States ("HTSUS") subheading 2918.22.1000.

Mixed ortho-acetylsalicylic acid consists of ortho-acetylsalicylic acid combined with other inactive substances such as starch, lactose, cellulose, or coloring materials and/or other active substances. The presence of other active substances must be in concentrations less than that specified for particular nonprescription drug combinations of aspirin and active substances as published in the *Handbook of Nonprescription Drugs*, eighth edition, American Pharmaceutical Association. This product is classified under HTSUS subheading 3003.90.0000. Although the HTSUS subheadings are provided for convenience and customs purposes, the written description of the merchandise under investigation is dispositive.

Period of Investigation

The period of this investigation ("POI") corresponds to each exporter's two most recent fiscal quarters prior to the filing of the petition, *i.e.*, October 1, 1998, through March 31, 1999.

Nonmarket Economy Country Status

The Department has treated the PRC as a nonmarket economy ("NME") country in all past antidumping investigations (*see, e.g., Final Determination of Sales at Less Than Fair Value: Creatine Monohydrate from the People's Republic of China*, 64 FR 71104 (December 20, 1999) ("*Creatine*") and *Final Determination of Sales at Less Than Fair Value: Certain Preserved Mushrooms from the People's Republic of China*, 63 FR 72255 (December 31, 1998) ("*Mushrooms*"). A designation as an NME remains in effect until it is revoked by the Department (*see* section 771(18)(C) of the Act).

The respondents in this investigation have not requested a revocation of the

PRC's NME status. We have, therefore, preliminarily determined to continue to treat the PRC as an NME.

Separate Rates

Both Jilin and Shandong have requested separate company-specific rates. These companies have stated that they are privately owned companies with no element of government ownership or control.

The Department's separate rate test is not concerned, in general, with macroeconomic/border-type controls, *e.g.*, export licenses, quotas, and minimum export prices, particularly if these controls are imposed to prevent dumping. The test focuses, rather, on controls over the investment, pricing, and output decision-making process at the individual firm level. *See Certain Cut-to-Length Carbon Steel Plate from Ukraine: Final Determination of Sales at Less Than Fair Value*, 62 FR 61754, 61757 (November 19, 1997); *Tapered Roller Bearings and Parts Thereof, Finished and Unfinished, from the People's Republic of China: Final Results of Antidumping Duty Administrative Review*, 62 FR 61276, 61279 (November 17, 1997); and *Honey from the People's Republic of China: Preliminary Determination of Sales at Less Than Fair Value*, 60 FR 14725, 14726 (March 20, 1995) ("*Honey*").

To establish whether a firm is sufficiently independent from government control to be entitled to a separate rate, the Department analyzes each exporting entity under a test arising out of the *Final Determination of Sales at Less Than Fair Value: Sparklers from the People's Republic of China*, 56 FR 20588 (May 6, 1991) ("*Sparklers*"), as modified by *Final Determination of Sales at Less Than Fair Value: Silicon Carbide from the People's Republic of China*, 59 FR 22585 (May 2, 1994) ("*Silicon Carbide*"). Under the separate rates criteria, the Department assigns separate rates in NME cases only if the respondents can demonstrate the absence of both *de jure* and *de facto* governmental control over export activities.

1. Absence of De Jure Control

The respondents have placed on the record a number of documents to demonstrate absence of *de jure* government control, including the "Foreign Trade Law of the People's Republic of China" and the "Company Law of the People's Republic of China."

The Department has analyzed these laws in prior cases and found that they establish an absence of *de jure* control. (*See, e.g., Final Determination of Sales at Less Than Fair Value: Certain Partial-*

Extension Steel Drawer Slides with Rollers from the People's Republic of China, 60 FR 54472 (October 24, 1995); *see also Mushrooms*.) We have no new information in this proceeding which would cause us to reconsider this determination.

Accordingly, we preliminarily determine that, within the aspirin industry, there is an absence of *de jure* government control over export pricing and marketing decisions of firms.

2. Absence of De Facto Control

As stated in previous cases, there is some evidence that certain enactments of the PRC central government have not been implemented uniformly among different sectors and/or jurisdictions in the PRC. (*See, e.g., Sparklers and Silicon Carbide*) Therefore, the Department has determined that an analysis of *de facto* control is critical in determining whether respondents are, in fact, subject to a degree of governmental control which would preclude the Department from assigning separate rates.

The Department typically considers four factors in evaluating whether each respondent is subject to *de facto* governmental control of its export functions: (1) Whether the export prices are set by, or subject to, the approval of a governmental authority; (2) whether the respondent has authority to negotiate and sign contracts and other agreements; (3) whether the respondent has autonomy from the government in making decisions regarding the selection of its management; and (4) whether the respondent retains the proceeds of its export sales and makes independent decisions regarding disposition of profits or financing of losses (*see Mushrooms*).

Shandong and Jilin have each asserted the following: (1) They establish their own export prices; (2) they negotiate contracts without guidance from any governmental entities or organizations; (3) they make their own personnel decisions; and (4) they retain the proceeds of their export sales and use profits according to their business needs without any restrictions. Additionally, these two respondents have stated that they do not coordinate or consult with other exporters regarding their pricing. This information supports a preliminary finding that there is no *de facto* governmental control of the export functions of these companies. Consequently, we preliminarily determine that both responding exporters have met the criteria for the application of separate rates.

We note that the petitioner has alleged that neither Jilin nor Shandong

is sufficiently independent from state control to justify the calculation of separate rates. The petitioner makes various arguments in support of its claim that the respondents do not have independence with respect to pricing authority. The petitioner cites, for example, the PRC government's control of essential raw materials used in the production of aspirin and the fact that shareholders of Jilin and Shandong were shareholders in the companies' state-owned predecessor companies. We have considered the petitioner's various arguments and find that they do not direct us to reject the respondents' claims that they are entitled to separate rates. As stated above, our separate rates test is not concerned with broad-based macroeconomic concerns, but rather focuses on controls over pricing and decision-making at the individual firm level. The petitioner's arguments do not address the company-specific, day-to-day operations of Jilin and Shandong which we consider in making a separate rates determination.

Use of Facts Available

PRC-Wide Rate

Information on the record of this investigation indicates that there may be producers/exporters of the subject merchandise in the PRC in addition to the companies participating in this investigation. Also, U.S. import statistics indicate that the total quantity of U.S. imports of aspirin from the PRC is greater than the total quantity of aspirin exported to the United States as reported by both PRC aspirin exporters that submitted responses in this investigation. Given this discrepancy, it appears that not all PRC exporters of aspirin responded to our questionnaire. Accordingly, we are applying a single antidumping deposit rate—the PRC-wide rate—to all exporters in the PRC, other than those specifically identified below in the “Suspension of Liquidation” section, based on our presumption that the export activities of the companies that failed to respond to the Department's questionnaire are controlled by the PRC government (*see, e.g., Bicycles from the PRC*).

The PRC-wide antidumping rate is based on adverse facts available. Section 776(a)(2) of the Act provides that

if an interested party or any other person— (A) withholds information that has been requested by the administering authority or the Commission under this title, (B) fails to provide such information by the deadlines for submission of the information or in the form and manner requested, subject to subsections (c)(1) and (e) of section 782, (C) significantly impedes a proceeding under this title, or (D) provides such information

but the information cannot be verified as provided in section 782(i), the administering authority and the Commission shall, subject to section 782(d), use the facts otherwise available in reaching the applicable determination under this title.

Only Jilin and Shandong have provided the information requested by the Department. Accordingly, the use of facts available is warranted with respect to all other PRC producers/exporters of aspirin.

Section 776(b) of the Act provides that adverse inferences may be used when a party has failed to cooperate by not acting to the best of its ability to comply with a request for information. The exporters that decided not to respond in any form to the Department's questionnaire failed to act to the best of their ability in this investigation. Thus, the Department has determined that, in selecting from among the facts otherwise available, an adverse inference is warranted. As adverse facts available, we are assigning the highest margin in the petition, 144.02 percent, which is higher than any of the calculated margins.

Section 776(c) of the Act provides that where the Department selects from among the facts otherwise available and relies on “secondary information,” such as the petition, the Department shall, to the extent practicable, corroborate that information from independent sources reasonably at the Department's disposal. The Statement of Administrative Action accompanying the URAA, H.R. Doc. No. 103-316 (1994) (SAA), states that “corroborate” means to determine that the information used has probative value. *See* SAA at 870.

The petitioner's methodology for calculating export price (“EP”) and normal value (“NV”) is discussed in the *Notice of Initiation*. To corroborate the petitioner's EP calculations, we compared the prices in the petition for the product to the prices submitted by respondents for the same product in similar volumes. To corroborate the petitioner's NV calculations, we compared the petitioner's factor consumption and surrogate value data for the product to the data reported by the respondents for the most significant factors—chemical inputs, factory overhead, and selling, general, and administrative expenses (“SG&A”)—and the surrogate values for these factors in the petition to the values selected for the preliminary determination, as discussed below. Our analysis showed that, in general, the petitioner's data was reasonably close to the data submitted by the respondents and to the surrogate values chosen by the Department. (*See* memorandum to the file dated

December 21, 1999 (“Corroboration Memo”).) Based on our analysis, we find that the figures and calculations set forth in the petition have probative value.

Fair Value Comparisons

To determine whether sales of the subject merchandise by Shandong and Jilin to the United States were made at LTFV, we compared the EP or constructed export price (“CEP”) to the NV, as described in the “Export Price” and “Normal Value” sections of this notice, below. In accordance with section 777A(d)(1)(A)(i) of the Act, we compared POI-wide weighted-average EPs and CEPs to NVs.

Export Price

For all sales made by Shandong and certain sales by Jilin, we used the EP methodology in accordance with section 772(a) of the Act, because the subject merchandise was sold directly to unaffiliated customers in the United States prior to importation and CEP methodology was not otherwise appropriate. We calculated EP based on packed FOB, CIF or C&F prices to the first unaffiliated purchaser in the United States. Where appropriate, we made deductions from the starting price (gross unit price) for inland freight from the plant/warehouse to port of exit, brokerage and handling in the PRC, marine insurance and ocean freight. Because certain domestic brokerage and handling, marine insurance, and inland freight were provided by NME companies, we based those charges on surrogate rates from India. (*See* “Normal Value” section for further discussion.)

Constructed Export Price

For certain sales by Jilin, we calculated CEP, in accordance with sections 772(b), (c) and (d) of the Act, because sales to the first unaffiliated purchaser in the United States took place after importation. We calculated CEP based on ex-dock, ex-warehouse, CIF or delivered prices to unaffiliated purchasers in the United States. Where appropriate, we made deductions for inland freight in the PRC, brokerage and handling in the PRC, ocean freight, marine insurance, U.S. duty, U.S. inland freight, U.S. brokerage and handling, and U.S. warehousing. Because certain domestic brokerage and handling, marine insurance, and inland freight were provided by NME companies, we based those charges on surrogate rates from India. (*See* “Normal Value” section for further discussion.) Also, where appropriate, we deducted direct and indirect selling expenses related to commercial activity in the United

States. Pursuant to section 772(d)(3) of the Act, where applicable, we made an adjustment for CEP profit.

Normal Value

1. Surrogate Country

Section 773(c)(4) of the Act requires the Department to value the NME producer's factors of production, to the extent possible, in one or more market economy countries that: (1) Are at a level of economic development comparable to that of the NME, and (2) are significant producers of comparable merchandise. The Department has determined that India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Indonesia, and the Philippines are countries comparable to the PRC in terms of overall economic development (see memorandum from Jeff May, Director, Office of Policy, to Susan Kuhbach, Senior Director, AD/CVD Enforcement, Office 1, July 13, 1999). We have further determined that India is a significant producer of comparable merchandise. Accordingly, we have calculated NV using mainly Indian values, and in some cases U.S. export values, for the PRC producers' factors of production. Where it was applicable and practicable, we have considered all information on the record, including data provided in the petitioner's December 1, 1999, comments.

2. Factors of Production

In accordance with section 773(c) of the Act, we calculated NV based on factors of production reported by the companies in the PRC which produced aspirin and sold aspirin to the United States during the POI. Our NV calculation included amounts for materials, labor, energy, overhead, SG&A, and profit. To calculate NV, the reported unit factor quantities were multiplied by publicly available Indian and U.S. export price values.

In selecting the surrogate values, we considered the quality, specificity, and contemporaneity of the data. As appropriate, we adjusted input prices to make them delivered prices. Where the distance between the material supplier and the factory was reported, we added to Indian CIF surrogate values a surrogate freight cost using the shorter of the reported distances from either the closest PRC port to the PRC factory, or from the domestic supplier to the factory. This adjustment is in accordance with the CAFC's decision in *Sigma Corp. v. United States*, 117 F. 3d 1401 (Fed. Cir. 1997). Where a producer did not report the distances between the material supplier and the factory, as facts available, we used the distance to

the nearest PRC port to the PRC factory. For those values not contemporaneous with the POI and quoted in a foreign currency, we adjusted for inflation using wholesale price indices published in the International Monetary Fund's *International Financial Statistics*.

(1) *Material Inputs*: To value acetic acid, sulfuric acid, and certain other inputs, we used public information from the Indian publication *Indian Chemical Weekly* ("ICW") that corresponded with the POI. For caustic soda, ethyl phosphate, ammonia, corn starch, and certain other inputs, we relied on import prices contained in *Monthly Statistics of the Foreign Trade of India* ("MSFTI"). Phenol was valued using both ICW and MSFTI data. To value carbon dioxide, we used data from 1998 U.S. Census Bureau Export Statistics. We used a U.S. export value for this input because the value reported in the MSFTI was aberrational. For further discussion, see "Factors of Production Valuation Memorandum" dated December 21, 1999.

(2) *Labor*: We valued labor using the method described in 19 CFR § 351.408(c)(3).

(3) *Energy*: To value electricity, coal and fuel oil, we used the rates reported in the publication *Energy Prices and Taxes* (1998).

(4) *Overhead, SG&A and Profit*: We based factory overhead, SG&A, and profit on financial information relating to the Indian "drugs and pharmaceuticals" industry, as reported by the *Indian Informer*.

(5) *Inland Freight*: To value truck freight rates, we used price quotes obtained by the Department from Indian truck freight companies in November 1999. With regard to rail freight, we based our calculation on price quotes obtained by the Department from an Indian rail freight company in November 1999.

(6) *Packing Materials*: For packing materials, we used import values from the MSFTI.

(7) *Brokerage and Handling*: To value foreign brokerage and handling, we relied on public information reported in the case record for a new shipper review of stainless wire rod from India. See *Certain Stainless Steel Wire Rod From India; Preliminary Results of Antidumping Duty Administrative and New Shipper Reviews*, 63 FR 48184 (Sept. 9, 1998).

(8) *Marine Insurance*: For marine insurance, we used public information collected for *Tapered Roller Bearing and Parts Thereof, Finished and Unfinished, from the PRC; Final Results of 1996-1997 Antidumping Administrative Review*, 63 FR 63842,

63847 (Nov. 17, 1998) ("TRBs-10"), which was obtained through queries made directly to an international marine insurance provider.

(9) *Ocean Freight*: Where the PRC producer/exporter used a market economy shipper and paid for the shipping in a market economy currency, we used the amount reported. Where the producer/exporter also reported that freight services were provided by a nonmarket economy carrier and/or paid for in nonmarket economy currency, we used an average of the market economy values as the factor value.

Verification

As provided in section 782(i) of the Act, we will verify all information relied upon in making our final determination.

Suspension of Liquidation

In accordance with section 733(d) of the Act, we are directing the Customs Service to suspend liquidation of all imports of subject merchandise from the PRC, except for subject merchandise produced and exported by Jilin (which has a zero weighted-average margin), that are entered, or withdrawn from warehouse, for consumption on or after the date of publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**. We will instruct the Customs Service to require a cash deposit or the posting of a bond equal to the weighted-average amount by which the NV exceeds the EP or CEP, as indicated in the chart below. These suspension of liquidation instructions will remain in effect until further notice.

Exporter/manufacturer	Weighted-average margin percentage
Shandong Xinhua Pharmaceutical Factory	11.14
Jilin Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd./ Jilin Pharmaceutical Import and Export Corporation	0.00
PRC-wide Rate	144.02

The PRC-wide rate applies to all entries of the subject merchandise except for entries from exporters/producers that are identified individually above.

ITC Notification

In accordance with section 733(f) of the Act, we have notified the ITC of our determination. If our final determination is affirmative, the ITC will determine before the later of 120 days after the date of this preliminary determination or 45 days after our final determination whether these imports are materially injuring, or threaten material injury to, the U.S. industry.

Public Comment

Case briefs or other written comments in six copies must be submitted to the Assistant Secretary for Import Administration no later than February 18, 2000, and rebuttal briefs no later than February 23, 2000. A list of authorities used and an executive summary of issues should accompany any briefs submitted to the Department. Such summary should be limited to five pages total, including footnotes. In accordance with section 774 of the Act, we will hold a public hearing, if requested, to afford interested parties an opportunity to comment on arguments raised in case or rebuttal briefs. Tentatively, the hearing will be held on February 25, 2000, at the Department of Commerce, 14th Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20230. Parties should confirm by telephone the time, date, and place of the hearing 48 hours before the scheduled time.

Interested parties who wish to request a hearing, or to participate if one is requested, must submit a written request to the Assistant Secretary for Import Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, Room 1870, within 30 days of the publication of this notice. Requests should contain: (1) The party's name, address, and telephone number; (2) the number of participants; and (3) a list of the issues to be discussed. Oral presentations will be limited to issues raised in the briefs. If this investigation proceeds normally, we will make our final determination not later than 75 days after the date of the preliminary determination.

This determination is issued and published in accordance with sections 733(d) and 777(i)(1) of the Act.

Dated: December 21, 1999.

Robert S. LaRussa,

Assistant Secretary for Import Administration.

[FR Doc. 99-33962 Filed 12-30-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-DS-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[ID 112499A]

International Whaling Commission; Meetings

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of public meetings.

SUMMARY: NOAA makes use of a public Interagency Committee to assist in

preparing for meetings of the International Whaling Commission (IWC). This notice sets forth guidelines for participating on the Committee and a tentative schedule of meetings and of important dates.

DATES: The January 14, 2000, Interagency Meeting will be held at 2:00 p.m. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for tentative 2000 meeting schedules.

ADDRESSES: The January 14, 2000, meeting will be held in Room 1W611 on the ground floor of Building 4 in the NOAA Silver Spring Metro Complex, 1305 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Cathy Campbell, (202) 482-2652.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The January 14, 2000, Interagency Committee meeting will review recent events relating to the IWC and issues that will arise at the 2000 IWC annual meeting.

The Secretary of Commerce is charged with the responsibility of discharging the obligations of the United States under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, 1946. This authority has been delegated to the Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, who is also the U.S. Commissioner to the IWC. The U.S. Commissioner has primary responsibility for the preparation and negotiation of U.S. positions on international issues concerning whaling and for all matters involving the IWC. He is staffed by the Department of Commerce and assisted by the Department of State, the Department of the Interior, the Marine Mammal Commission, and by other interested agencies.

Each year, NOAA conducts meetings and other activities to prepare for the annual meeting of the IWC. The major purpose of the preparatory meetings is to provide input in the development of policy by individuals and non-governmental organizations interested in whale conservation. NOAA believes that this participation is important for the effective development and implementation of U.S. policy concerning whaling. Any person with an identifiable interest in United States whale conservation policy may participate in the meetings, but NOAA reserves the authority to inquire about the interest of any person who appears at a meeting and to determine the appropriateness of that person's participation. Foreign nationals and persons who represent foreign governments may not attend. These stringent measures are necessary to promote the candid exchange of information and to establish the

necessary basis for the relatively open process of preparing for IWC meetings that characterizes current practices.

Tentative Meeting Schedule

The schedule of additional meetings and deadlines, including those of the IWC, during 2000 follows. Specific locations and times will be published in the **Federal Register**.

January 14, 2000 (NOAA, Silver Spring Metro Complex, Building 4, Room 1W611, Silver Spring, MD): Interagency Committee meeting to review recent events relating to the IWC and to review U.S. positions for the 2000 IWC annual meeting.

June 12-13, 2000 (Australia): IWC Scientific Committee Working Groups and Sub-committees.

June 14-26, 2000 (Australia): IWC Scientific Committee.

June 28 - July 1, 2000 (Australia): IWC Commission Committees, Sub-committees and Working Groups.

July 3-6, 2000 (Australia): IWC 52nd Annual Meeting.

Special Accommodations

Department of Commerce meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Cathy Campbell (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**) at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: December 22, 1999.

Art Jeffers,

Deputy Director, Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 99-34083 Filed 12-30-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE**Office of the Secretary****Proposed Information Collection Available for Public Comment**

AGENCY: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness).

ACTION: Notice.

In compliance with Section 3506(c)(2)(A) of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) announces the following proposed reinstatement of a public information collection and seeks public comment on the provisions thereof. Comments are invited on: (a) whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have