

SW., Suite 315, Renton, WA 98055-4056.

In addition, any person may, upon request, inspect the application, notice and other documents germane to the application in person at the Pocatello Regional Airport.

Issued in Renton, Washington on September 23, 2003.

David A. Field,

Manager, Planning, Programming and Capacity Branch, Northwest Mountain Region.

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BILLING CODE 4910-13-M

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Maritime Administration

[Docket MARAD-2003-16248]

Notice of Request To Transfer Maritime Security Program Operating Agreements MA/MSP-29 Through MA/MSP-43 to Maersk Line, Limited

By letter dated September 18, 2003 (which incorporates earlier correspondence of July 10, 2003), Maersk Line, Limited (Maersk) has requested approval from the Maritime Administration (MARAD) to transfer Maritime Security Program (MSP) Operating Agreements Nos. MA/MSP-29 through 43 (Agreements) from U.S. Ship Management, Inc. (USSM) to itself. The MSP was established by the Maritime Security Act of 1996, Pub. L. 104-239, and is contained in sections 651 through 656 of the Merchant Marine Act, 1936, as amended, 46 App. U.S.C. 1187-1187e. The MSP serves to maintain an active, privately owned, U.S.-flag and U.S. citizen crewed liner fleet in international trade. At present, MSP provides operating payments to 47 vessels, under single-vessel MSP Operating Agreements.

The vessels at issue here, or their predecessors, were originally operated by Sea-Land Service, Inc. (Sea-Land) as the international liner division of Sea-Land. The transportation assets of the international liner division, other than the MSP Agreements or title to the vessels, were sold to Maersk in 1999. Maersk is a company organized in the United States, but is owned by the A.P. Moller Group, a Danish consortium.

At the time of the sale to Maersk, Sea-Land proposed to transfer the MSP Agreements to USSM, a newly-created U.S. citizen company. On December 8, 1999, the Maritime Administrator authorized transfer of the MSP Agreements from Sea-Land to USSM. In order to maintain the U.S. citizen status of the vessels for MSP purposes, titles

to the vessels covered by the Agreements were either transferred to trusts qualified under section 1136(c) of the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 1996, or required to remain in existing U.S. citizen trusts, as applicable. A vessel owned by a qualified section 1136(c) trust and bareboat chartered to a U.S. citizen is deemed to be owned and operated by a U.S. citizen for MSP purposes, notwithstanding foreign beneficial ownership of the trust. Sea-Land assigned the bareboat charters of all 15 vessels to USSM, the MSP contract holder, which, in turn, time chartered the 15 vessels to Maersk, through September 30, 2005, when the current MSP expires.

Maersk claims a right of election under Article 2(b)(vi) of the time charters to become the MSP contractor for the 15 vessels, at any time during the term of the time charters, subject to the qualification that the arrangement is "permitted under applicable laws and regulations and the terms of the Operating Agreement." On November 7, 2002, Maersk requested that MARAD confirm Maersk's eligibility to become the contractor for the vessels as provided in the time charters.

An opinion by MARAD's Chief Counsel, Robert B. Ostrom, issued on April 29, 2003, concluded that, "Maersk qualifies as an eligible transferee of the MSP Agreements from USSM." That opinion stated that it was limited solely to the question of Maersk's eligibility as a transferee under applicable statutes and regulations, "and in no way addresses whether MARAD would grant approval for such a transfer if an application were filed." In addition, that opinion did not address whether the proposed vessel operation and ownership arrangements would be acceptable.

On April 30, 2003, Maersk delivered to USSM a Notice of Election. In accordance with the Notice of Election, USSM was required to respond within five business days or be declared in default of the time charters. On May 9, 2003 Maersk delivered to USSM a Notice of Default, which then triggered a 60 day period for USSM to remedy said default. By letter dated July 3, 2003 USSM rejected Maersk's Notice of Default. By letter dated July 9, 2003, Maersk advised USSM that it had declared USSM in default of the time charters on that date and is unilaterally seeking to act for USSM with regard to transfer of the Agreements. Maersk asserts that it has the right to submit the subject transfer application on behalf of, or in place of, USSM.

USSM filed a complaint in U.S. District Court for the District of

Columbia, styled *U.S. Ship Management, Inc. v. U.S. Maritime Administration*, No. 1:03-cv-00951-RJL (filed April 29, 2003), contesting the legality of MARAD's legal opinion. That case is ongoing at this time. USSM also vigorously opposes Maersk's application. USSM further asserts that Maersk cannot act as attorney-in-fact, because the time charters giving rise to the attorney-in-fact powers contain several conditions which have not been satisfied. One of those conditions, USSM avers, is that the MSP Agreement transfer be approved by MARAD, which has not occurred.

A copy of Maersk's request, and other documents pertinent to this request, will be available for inspection at the Department of Transportation (DOT) Dockets Facility and on the DOT Web site (address information follows). Any person, firm or corporation having an interest in this matter, and who desires to submit comments concerning it, may file such comments as follows. You should mention the docket number that appears at the top of this notice. Written comments should be submitted to the Docket Clerk, U.S. DOT Dockets, Room PL-401, Nassif Building, Department of Transportation, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590. Comments may also be filed electronically via the Internet at <http://dmses.dot.gov/submit/>. You may call Docket Management at (202) 366-9324. You may visit the docket room to inspect and copy comments at the above address between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday, except holidays. An electronic version of this document is available on the World Wide Web at <http://dms.dot.gov>. Comments must be received by the close of business October 24, 2003.

This notice is published as a matter of discretion. Section 652(j) of the Act, as implemented by MARAD's regulations at 46 CFR 295.20(i), permits the transfer of an MSP Operating Agreement by the MSP contractor to a qualified transferee unless MARAD disapproves the transfer within 90 days of receiving a completed application. Due to the unusual nature of this application, wherein the MSP contractor has not itself submitted an application and in fact opposes the submission of an application, no decision has been made on whether MARAD accepts the submission as an application properly submitted under § 295.20(i). Accordingly, no transfer of the MSP Operating Agreements may be consummated unless and until expressly approved by MARAD. Further, MARAD will not permit a transfer of the Agreements unless and until satisfied that the vessels associated

with those Agreements remain available for operation under those Agreements, or other acceptable vessels are available to substitute for the current vessels.

The fact of this publication should in no way be considered a favorable or unfavorable decision on the matter in question, as filed or as it may be amended. As noted above, the MARAD Chief Counsel Opinion of April 29, 2003 did not address whether MARAD would grant approval. MARAD will consider all comments submitted in a timely fashion, and will take such action thereto as may be deemed appropriate.

By Order of the Maritime Administration.

Dated: September 29, 2003.

Joel C. Richard,

Secretary, Maritime Administration.

[FR Doc. 03-25077 Filed 10-2-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-81-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

[Docket No. NHTSA-2003-16250]

Certification; Importation of Vehicles and Equipment Subject to Federal Safety and Bumper Standards; Registered Importers of Vehicles Not Originally Manufactured To Conform With the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards; Schedule of Fees Authorized by 49 U.S.C. 30141

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Request for public comment on proposed collection of information.

SUMMARY: Before a Federal agency can collect certain information from the public, it must receive approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Under procedures established by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, before seeking OMB approval, Federal agencies must solicit public comment on the proposed collection of information.

This document describes a proposed collection of information under regulations that pertain to the importation by registered importers (RIs) of motor vehicles that were not manufactured to comply with all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety and bumper standards. NHTSA has proposed certain amendments to those regulations (as found at 49 CFR parts 567, 591, 592, and 594) that would, in part, clarify the requirements applicable to RIs and applicants for RI status, as well as the procedures for suspending or revoking the registrations of RIs that

violate the vehicle importation laws. The proposed regulations would require RIs to retain, for a period of ten years, records pertaining to the nonconforming vehicles they import. Under the regulations that are now in effect, RIs are required to retain that information for a period of eight years. The proposed regulations would also require RIs, and applicants for RI status, to submit to NHTSA more information than is currently required to obtain and maintain a registration. The additional information would enhance the agency's ability to ensure that RIs are conducting their business activities in accordance with applicable regulations, thereby protecting the interests of those who utilize the services of an RI to import a nonconforming motor vehicle, or who purchase a motor vehicle imported by an RI.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before December 2, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Comments should refer to the docket number and notice number, and be submitted to: Docket Management, Room PL-401, 400 Seventh St., SW., Washington, DC 20590 (docket hours are from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.). Anyone is able to search the electronic form of all comments received into any of our dockets by the name of the individual submitting the comment (or signing the comment, if submitted on behalf of an association, business, labor union, etc.). You may review DOT's complete Privacy Act Statement in the **Federal Register** published on April 11, 2000 (Volume 65, Number 70; Pages 19477-78), or you may visit <http://dms.dot.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Coleman Sachs, Office of Vehicle Safety Compliance, NHTSA (202-366-3151).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA), before an agency submits a proposed collection of information to OMB for approval, it must publish a document in the **Federal Register** providing a 60-day comment period and otherwise consult with members of the public and affected agencies concerning each proposed collection of information. The OMB has promulgated regulations describing what must be included in such a document. Under OMB's regulations (at 5 CFR 1320.8(d)), an agency must ask for public comment on the following:

- (i) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility;
- (ii) The accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed

collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions;

(iii) How to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and

(iv) How to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses.

Certification; Importation of Vehicles and Equipment Subject to Federal Safety and Bumper Standards; Registered Importers of Vehicles Not Originally Manufactured To Conform with the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards; Schedule of Fees Authorized by 49 U.S.C. 30141

Type of Request—New Collection.

OMB Clearance Number—None.

Requested Expiration Date of Approval—June 30, 2006.

Summary of Collection of Information—Section 30112(a) of Title 49, U.S. Code prohibits, with certain exceptions, the importation into the United States of a motor vehicle manufactured after the date an applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standard (FMVSS) takes effect, unless the motor vehicle was manufactured in compliance with the standard and was so certified by its original manufacturer. Under one of the exceptions to this prohibition, found at 49 U.S.C. 30141, a nonconforming vehicle can be imported into the United States provided: (1) NHTSA decides that it is eligible for importation, based on its capability of being modified to conform to all applicable FMVSS, and (2) it is imported by an RI, or by a person who has a contract with an RI to bring the vehicle into conformity with all applicable standards. Regulations implementing this statute are found at 49 CFR parts 567, 591, 592, and 594. The regulations require a declaration to be filed (on the HS-7 Declaration Form) at the time a vehicle is imported that identifies, among other things, whether the vehicle was originally manufactured to conform to all applicable FMVSS, and if it was not, to state the basis for the importation of the vehicle. The regulations also require an RI, among other things, to furnish a bond (on the HS-474 Conformance Bond Form) at the time of entry for each nonconforming vehicle it imports, to ensure that the vehicle will be brought into conformity with all applicable safety and bumper standards within 120 days of entry or will be exported from or abandoned to