

program content (orientation and wrap-up sessions, program meetings, resource materials and follow-up activities).

4. *Institutional Capacity*: Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals.

5. *Institution's Record/Ability*: Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past Bureau grants as determined by Bureau Grant Staff. The Bureau will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.

6. *Project Evaluation*: Proposals should include a plan to evaluate the activity's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. A draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives is recommended. Successful applicants will be expected to submit intermediate reports after each project component is concluded or quarterly, whichever is less frequent.

7. *Cost-effectiveness*: The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate.

Authority

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries * * *; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations * * * and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world."

Notice

The terms and conditions published in this RFGP are binding and may not be modified by any Bureau representative. Explanatory information provided by the Bureau that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the RFGP does not

constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Awards made will be subject to periodic reporting and evaluation requirements.

Notification

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal Bureau procedures.

Dated: April 28, 2004.

Patricia S. Harrison,

Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs, Department of State.

[FR Doc. 04-10216 Filed 5-4-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4710-05-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Maritime Administration

Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreement (VISA)

AGENCY: Maritime Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of open season for enrollment in the VISA Program.

Introduction

The VISA program was established pursuant to section 708 of the Defense Production Act of 1950, as amended (DPA), which provides for voluntary agreements for emergency preparedness programs. VISA was approved for a two year term on January 30, 1997, and published in the **Federal Register** on February 13, 1997, (62 FR 6837). Approval was extended through February 13, 2005, and published in the **Federal Register** on February 25, 2003 (68 FR 8800).

As implemented, the VISA program is open to U.S.-flag vessel operators of militarily useful vessels, including bareboat charter operators if satisfactory signed agreements are in place committing the assets of the owner to the bareboat charterer for purposes of VISA. While tug/barge operators must own or bareboat charter barges committed to the VISA program, it is not required that these operators commit tug service through bareboat charter or ownership arrangements. Time charters of U.S.-flag tugs will satisfy tug commitments to the VISA program. However, participation in the VISA program is not satisfied by tug commitment only. Tug/barge VISA participants must commit capacity of at least one barge to the VISA program. Voyage and space charterers are not

considered U.S.-flag vessel operators for purposes of VISA eligibility.

VISA Concept

The mission of VISA is to provide commercial sealift and intermodal shipping services and systems, including vessels, vessel space, intermodal systems and equipment, terminal facilities, and related management services, to the Department of Defense (DOD), as necessary, to meet national defense contingency requirements or national emergencies.

VISA provides for the staged, time-phased availability of participants' shipping services/systems to meet contingency requirements through prenegotiated contracts between the Government and participants. Such arrangements are jointly planned with the Maritime Administration (MARAD), U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM), and participants in peacetime to allow effective and best valued use of commercial sealift capacity, to provide DOD assured contingency access, and to minimize commercial disruption, whenever possible.

There are three time-phased stages in the event of VISA activation. VISA Stages I and II provide for prenegotiated contracts between the DOD and participants to provide sealift capacity to meet all projected DOD contingency requirements. These contracts are executed in accordance with approved DOD contracting methodologies. VISA Stage III will provide for additional capacity to the DOD when Stage I and II commitments or volunteered capacity are insufficient to meet contingency requirements, and adequate shipping services from non-participants are not available through established DOD contracting practices or U.S. Government treaty agreements.

VISA Enrollment Open Season

The purpose of this notice is to invite interested, qualified U.S.-flag vessel operators that are not currently enrolled in the VISA program to participate in the program. Approved participants' VISA contingency contracts will coincide with the DOD contracting cycle of September 1, 2004 through August 31, 2005. Current participants in the VISA program are not required to apply for this enrollment, as VISA participation will be automatically extended for this period, provided that current participants have approved contingency contracts on file with the appropriate DOD contracting agency. This is the seventh annual enrollment period since the commencement of the VISA program. The annual enrollment

was initiated because VISA has been fully integrated into DOD's priority for award of cargo to VISA participants. It is necessary to link the VISA enrollment cycle with DOD's peacetime cargo contracting cycle.

New VISA applicants are required to submit their applications for the VISA program as described in this Notice no later than June 1, 2004. This alignment of VISA enrollment and eligibility for VISA priority will solidify the linkage between commitment of contingency assets by VISA participants and receiving VISA priority consideration for the award of DOD peacetime cargo.

This is the only planned enrollment period for carriers to join the VISA program and derive benefits for DOD peacetime contracts during the time frame of September 1, 2004 through August 31, 2005. The only exception to this open season period for VISA enrollment will be for a non-VISA carrier that reflags a vessel into U.S. registry. That carrier may submit an application to participate in the VISA program at any time upon completion of reflagging.

Advantages of Peacetime Participation

Because enrollment of carriers in the VISA program provides the DOD with assured access to sealift services during contingencies based on a level of commitment, as well as a mechanism for joint planning, the DOD awards peacetime cargo contracts to VISA participants on a priority basis. This applies to liner trades and charter contracts alike. Award of DOD cargoes to meet DOD peacetime and contingency requirements is made on the basis of the following priorities:

- U.S.-flag vessel capacity operated by VISA participants, and U.S.-flag Vessel Sharing Agreement (VSA) capacity held by VISA participants.
- U.S.-flag vessel capacity operated by non-participants.
- Combination U.S.-flag/foreign-flag vessel capacity operated by VISA participants, and combination U.S.-flag/foreign-flag VSA capacity held by VISA participants.
- Combination U.S.-flag/foreign-flag vessel capacity operated by non-participants.
- U.S.-owned or operated foreign-flag vessel capacity and VSA capacity held by VISA participants.
- U.S.-owned or operated foreign-flag vessel capacity and VSA capacity held by non-participants.
- Foreign-owned or operated foreign-flag vessel capacity of non-participants.

Participants

Any U.S.-flag vessel operator organized under the laws of a state of the United States, or the District of Columbia, who is able and willing to commit militarily useful sealift assets and assume the related consequential risks of commercial disruption, may be eligible to participate in the VISA program. While vessel brokers and agents play an important role as a conduit to locate and secure appropriate vessels for the carriage of DOD cargo, they may not become participants in the VISA program due to lack of requisite vessel ownership or operation. However, brokers and agents should encourage the carriers they represent to join the program.

Commitment

Any U.S.-flag vessel operator desiring to receive priority consideration in the award of DOD peacetime contracts must commit no less than 50 percent of its total U.S.-flag militarily useful capacity in Stage III of the VISA program. Participants operating vessels in international trade and desiring to bid on DOD peacetime contracts will be required to provide commitment levels to meet DOD-established Stages I and/or II minimum percentages of the participant's militarily useful, oceangoing U.S.-flag international trading fleet capacity on an annual basis. The USTRANSCOM and MARAD will coordinate to ensure that the amount of sealift assets committed to Stages I and II will not have an adverse national economic impact. To minimize domestic commercial disruption, participants operating vessels exclusively in the domestic Jones Act trades are not required to commit the capacity of those U.S. domestic trading vessels to VISA Stages I and II. Overall VISA commitment requirements are based on annual enrollment.

In order to protect a U.S.-flag vessel operator's market share during contingency activation, VISA allows participants to join with other vessel operators in Carrier Coordination Agreements (CCAs) to satisfy commercial or DOD requirements. VISA provides a defense against antitrust laws in accordance with the DPA. CCAs must be submitted to MARAD for coordination with the Department of Justice for approval, before they can be utilized.

Compensation

In addition to receiving priority in the award of DOD peacetime cargo, a participant will receive compensation during contingency activation. During

enrollment, each participant may choose a compensation methodology which is commensurate with risk and service provided. The compensation methodology selection will be completed with the appropriate DOD agency.

Enrollment

New applicants may enroll by obtaining a VISA application package (Form MA-1020 (OMB Approval No. 2133-0532)) from the Director, Office of Sealift Support, at the address indicated below. Form MA-1020 includes instructions for completing and submitting the application, blank VISA Application forms and a request for information regarding the operations and U.S. citizenship of the applicant company. A copy of the February 25, 2003 VISA will also be provided with the package. This information is needed in order to assist MARAD in making a determination of the applicant's eligibility. An applicant company must provide an affidavit that demonstrates that the company is qualified to document a vessel under 46 U.S.C., section 12102, and that it owns, or bareboat charters and controls, oceangoing, militarily useful vessel(s) for purposes of committing assets to the VISA program. As previously mentioned, VISA applicants must return the completed VISA application documents to MARAD not later than June 1, 2004. Once MARAD has reviewed the application and determined VISA eligibility, MARAD will sign the VISA application document which completes the eligibility phase of the VISA enrollment process.

In addition, the applicant will be required to enter into a contingency contract with the DOD. For the VISA open season applicants, and prior to being enrolled in VISA, eligible VISA applicants will be required to execute a joint VISA Enrollment Contract (VEC) with the DOD [Surface Deployment Distribution Center (SDDC) and the Military Sealift Command (MSC)] which will specify the participant's Stage III commitment for the period September 1, 2004 through August 31, 2005. Once the VEC is completed, the applicant completes the DOD contracting process by executing a Drytime Contingency Contract (DCC) with MSC (for Charter Operators) and if applicable, a VISA Contingency Contract (VCC) with SDDC (for Liner Operators).

For Additional Information and Applications Contact: Frances M. Olsen, Deputy Director, Office of Sealift Support, U.S. Maritime Administration, Room 7307, 400 Seventh Street, SW.,

Washington, DC 20590. Telephone (202) 366-2323. Fax (202) 493-2180. Other information about the VISA can be found on MARAD's Internet Web Page at <http://www.marad.dot.gov>.

Authority: 49 CFR 1.66.

By Order of the Maritime Administrator.
Dated: April 30, 2004.

Joel C. Richard,

Secretary, Maritime Administration.

[FR Doc. 04-10202 Filed 5-4-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-81-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Departmental Offices; Treasury's Decision To Extend the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act's "Make Available" Requirement

AGENCY: Department of the Treasury, Departmental Offices.

ACTION: Notice; Request for Comments.

SUMMARY: Title I of the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act of 2002 (Pub. L. 107-297) requires that, from the date of enactment (November 26, 2002) through the last day of Program Year 2 (December 31, 2004), each insurer must make available, in all of its property and casualty insurance policies, coverage for insured losses under the Act. In this regard, the Act requires that such insurance coverage must not differ materially from the terms, amounts and other coverage limitations applicable to losses arising from events other than acts of terrorism. In addition, the Act requires the Secretary of the Treasury (Treasury) to determine, no later than September 1, 2004, whether to extend these statutory make available requirements through Program Year 3 (December 31, 2005). To obtain additional information to assist Treasury in its determination, the Treasury solicits public comment on the questions listed below.

DATES: Comments must be in writing and received by June 4, 2004.

ADDRESSES: Send comments by e-mail to triacomment@do.treas.gov. Please include your name, affiliation, address, e-mail address, and telephone number. All submissions should be captioned "Comments on Make Available Determination."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mario Ugoletti, Acting Director, Office of Financial Institutions Policy, 202-622-0715; Roy Woodall, Senior Insurance Analyst, Office of Financial Institutions Policy, 202-622-5171; U.S. Treasury Department (not toll-free numbers).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On November 26, 2002, President Bush signed into law the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act of 2002 (the Act). The Act was effective immediately. Title I of the Act established a temporary federal program of shared public and private compensation for insured commercial property and casualty insured losses resulting from an act of terrorism as defined by the Act. The Act authorized Treasury to administer and implement the three year Terrorism Risk Insurance Program which ends on December 31, 2005.

Section 103(c)(1) of the Act requires each entity that meets the definition of an insurer under the Act to (A) make available, in all of its property and casualty insurance policies coverage for insured losses; and (B) make available property and casualty insurance coverage for insured losses that does not differ materially from the terms, amounts, and other coverage limitations applicable to losses arising from events other than acts of terrorism. These requirements apply from the date of enactment (November 26, 2002) through the last day of Program Year 2 (December 31, 2004).¹

In addition, section 103(c)(2) of the Act requires Treasury to determine, no later than September 1, 2004, whether to extend the "make available" requirements of section 103(c)(1) through Program Year 3 (December 31, 2005). (Regardless of whether the make available requirements are extended by Treasury through Program Year 3, we note that the overall Program and the Act's federal backstop for insured losses for acts of terrorism continue through December 31, 2005.) The Treasury determination on whether to extend the make available requirements through Program Year 3 is to be based on the factors referred to in section 108(d)(1) of the Act. The factors referred to in section 108(d)(1) are:

- The "effectiveness of the Program;"
- The "likely capacity of the property and casualty insurance industry to offer insurance for terrorism risk after termination of the Program" and
- The "availability and affordability of such insurance for various policyholders, including railroads, trucking, and public transit."

¹ Following enactment of the Act, Treasury promptly issued interim guidance on the make available requirement and other provisions of the Act. See for example, 67 FR 76206 (December 11, 2002). This interim guidance was superseded by Treasury's interim final rules and notice and comment rulemaking. Treasury's final regulations implementing the make available requirements of section 103(c)(1) are located at 31 CFR 50.20-24. See also 68 FR 59720 (October 17, 2003).

Pursuant to the Act, Treasury is now considering whether to extend the make available requirements in section 103(c)(1)(A) and (B) to Program Year 3. As noted above, section 103(c)(2) provides that Treasury base this determination "on the factors referred to in section 108(d)(1)". Section 108(d) of the Act requires Treasury to conduct a study and prepare a report to Congress by June 30, 2005 relating to the termination of the Program; the factors described in section 108(d)(1) (and cross-referenced by section 103 of the Act) are keyed directly to the overall effectiveness of the Program and how the insurance industry might respond after the termination of the Program. To better enable Treasury to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the Act as required by section 108(d), Treasury is in the process of conducting a series of nationally representative surveys of insurers and policyholders.

The section 103(c) determination of whether to extend the make available requirements, and its timing, differ from the purpose and timing of the study and report required by section 108(d), but the Act requires Treasury to base the make available determination on the factors referenced in section 108(d)(1).

Treasury's data collection from the surveys we are conducting as part of our overall evaluation of the Program for purposes of the study under section 108(d) will only be partially complete by the time a decision on extending the make available requirement must be made. In addition, the make available requirement of section 103(c) comprises only one component of the overall Program. Thus, as Treasury considers whether to extend the make available requirement into Program Year 3, we are particularly interested in any specific way, or ways, in which the make available requirement has worked or affected the overall operation of the Program and whether this ties into the factors described in section 108(d)(1).

To facilitate a determination by Treasury within the required time frame on whether to extend the make available requirement into Program Year 3, Treasury solicits general comments from the public as well as specific responses to the following questions, including submission of any relevant empirical data in support of such comments where appropriate and available.

I. Effectiveness of the Make Available Requirement in the Context of the Overall Program

1.1 Has the make available requirement contributed to the overall effectiveness of the Program over the first two years of the Program? In