

the U.S.—Y tax treaty at the time of payment.

Example 4. P, a citizen and resident of Country Z, is a lawyer and a well-known expert on real estate transactions. P is scheduled to attend a three-day seminar on complex real estate transactions, as a participant, at University U, a U.S. university, beginning on a Saturday and ending on the following Monday, which is a holiday. University U has entered into a special acceptance agent agreement with the IRS that permits University U to request an ITIN on an expedited basis. Country Z is a country with which the United States has an income tax treaty that exempts certain income earned from the performance of independent personal services from U.S. tax. It is P's first visit to the United States. On Saturday, prior to the start of the seminar, Professor Q, one of the lecturers at the seminar, cancels his lecture. That same day the Dean of University U offers P \$5000, to replace Professor Q at the seminar, payable at the conclusion of the seminar on Monday. P agrees. P gives her lecture Sunday afternoon. ITINs are not available from the IRS on that Saturday, Sunday, or Monday. After the seminar ends on Monday, P, who does not have an ITIN, requests payment for her teaching. P furnishes a beneficial owner withholding certificate, described in §1.1441-1(e)(2), to University U that represents that P is a resident of Country Z (within the meaning of the U.S.—Z tax treaty) and meets all applicable requirements for claiming benefits under the U.S.—Z tax treaty. The beneficial owner withholding certificate does not, however, contain an ITIN for P. On Tuesday, University U faxes a completed Form W-7, including the required certification, for P, to the IRS for an expedited ITIN. Pursuant to paragraph (b) and (g)(2) of this section, absent actual knowledge or reason to know otherwise, University U may rely on the documentation furnished by P and pay \$5000 to P without withholding U.S. tax based on the treaty exemption.

(h) *Effective dates*—(1) *General rule.* This section applies to payments made after December 31, 2000, except for paragraph (g) of this section which applies to payments made after December 31, 2001.

(2) *Transition rules.* For purposes of this section, the validity of a Form 1001 or 8233 that was valid on January 1, 1998, under the regulations in effect prior to January 1, 2001 (see 26 CFR parts 1 and 35a, revised April 1, 1999) and expired, or will expire, at any time during 1998, is extended until December 31, 1998. The validity of a Form 1001 or 8233 that is valid on or after January 1,

1999, remains valid until its validity expires under the regulations in effect prior to January 1, 2001 (see 26 CFR parts 1 and 35a, revised April 1, 1999) but in no event will such a form remain valid after December 31, 2000. The rule in this paragraph (h)(2), however, does not apply to extend the validity period of a Form 1001 or 8233 that expires solely by reason of changes in the circumstances of the person whose name is on the certificate or in interpretation of the law under the regulations under §1.894-1T(d). Notwithstanding the first three sentences of this paragraph (h)(2), a withholding agent may choose to not take advantage of the transition rule in this paragraph (h)(2) with respect to one or more withholding certificates valid under the regulations in effect prior to January 1, 2001 (see 26 CFR parts 1 and 35a, revised April 1, 1999) and, therefore, to require withholding certificates conforming to the requirements described in this section (new withholding certificates). For purposes of this section, a new withholding certificate is deemed to satisfy the documentation requirement under the regulations in effect prior to January 1, 2001 (see 26 CFR parts 1 and 35a, revised April 1, 1999). Further, a new withholding certificate remains valid for the period specified in §1.1441-1(e)(4)(ii), regardless of when the certificate is obtained.

[T.D. 8734, 62 FR 53458, Oct. 14, 1997, as amended by T.D. 8804, 63 FR 72185, 72188, Dec. 31, 1998; T.D. 8856, 64 FR 73410, Dec. 30, 1999; 65 FR 16320, Mar. 28, 2000; T.D. 8881, 65 FR 32194, May 22, 2000; T.D. 8977, 67 FR 2328, Jan. 17, 2002; T.D. 9023, 67 FR 70312, Nov. 22, 2002]

§1.1441-7 General provisions relating to withholding agents.

(a) *Withholding agent defined*—(1) *In general.* For purposes of chapter 3 of the Internal Revenue Code and the regulations under such chapter, the term *withholding agent* means any person, U.S. or foreign, that has the control, receipt, custody, disposal, or payment of an item of income of a foreign person subject to withholding, including (but not limited to) a foreign intermediary described in §1.1441-1(e)(3)(i), a foreign partnership, or a U.S. branch described in §1.1441-1(b)(2)(iv)(A) or (E). See §§1.1441-1(b)(2) and (3) and 1.1441-

5(c), (d), and (e), for rules to determine whether a payment is considered made to a foreign person. Any person who meets the definition of a withholding agent is required to deposit any tax withheld under §1.1461-1(a) and to make the returns prescribed by §1.1461-1(b) and (c), except as otherwise may be required by a qualified intermediary withholding agreement, a withholding foreign partnership agreement, or a withholding foreign trust agreement. When several persons qualify as withholding agents with respect to a single payment, only one tax is required to be withheld and deposited. See §1.1461-1. A person who, as a nominee described in §1.6031(c)-1T, has furnished to a partnership all of the information required to be furnished under §1.6031(c)-1T(a) shall not be treated as a withholding agent if it has notified the partnership that it is treating the provision of information to the partnership as a discharge of its obligations as a withholding agent.

(2) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules of paragraph (a)(1) of this section:

Example 1. USB is a broker organized in the United States. USB pays U.S. source dividends and interest, which are amounts subject to withholding under §1.1441-2(a), to FC, a foreign corporation that has an investment account with USB. USB is a withholding agent as defined in paragraph (a)(1) of this section.

Example 2. USB is a bank organized in the United States. FB is a bank organized in country X. X has an omnibus account with USB through which FB invests in debt and equity instruments that pay amounts subject to withholding as defined in §1.1441-2(a). FB is a nonqualified intermediary, as defined in §1.1441-1(c)(14). Both USB and FB are withholding agents as defined in paragraph (a)(1) of this section.

Example 3. The facts are the same as in Example 2, except that FB is a qualified intermediary. Both USB and FB are withholding agents as defined in paragraph (a)(1) of this section.

Example 4. FB is a bank organized in country X. FB has a branch in the United States. FB's branch has customers that are foreign persons who receive amounts subject to withholding, as defined in §1.1441-2(a). FB is a withholding agent under paragraph (a)(1) of this section and is required to withhold and report payments of amounts subject to withholding in accordance with chapter 3 of the Internal Revenue Code.

Example 5. X is a foreign corporation. X pays dividends to shareholders who are foreign persons. Under section 861(a)(2)(B), a portion of the dividends are from sources within the United States and constitute amounts subject to withholding within the meaning of §1.1441-2(a). The dividends are not subject to tax under section 884(a). See 884(e)(3). X is a withholding agent under paragraph (a)(1) of this section.

(b) *Standards of knowledge—(1) In general.* A withholding agent must withhold at the full 30-percent rate under section 1441, 1442, or 1443(a) or at the full 4-percent rate under section 1443(b) if it has actual knowledge or reason to know that a claim of U.S. status or of a reduced rate of withholding under section 1441, 1442, or 1443 is unreliable or incorrect. A withholding agent shall be liable for tax, interest, and penalties to the extent provided under sections 1461 and 1463 and the regulations under those sections if it fails to withhold the correct amount despite its actual knowledge or reason to know the amount required to be withheld. For purposes of the regulations under sections 1441, 1442, and 1443, a withholding agent may rely on information or certifications contained in, or associated with, a withholding certificate or other documentation furnished by or for a beneficial owner or payee unless the withholding agent has actual knowledge or reason to know that the information or certifications are incorrect or unreliable and, if based on such knowledge or reason to know, it should withhold (under chapter 3 of the Code or another withholding provision of the Code) an amount greater than would be the case if it relied on the information or certifications, or it should report (under chapter 3 of the Code or under another provision of the Code) an amount that would not otherwise be reportable if it relied on the information or certifications. See §1.1441-1(e)(4)(viii) for applicable reliance rules. A withholding agent that has received notification by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that a claim of U.S. status or of a reduced rate is incorrect has actual knowledge beginning on the date that is 30 calendar days after the date the notice is received. A withholding agent that fails to act in accordance with the presumptions set forth in §§ 1.1441-1(b)(3), 1.1441-

4(a), 1.1441-5 (d) and (e), or 1.1441-9(b)(3) may also be liable for tax, interest, and penalties. See § 1.1441-1(b)(3)(ix) and (7).

(2) *Reason to know.* A withholding agent shall be considered to have reason to know if its knowledge of relevant facts or of statements contained in the withholding certificates or other documentation is such that a reasonably prudent person in the position of the withholding agent would question the claims made.

(3) *Financial institutions—limits on reason to know.* For purposes of this paragraph (b)(3) and paragraphs (b)(4) through (b)(10) of this section, the terms *withholding certificate*, *documentary evidence*, and *documentation* are defined in § 1.1441-1(c)(16), (17) and (18). Except as otherwise provided in paragraphs (b)(4) through (b)(9) of this section, a withholding agent that is a financial institution (including a regulated investment company) that has a direct account relationship with a beneficial owner (a direct account holder) has a reason to know, with respect to amounts described in § 1.1441-6(c)(2), that documentation provided by the direct account holder is unreliable or incorrect only if one or more of the circumstances described in paragraphs (b)(4) through (b)(9) of this section exist. If a direct account holder has provided documentation that is unreliable or incorrect under the rules of paragraph (b)(4) through (b)(9) of this section, the withholding agent may require new documentation. Alternatively, the withholding agent may rely on the documentation originally provided if the rules of paragraphs (b)(4) through (b)(9) of this section permit such reliance based on additional statements and documentation. Paragraph (b)(10) of this section provides limits on reason to know for financial institutions that receive beneficial owner documentation from persons (indirect account holders) that have an account relationship with, or an ownership interest in, a direct account holder. For rules regarding reliance on Form W-9, see § 31.3406(g)-3(e)(2) of this chapter.

(4) *Rules applicable to withholding certificates—(i) In general.* A withholding agent has reason to know that a beneficial owner withholding certificate

provided by a direct account holder in connection with a payment of an amount described in § 1.1441-6(c)(2) is unreliable or incorrect if the withholding certificate is incomplete with respect to any item on the certificate that is relevant to the claims made by the direct account holder, the withholding certificate contains any information that is inconsistent with the direct account holder's claim, the withholding agent has other account information that is inconsistent with the direct account holder's claim, or the withholding certificate lacks information necessary to establish entitlement to a reduced rate of withholding. For purposes of establishing a direct account holder's status as a foreign person or resident of a treaty country a withholding certificate shall be considered unreliable or inconsistent with an account holder's claims only if it is not reliable under the rules of paragraphs (b)(5) and (6) of this section. A withholding agent that relies on an agent to review and maintain a withholding certificate is considered to know or have reason to know the facts within the knowledge of the agent.

(ii) *Examples.* The rules of paragraph (b)(4) of this section are illustrated by the following examples:

Example 1. F, a foreign person that has a direct account relationship with USB, a bank that is a U.S. person, provides USB with a beneficial owner withholding certificate for the purpose of claiming a reduced rate of withholding on U.S. source dividends. F resides in a treaty country that has a limitation on benefits provision in its income tax treaty with the United States. The withholding certificate, however, does not contain a statement regarding limitations on benefits or deriving the income under section 894 as required by § 1.1441-6(b)(1). USB cannot rely on the withholding certificate to grant a reduced rate of withholding because it is incomplete with respect to the claim made by F.

Example 2. F, a foreign person that has a direct account relationship with USB, a broker that is a U.S. person, provides USB with a withholding certificate for the purpose of claiming the portfolio interest exception under section 881(c), which applies to foreign corporations. F indicates on its withholding certificate, however, that it is a partnership. USB may not treat F as a beneficial owner of the interest for purposes of the portfolio interest exception because F has indicated on

its withholding certificate that it is a foreign partnership, and therefore under § 1.1441-1(c)(6)(ii) it is not the beneficial owner of the interest payment.

(5) *Withholding certificate—establishment of foreign status.* A withholding agent has reason to know that a beneficial owner withholding certificate (as defined in § 1.1441-1(e)(2)) provided by a direct account holder in connection with a payment of an amount described in § 1.1441-6(c)(2) is unreliable or incorrect for purposes of establishing the account holder's status as a foreign person if the certificate is described in paragraph (b)(5)(i) or (ii) of this section.

(i) A withholding certificate is unreliable or incorrect if the withholding certificate has a permanent residence address (as defined in § 1.1441-1(e)(2)(ii)) in the United States, the withholding certificate has a mailing address in the United States, the withholding agent has a residence or mailing address as part of its account information that is an address in the United States, or the direct account holder notifies the withholding agent of a new residence or mailing address in the United States (whether or not provided on a withholding certificate). A withholding agent may, however, rely on the beneficial owner withholding certificate as establishing the account holder's foreign status if it may do so under the provisions of paragraph (b)(5)(i)(A) or (B) of this section.

(A) A withholding agent may treat a direct account holder as a foreign person if the beneficial owner withholding certificate has been provided by an individual and—

(1) The withholding agent has in its possession or obtains documentary evidence (which does not contain a U.S. address) that has been provided within the past three years, was valid at the time it was provided, the documentary evidence supports the claim of foreign status, and the direct account holder provides the withholding agent with a reasonable explanation, in writing, supporting the account holder's foreign status; or

(2) The account is maintained at an office of the withholding agent outside the United States and the withholding agent is required to report annually a

payment to the direct account holder on a tax information statement that is filed with the tax authority of the country in which the office is located and that country has an income tax treaty in effect with the United States.

(B) A withholding agent may treat an account holder as a foreign person if the beneficial owner withholding certificate has been provided by an entity that the withholding agent does not know, or does not have reason to know, is a flow-through entity and—

(1) The withholding agent has in its possession, or obtains, documentation that substantiates that the entity is actually organized or created under the laws of a foreign country; or

(2) The account is maintained at an office of the withholding agent outside the United States and the withholding agent is required to report annually a payment to the direct account holder on a tax information statement that is filed with the tax authority of the country in which the office is located and that country has an income tax treaty in effect with the United States.

(ii) A beneficial owner withholding certificate is unreliable or incorrect if it is provided with respect to an offshore account (as defined in § 1.6049-5(c)(1)) and the direct account holder has standing instructions directing the withholding agent to pay amounts from its account to an address or an account maintained in the United States. The withholding agent may treat the direct account holder as a foreign person, however, if the direct account holder provides a reasonable explanation in writing that supports its foreign status.

(6) *Withholding certificate—claim of reduced rate of withholding under treaty.* A withholding agent has reason to know that a withholding certificate (other than Form W-9) provided by a direct account holder in connection with a payment of an amount described in § 1.1441-6(c)(2) is unreliable or incorrect for purposes of establishing that the direct account holder is a resident of a country with which the United States has an income tax treaty if it is described in paragraphs (b)(6)(i) through (iii) of this section.

(i) A beneficial owner withholding certificate is unreliable or incorrect if

the permanent residence address on the beneficial owner withholding certificate is not in the country whose treaty is invoked, or the direct account holder notifies the withholding agent of a new permanent residence address that is not in the treaty country. A withholding agent may, however, treat a direct account holder as entitled to a reduced rate of withholding under an income tax treaty if the direct account holder provides a reasonable explanation for the permanent residence address outside the treaty country (e.g., the address is the address of a branch of the beneficial owner located outside the treaty country in which the entity is a resident) or the withholding agent has in its possession, or obtains, documentary evidence that establishes residency in a treaty country.

(ii) A beneficial owner withholding certificate is unreliable or incorrect if the permanent residence address on the withholding certificate is in the applicable treaty country but the withholding certificate contains a mailing address outside the treaty country or the withholding agent has a mailing address as part of its account information that is outside the treaty country. A mailing address that is a P.O. Box, in-care-of address, or address at a financial institution (if the financial institution is not a beneficial owner) shall not preclude a withholding agent from treating the direct account holder as a resident of a treaty country if such address is in the treaty country. If a withholding agent has a mailing address (whether or not contained on the withholding certificate) outside the applicable treaty country, the withholding agent may nevertheless treat a direct account holder as a resident of an applicable treaty country if—

(A) The withholding agent has in its possession, or obtains, additional documentation supporting the direct account holder's claim of residence in the applicable treaty country (and the additional documentation does not contain an address outside the treaty country);

(B) The withholding agent has in its possession, or obtains, documentation that establishes that the direct account holder is an entity organized in a treaty country (or an entity managed

and controlled in a treaty country, if the applicable treaty so requires);

(C) The withholding agent knows that the address outside the applicable treaty country (other than a P.O. box, or in-care-of address) is a branch of a bank or insurance company that is a resident of the applicable treaty country; or

(D) The withholding agent obtains a written statement from the direct account holder that reasonably establishes entitlement to treaty benefits.

(iii) A beneficial owner withholding certificate is unreliable or incorrect to establish entitlement to a reduced rate of withholding under an income tax treaty if the direct account holder has standing instructions for the withholding agent to pay amounts from its account to an address or an account outside the treaty country unless the direct account holder provides a reasonable explanation, in writing, establishing the direct account holder's residence in the applicable treaty country.

(7) *Documentary evidence.* A withholding agent shall not treat documentary evidence provided by a direct account holder as valid if the documentary evidence does not reasonably establish the identity of the person presenting the documentary evidence. For example, documentary evidence is not valid if it is provided in person by a direct account holder that is a natural person and the photograph or signature on the documentary evidence, if any, does not match the appearance or signature of the person presenting the document. A withholding agent shall not rely on documentary evidence to reduce the rate of withholding that would otherwise apply under the presumption rules of §§ 1.1441-1(b)(3), 1.1441-5(d) and (e)(6), and 1.6049-5(d) if the documentary evidence contains information that is inconsistent with the direct account holder's claim of a reduced rate of withholding, the withholding agent has other account information that is inconsistent with the direct account holder's claim, or the documentary evidence lacks information necessary to establish entitlement to a reduced rate of withholding. For example, if a direct account holder provides documentary evidence to claim treaty benefits and the documentary

evidence establishes the direct account holder's status as a foreign person and a resident of a treaty country, but the account holder fails to provide the treaty statements required by § 1.1441-6(c)(5), the documentary evidence does not establish the direct account holder's entitlement to a reduced rate of withholding. For purposes of establishing a direct account holder's status as a foreign person or resident of a country with which the United States has an income tax treaty with respect to income described in § 1.1441-6(c)(2), documentary evidence shall be considered unreliable or incorrect only if it is not reliable under the rules of paragraph (b)(8) and (9) of this section.

(8) *Documentary evidence—establishment of foreign status.* A withholding agent has reason to know that documentary evidence provided in connection with a payment of an amount described in § 1.1441-6(c)(2) is unreliable or incorrect for purposes of establishing the direct account holder's status as a foreign person if the documentary evidence is described in paragraphs (b)(8)(i), (ii), (iii) or (iv) of this section.

(i) A withholding agent shall not treat documentary evidence provided by an account holder after December 31, 2000, as valid for purposes of establishing the direct account holder's foreign status if the only mailing or residence address that is available to the withholding agent is an address at a financial institution (unless the financial institution is a beneficial owner of the income), an in-care-of address, or a P.O. box. In this case, the withholding agent must obtain additional documentation that is sufficient to establish the direct account holder's status as a foreign person. A withholding agent shall not treat documentary evidence provided by an account holder before January 1, 2001, as valid for purposes of establishing a direct account holder's status as a foreign person if it has actual knowledge that the direct account holder is a U.S. person or if it has a mailing or residence address for the direct account holder in the United States. If a withholding agent has an address for the direct account holder in the United States, the withholding agent may nevertheless treat the direct account holder as a foreign person

if it can so treat the direct account holder under the rules of paragraph (b)(8)(ii) of this section.

(ii) Documentary evidence is unreliable or incorrect to establish a direct account holder's status as a foreign person if the withholding agent has a mailing or residence address (whether or not on the documentation) for the direct account holder in the United States or if the direct account holder notifies the withholding agent of a new address in the United States. A withholding agent may, however, rely on documentary evidence as establishing the direct account holder's foreign status if it may do so under the provisions of paragraph (b)(8)(ii)(A) or (B) of this section.

(A) A withholding agent may treat a direct account holder that is an individual as a foreign person even if it has a mailing or residence address for the direct account holder in the United States if the withholding agent—

(1) Has in its possession or obtains additional documentary evidence (which does not contain a U.S. address) supporting the claim of foreign status and a reasonable explanation in writing supporting the account holder's foreign status;

(2) Has in its possession or obtains a valid beneficial owner withholding certificate on Form W-8 and the Form W-8 contains a permanent residence address outside the United States and a mailing address outside the United States (or if a mailing address is inside the United States the direct account holder provides a reasonable explanation in writing supporting the direct account holder's foreign status); or

(3) The account is maintained at an office of the withholding agent outside the United States and the withholding agent is required to report annually a payment to the direct account holder on a tax information statement that is filed with the tax authority of the country in which the office is located and that country has an income tax treaty in effect with the United States.

(B) A withholding agent may treat a direct account holder that is an entity (other than a flow-through entity) as a foreign person even if it has a mailing

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or residence address for the direct account holder in the United States if the withholding agent—

(1) Has in its possession, or obtains, documentation that substantiates that the entity is actually organized or created under the laws of a foreign country;

(2) Obtains a valid beneficial owner withholding certificate on Form W-8 and the Form W-8 contains a permanent residence address outside the United States and a mailing address outside the United States (or if a mailing address is inside the United States the direct account holder provides additional documentary evidence sufficient to establish the direct account holder's foreign status); or

(3) The account is maintained at an office of the withholding agent outside the United States and the withholding agent is required to report annually a payment to the direct account holder on a tax information statement that is filed with the tax authority of the country in which the office is located and that country has an income tax treaty in effect with the United States.

(iii) Documentary evidence is unreliable or incorrect if the direct account holder has standing instructions directing the withholding agent to pay amounts from its account to an address or an account maintained in the United States. The withholding agent may treat the direct account holder as a foreign person, however, if the account holder provides a reasonable explanation in writing that supports its foreign status.

(9) *Documentary evidence—claim of reduced rate of withholding under treaty.* A withholding agent has reason to know that documentary evidence provided in connection with a payment of an amount described in § 1.1441-6(c)(2) is unreliable or incorrect for purposes of establishing that a direct account holder is a resident of a country with which the United States has an income tax treaty if it is described in paragraph (b)(9)(i) or (ii) of this section.

(i) Documentary evidence is unreliable or incorrect if the withholding agent has a mailing or residence address for the direct account holder (whether or not on the documentary evidence) that is outside the applicable

treaty country, or the only address that the withholding agent has (whether in or outside of the applicable treaty country) is a P.O. box, an in-care-of address, or the address of a financial institution (if the financial institution is not the beneficial owner). If a withholding agent has a mailing or residence address for the direct account holder outside the applicable treaty country, the withholding agent may nevertheless treat a direct account holder as a resident of an applicable treaty country if the withholding agent—

(A) Has in its possession, or obtains, additional documentary evidence supporting the direct account holder's claim of residence in the applicable treaty country (and the documentary evidence does not contain an address outside the applicable treaty country, a P.O. box, an in-care-of address, or the address of a financial institution);

(B) Has in its possession, or obtains, documentary evidence that establishes the direct account holder is an entity organized in a treaty country (or an entity managed and controlled in a treaty country, if the applicable treaty so requires); or

(C) Obtains a valid beneficial owner withholding certificate on Form W-8 that contains a permanent residence address and a mailing address in the applicable treaty country.

(ii) Documentary evidence is unreliable or incorrect if the direct account holder has standing instructions directing the withholding agent to pay amounts from its account to an address or an account maintained outside the treaty country unless the direct account holder provides a reasonable explanation, in writing, establishing the direct account holder's residence in the applicable treaty country.

(10) *Limits on reason to know—indirect account holders.* A financial institution that receives documentation from a payee through a nonqualified intermediary, a flow-through entity, or a U.S. branch described in § 1.1441-1(b)(2)(iv) (other than a U.S. branch that is treated as a U.S. person) with respect to a payment of an amount described in § 1.1441-6(c)(2) has reason to

know that the documentation is unreliable or incorrect if a reasonably prudent person in the position of a withholding agent would question the claims made. This standard requires, but is not limited to, a withholding agent's compliance with the rules of paragraphs (b)(10)(i) through (iii).

(i) The withholding agent must review the withholding statement described in § 1.1441-1(e)(3)(iv) and may not rely on information in the statement to the extent the information does not support the claims made for any payee. For this purpose, a withholding agent may not treat a payee as a foreign person if an address in the United States is provided for such payee and may not treat a person as a resident of a country with which the United States has an income tax treaty if the address for that person is outside the applicable treaty country. Notwithstanding a U.S. address or an address outside a treaty country, the withholding agent may treat a payee as a foreign person or a foreign person as a resident of a treaty country if a reasonable explanation is provided, in writing, by the nonqualified intermediary, flow-through entity, or U.S. branch supporting the payee's foreign status or the foreign person's residency in a treaty country.

(ii) The withholding agent must review each withholding certificate in accordance with the requirements of paragraphs (b)(5) and (6) of this section and verify that the information on the withholding certificate is consistent with the information on the withholding statement required under § 1.1441-1(e)(3)(iv). If there is a discrepancy between the withholding certificate and the withholding statement, the withholding agent may choose to rely on the withholding certificate, if valid, and instruct the nonqualified intermediary, flow-through entity, or U.S. branch to correct the withholding statement or apply the presumption rules of §§ 1.1441-1(b), 1.1441-5(d) and (e)(6), and 1.6049-5(d) to the payment allocable to the payee who provided the withholding certificate. A withholding agent that receives a withholding certificate before December 31, 2001, is not required to review the information on withholding certificates or determine

if it is consistent with the information on the withholding statement until December 31, 2001. A withholding agent may withhold and report in accordance with a withholding statement until December 31, 2001, unless it has actually performed the verification procedures required by this paragraph (b)(10)(ii) and determined that the withholding statement is inaccurate with respect to a particular payee.

(iii) The withholding agent must review the documentary evidence provided by the nonqualified intermediary, flow-through entity, or U.S. branch to determine that there is no obvious indication that the payee is a U.S. non-exempt recipient or that the documentary evidence does not establish the identity of the person who provided the documentation (*e.g.*, the documentary evidence does not appear to be an identification document).

(1) *Additional guidance.* The IRS may prescribe other circumstances for which a withholding certificate or documentary evidence is unreliable or incorrect in addition to the circumstances described in paragraph (b) of this section to establish an account holder's status as a foreign person or a beneficial owner entitled to a reduced rate of withholding in published guidance (see § 601.601(d)(2) of this chapter).

(c) *Authorized agent—(1) In general.* The acts of an agent of a withholding agent (including the receipt of withholding certificates, the payment of amounts of income subject to withholding, and the deposit of tax withheld) are imputed to the withholding agent on whose behalf it is acting. However, if the agent is a foreign person, a withholding agent that is a U.S. person may treat the acts of the foreign agent as its own for purposes of determining whether it has complied with the provisions of this section, but only if the agent is an authorized foreign agent, as defined in paragraph (c)(2) of this section. An authorized foreign agent cannot apply the provisions of this paragraph (c) to appoint another person its authorized foreign agent with respect to the payments it receives from the withholding agent.

(2) *Authorized foreign agent.* An agent is an authorized foreign agent only if—

(i) There is a written agreement between the withholding agent and the foreign person acting as agent;

(ii) The notification procedures described in paragraph (c)(3) of this section have been complied with;

(iii) Books and records and relevant personnel of the foreign agent are available (on a continuous basis, including after termination of the relationship) for examination by the IRS in order to evaluate the withholding agent's compliance with the provisions of chapters 3 and 61 of the Code, section 3406, and the regulations under those provisions; and

(iv) The U.S. withholding agent remains fully liable for the acts of its agent and does not assert any of the defenses that may otherwise be available, including under common law principles of agency in order to avoid tax liability under the Internal Revenue Code.

(3) *Notification.* A withholding agent that appoints an authorized agent to act on its behalf for purposes of § 1.871-14(c)(2), the withholding provisions of chapter 3 of the Code, section 3406 or other withholding provisions of the Internal Revenue Code, or the reporting provisions of chapter 61 of the Code, is required to file notice of such appointment with the Office of the Assistant Commissioner (International). Such notice shall be filed before the first payment for which the authorized agent acts as such. Such notice shall acknowledge the withholding agent liability as provided in paragraph (c)(2)(iv) of this section.

(4) *Liability of U.S. withholding agent.* An authorized foreign agent is subject to the same withholding and reporting obligations that apply to any withholding agent under the provisions of chapter 3 of the Code and the regulations thereunder. In particular, an authorized foreign agent does not benefit from the special procedures or exceptions that may apply to a qualified intermediary. A withholding agent acting through an authorized foreign agent is liable for any failure of the agent, such as failure to withhold an amount or make payment of tax, in the same manner and to the same extent as if the agent's failure had been the failure of the U.S. withholding agent. For

this purpose, the foreign agent's actual knowledge or reason to know shall be imputed to the U.S. withholding agent. The U.S. withholding agent's liability shall exist irrespective of the fact that the authorized foreign agent is also a withholding agent and is itself separately liable for failure to comply with the provisions of the regulations under section 1441, 1442, or 1443. However, the same tax, interest, or penalties shall not be collected more than once.

(5) *Filing of returns.* See § 1.1461-1(b)(2)(iii) and (c)(4)(iii) regarding returns required to be made where a U.S. withholding agent acts through an authorized foreign agent.

(d) *United States obligations.* If the United States is a withholding agent for an item of interest, including original issue discount, on obligations of the United States or of any agency or instrumentality thereof, the withholding obligation of the United States is assumed and discharged by—

(1) The Commissioner of the Public Debt, for interest paid by checks issued through the Bureau of the Public Debt;

(2) The Treasurer of the United States, for interest paid by him or her, whether by check or otherwise;

(3) Each Federal Reserve Bank, for interest paid by it, whether by check or otherwise; or

(4) Such other person as may be designated by the IRS.

(e) *Assumed obligations.* If, in connection with the sale of a corporation's property, payment on the bonds or other obligations of the corporation is assumed by a person, then that person shall be a withholding agent to the extent amounts subject to withholding are paid to a foreign person. Thus, the person shall withhold such amounts under § 1.1441-1 as would be required to be withheld by the seller or corporation had no such sale or assumption been made.

(f) *Conduit financing arrangements—(1) Liability of withholding agent.* Subject to paragraph (f)(2) of this section, any person that is required to deduct and withhold tax under § 1.1441-3(g) is made liable for that tax by section 1461. A person that is required to deduct and withhold tax but fails to do so is liable for the payment of the tax and any applicable penalties and interest.

(2) *Exception for withholding agents that do not know of conduit financing arrangement*—(i) *In general.* A withholding agent will not be liable under paragraph (f)(1) of this section for failing to deduct and withhold with respect to a conduit financing arrangement unless the person knows or has reason to know that the financing arrangement is a conduit financing arrangement. This standard shall be satisfied if the withholding agent knows or has reason to know of facts sufficient to establish that the financing arrangement is a conduit financing arrangement, including facts sufficient to establish that the participation of the intermediate entity in the financing arrangement is pursuant to a tax avoidance plan. A withholding agent that knows only of the financing transactions that comprise the financing arrangement will not be considered to know or have reason to know of facts sufficient to establish that the financing arrangement is a conduit financing arrangement.

(ii) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the operation of paragraph (d)(2) of this section.

Example 1. (i) DS is a U.S. subsidiary of FP, a corporation organized in Country N, a country that does not have an income tax treaty with the United States. FS is a special purpose subsidiary of FP that is incorporated in Country T, a country that has an income tax treaty with the United States that prohibits the imposition of withholding tax on payments of interest. FS is capitalized with \$10,000,000 in debt from BK, a Country N bank, and \$1,000,000 in capital from FS.

(ii) On May 1, 1995, C, a U.S. person, purchases an automobile from DS in return for an installment note. On July 1, 1995, DS sells a number of installment notes, including C's, to FS in exchange for \$10,000,000. DS continues to service the installment notes for FS and C is not notified of the sale of its obligation and continues to make payments to DS. But for the withholding tax on payments of interest by DS to BK, DS would have borrowed directly from BK, pledging the installment notes as collateral.

(iii) The C installment note is a financing transaction, whether held by DS or by FS, and the FS note held by BK also is a financing transaction. After FS purchases the installment note, and during the time the installment note is held by FS, the transactions constitute a financing arrangement, within the meaning of § 1.881-3(a)(2)(i). BK is the financing entity, FS is the intermediate entity, and C is the financed entity. Because

the participation of FS in the financing arrangement reduces the tax imposed by section 881 and because there was a tax avoidance plan, FS is a conduit entity.

(iv) Because C does not know or have reason to know of the tax avoidance plan (and by extension that the financing arrangement is a conduit financing arrangement), C is not required to withhold tax under section 1441. However, DS, who knows that FS's participation in the financing arrangement is pursuant to a tax avoidance plan and is a withholding agent for purposes of section 1441, is not relieved of its withholding responsibilities.

Example 2. Assume the same facts as in *Example 1* except that C receives a new payment booklet on which DS is described as "agent". Although C may deduce that its installment note has been sold, without more C has no reason to know of the existence of a financing arrangement. Accordingly, C is not liable for failure to withhold, although DS still is not relieved of its withholding responsibilities.

Example 3. (i) DC is a U.S. corporation that is in the process of negotiating a loan of \$10,000,000 from BK1, a bank located in Country N, a country that does not have an income tax treaty with the United States. Before the loan agreement is signed, DC's tax lawyers point out that interest on the loan would not be subject to withholding tax if the loan were made by BK2, a subsidiary of BK1 that is incorporated in Country T, a country that has an income tax treaty with the United States that prohibits the imposition of withholding tax on payments of interest. BK1 makes a loan to BK2 to enable BK2 to make the loan to DC. Without the loan from BK1 to BK2, BK2 would not have been able to make the loan to DC.

(ii) The loan from BK1 to BK2 and the loan from BK2 to DC are both financing transactions and together constitute a financing arrangement within the meaning of § 1.881-3(a)(2)(i). BK1 is the financing entity, BK2 is the intermediate entity, and DC is the financed entity. Because the participation of BK2 in the financing arrangement reduces the tax imposed by section 881 and because there is a tax avoidance plan, BK2 is a conduit entity.

(iii) Because DC is a party to the tax avoidance plan (and accordingly knows of its existence), DC must withhold tax under section 1441. If DC does not withhold tax on its payment of interest, BK2, a party to the plan and a withholding agent for purposes of section 1441, must withhold tax as required by section 1441.

Example 4. (i) DC is a U.S. corporation that has a long-standing banking relationship with BK2, a U.S. subsidiary of BK1, a bank incorporated in Country N, a country that does not have an income tax treaty with the United States. DC has borrowed amounts of

as much as \$75,000,000 from BK2 in the past. On January 1, 1995, DC asks to borrow \$50,000,000 from BK2. BK2 does not have the funds available to make a loan of that size. BK2 considers asking BK1 to enter into a loan with DC but rejects this possibility because of the additional withholding tax that would be incurred. Accordingly, BK2 borrows the necessary amount from BK1 with the intention of on-lending to DC. BK1 does not make the loan directly to DC because of the withholding tax that would apply to payments of interest from DC to BK1. DC does not negotiate with BK1 and has no reason to know that BK1 was the source of the loan.

(ii) The loan from BK2 to DC and the loan from BK1 to BK2 are both financing transactions and together constitute a financing arrangement within the meaning of § 1.881-3(a)(2)(i). BK1 is the financing entity, BK2 is the intermediate entity, and DC is the financed entity. The participation of BK2 in the financing arrangement reduces the tax imposed by section 881. Because the participation of BK2 in the financing arrangement reduces the tax imposed by section 881 and because there was a tax avoidance plan, BK2 is a conduit entity.

(iii) Because DC does not know or have reason to know of the tax avoidance plan (and by extension that the financing arrangement is a conduit financing arrangement), DC is not required to withhold tax under section 1441. However, BK2, who is also a withholding agent under section 1441 and who knows that the financing arrangement is a conduit financing arrangement, is not relieved of its withholding responsibilities.

(3) *Effective date.* This paragraph (f) is effective for payments made by financed entities on or after September 11, 1995. This paragraph shall not apply to interest payments covered by section 127(g)(3) of the Tax Reform Act of 1984, and to interest payments with respect to other debt obligations issued prior to October 15, 1984 (whether or not such debt was issued by a Netherlands Antilles corporation).

(g) *Effective date.* Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (f)(3) of this section, this section applies to payments made after December 31, 2000.

[T.D. 7977, 49 FR 36834, Sept. 20, 1984, as amended by T.D. 8611, 60 FR 41014, Aug. 11, 1995; 60 FR 55312, Oct. 31, 1995; T.D. 8734, 62 FR 53462, Oct. 14, 1997; T.D. 8804, 63 FR 72188, Dec. 31, 1998; T.D. 8856, 64 FR 73412, Dec. 30, 1999; T.D. 8881, 65 FR 32197, 32212, May 22, 2000; 66 FR 18189, Apr. 6, 2001]

§ 1.1441-8 Exemption from withholding for payments to foreign governments, international organizations, foreign central banks of issue, and the Bank for International Settlements.

(a) *Foreign governments.* Under section 892, certain specific types of income received by foreign governments are excluded from gross income and are exempt from taxation, unless derived from the conduct of a commercial activity or received from or by a controlled commercial entity. Accordingly, withholding is not required under § 1.1441.1 with regard to any item of income which is exempt from taxation under section 892.

(b) *Reliance on claim of exemption by foreign government.* Absent actual knowledge or reason to know otherwise, the withholding agent may rely upon a claim of exemption made by the foreign government if, prior to the payment, the withholding agent can reliably associate the payment with documentation upon which it can rely to treat the payment as made to a beneficial owner in accordance with § 1.1441-1(e)(1)(ii). A Form W-8 furnished by a foreign government for purposes of claiming an exemption under this paragraph (b) is valid only if, in addition to other applicable requirements, it certifies that the income is, or will be, exempt from taxation under section 892 and the regulations under that section and whether the person whose name is on the certificate is an integral part of a foreign government (as defined in § 1.892-2T(a)(2)) or a controlled entity (as defined in § 1.892-2T(a)(3)).

(c) *Income of a foreign central bank of issue or the Bank for International Settlements—(1) Certain interest income.* Section 895 provides for the exclusion from gross income of certain income derived by a foreign central bank of issue, or by the Bank for International Settlements, from obligations of the United States or of any agency or instrumentality thereof or from interest on deposits with persons carrying on the banking business if the bank is the owner of the obligations or deposits and does not hold the obligations or deposits for, or use them in connection with, the conduct of a commercial banking function or other commercial