

# CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL APPLICATION PRINCIPLES

## PART A – INTRODUCTION

### 1. Authority

The United States Sentencing Commission ("Commission") is an independent agency in the judicial branch composed of seven voting and two non-voting, ex officio members. Its principal purpose is to establish sentencing policies and practices for the federal criminal justice system that will assure the ends of justice by promulgating detailed guidelines prescribing the appropriate sentences for offenders convicted of federal crimes.

The guidelines and policy statements promulgated by the Commission are issued pursuant to Section 994(a) of Title 28, United States Code.

### 2. The Statutory Mission

The Sentencing Reform Act of 1984 (Title II of the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984) provides for the development of guidelines that will further the basic purposes of criminal punishment: deterrence, incapacitation, just punishment, and rehabilitation. The Act delegates broad authority to the Commission to review and rationalize the federal sentencing process.

The Act contains detailed instructions as to how this determination should be made, the most important of which directs the Commission to create categories of offense behavior and offender characteristics. An offense behavior category might consist, for example, of "bank robbery/committed with a gun/\$2500 taken." An offender characteristic category might be "offender with one prior conviction not resulting in imprisonment." The Commission is required to prescribe guideline ranges that specify an appropriate sentence for each class of convicted persons determined by coordinating the offense behavior categories with the offender characteristic categories. Where the guidelines call for imprisonment, the range must be narrow: the maximum of the range cannot exceed the minimum by more than the greater of 25 percent or six months. 28 U.S.C. § 994(b)(2).

Pursuant to the Act, the sentencing court must select a sentence from within the guideline range. If, however, a particular case presents atypical features, the Act allows the court to depart from the guidelines and sentence outside the prescribed range. In that case, the court must specify reasons for departure. 18 U.S.C. § 3553(b). If the court sentences within the guideline range, an appellate court may review the sentence to determine whether the guidelines were correctly applied. If the court departs from the guideline range, an appellate court may review the reasonableness of the departure. 18 U.S.C. § 3742. The Act also abolishes parole, and substantially reduces and restructures good behavior adjustments.

The Commission's initial guidelines were submitted to Congress on April 13, 1987. After the prescribed period of Congressional review, the guidelines took effect on November 1, 1987, and apply to all offenses committed on or after that date. The Commission has the authority to submit guideline amendments each year to Congress between the beginning of a regular Congressional session and May 1. Such amendments automatically take effect 180 days after submission unless a law is enacted to the contrary. 28 U.S.C. § 994(p).

The initial sentencing guidelines and policy statements were developed after extensive hearings, deliberation, and consideration of substantial public comment. The Commission emphasizes, however, that it views the guideline-writing process as evolutionary. It expects, and the governing statute anticipates, that continuing research, experience, and analysis will result in modifications and revisions to the guidelines through submission of amendments to Congress. To this end, the Commission is established as a permanent agency to monitor sentencing practices in the federal courts.

### **3. The Basic Approach (Policy Statement)**

To understand the guidelines and their underlying rationale, it is important to focus on the three objectives that Congress sought to achieve in enacting the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984. The Act's basic objective was to enhance the ability of the criminal justice system to combat crime through an effective, fair sentencing system. To achieve this end, Congress first sought honesty in sentencing. It sought to avoid the confusion and implicit deception that arose out of the pre-guidelines sentencing system which required the court to impose an indeterminate sentence of imprisonment and empowered the parole commission to determine how much of the sentence an offender actually would serve in prison. This practice usually resulted in a substantial reduction in the effective length of the sentence imposed, with defendants often serving only about one-third of the sentence imposed by the court.

Second, Congress sought reasonable uniformity in sentencing by narrowing the wide disparity in sentences imposed for similar criminal offenses committed by similar offenders. Third, Congress sought proportionality in sentencing through a system that imposes appropriately different sentences for criminal conduct of differing severity.

Honesty is easy to achieve: the abolition of parole makes the sentence imposed by the court the sentence the offender will serve, less approximately fifteen percent for good behavior. There is a tension, however, between the mandate of uniformity and the mandate of proportionality. Simple uniformity -- sentencing every offender to five years -- destroys proportionality. Having only a few simple categories of crimes would make the guidelines uniform and easy to administer, but might lump together offenses that are different in important respects. For example, a single category for robbery that included armed and unarmed robberies, robberies with and without injuries, robberies of a few dollars and robberies of millions, would be far too broad.

A sentencing system tailored to fit every conceivable wrinkle of each case would quickly become unworkable and seriously compromise the certainty of punishment and its deterrent effect. For example: a bank robber with (or without) a gun, which the robber kept hidden (or brandished), might have frightened (or merely warned), injured seriously (or less seriously), tied up (or simply pushed) a guard, teller, or customer, at night (or at noon), in an effort to obtain money for other crimes (or for other purposes), in the company of a few (or many) other robbers, for the first (or fourth) time.

The list of potentially relevant features of criminal behavior is long; the fact that they can occur in multiple combinations means that the list of possible permutations of factors is virtually endless. The appropriate relationships among these different factors are exceedingly difficult to establish, for they are often context specific. Sentencing courts do not treat the occurrence of a simple bruise identically in all cases, irrespective of whether that bruise occurred in the context of a bank robbery or in the context of a breach of peace. This is so, in part, because the risk that such a harm will occur differs depending on the underlying offense with which it is connected; and also because, in part, the relationship between punishment and multiple harms is not simply

additive. The relation varies depending on how much other harm has occurred. Thus, it would not be proper to assign points for each kind of harm and simply add them up, irrespective of context and total amounts.

The larger the number of subcategories of offense and offender characteristics included in the guidelines, the greater the complexity and the less workable the system. Moreover, complex combinations of offense and offender characteristics would apply and interact in unforeseen ways to unforeseen situations, thus failing to cure the unfairness of a simple, broad category system. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, probation officers and courts, in applying a complex system having numerous subcategories, would be required to make a host of decisions regarding whether the underlying facts were sufficient to bring the case within a particular subcategory. The greater the number of decisions required and the greater their complexity, the greater the risk that different courts would apply the guidelines differently to situations that, in fact, are similar, thereby reintroducing the very disparity that the guidelines were designed to reduce.

In view of the arguments, it would have been tempting to retreat to the simple, broad category approach and to grant courts the discretion to select the proper point along a broad sentencing range. Granting such broad discretion, however, would have risked correspondingly broad disparity in sentencing, for different courts may exercise their discretionary powers in different ways. Such an approach would have risked a return to the wide disparity that Congress established the Commission to reduce and would have been contrary to the Commission's mandate set forth in the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984.

In the end, there was no completely satisfying solution to this problem. The Commission had to balance the comparative virtues and vices of broad, simple categorization and detailed, complex subcategorization, and within the constraints established by that balance, minimize the discretionary powers of the sentencing court. Any system will, to a degree, enjoy the benefits and suffer from the drawbacks of each approach.

A philosophical problem arose when the Commission attempted to reconcile the differing perceptions of the purposes of criminal punishment. Most observers of the criminal law agree that the ultimate aim of the law itself, and of punishment in particular, is the control of crime. Beyond this point, however, the consensus seems to break down. Some argue that appropriate punishment should be defined primarily on the basis of the principle of "just deserts." Under this principle, punishment should be scaled to the offender's culpability and the resulting harms. Others argue that punishment should be imposed primarily on the basis of practical "crime control" considerations. This theory calls for sentences that most effectively lessen the likelihood of future crime, either by deterring others or incapacitating the defendant.

Adherents of each of these points of view urged the Commission to choose between them and accord one primacy over the other. As a practical matter, however, this choice was unnecessary because in most sentencing decisions the application of either philosophy will produce the same or similar results.

In its initial set of guidelines, the Commission sought to solve both the practical and philosophical problems of developing a coherent sentencing system by taking an empirical approach that used as a starting point data estimating pre-guidelines sentencing practice. It analyzed data drawn from 10,000 presentence investigations, the differing elements of various crimes as distinguished in substantive criminal statutes, the United States Parole Commission's guidelines and statistics, and data from other relevant sources in order to determine which distinctions were important in pre-guidelines practice. After consideration, the Commission accepted, modified, or rationalized these distinctions.

This empirical approach helped the Commission resolve its practical problem by defining a list of relevant distinctions that, although of considerable length, was short enough to create a manageable set of guidelines. Existing categories are relatively broad and omit distinctions that some may believe important, yet they include most of the major distinctions that statutes and data suggest made a significant difference in sentencing decisions. Relevant distinctions not reflected in the guidelines probably will occur rarely and sentencing courts may take such unusual cases into account by departing from the guidelines.

The Commission's empirical approach also helped resolve its philosophical dilemma. Those who adhere to a just deserts philosophy may concede that the lack of consensus might make it difficult to say exactly what punishment is deserved for a particular crime. Likewise, those who subscribe to a philosophy of crime control may acknowledge that the lack of sufficient data might make it difficult to determine exactly the punishment that will best prevent that crime. Both groups might therefore recognize the wisdom of looking to those distinctions that judges and legislators have, in fact, made over the course of time. These established distinctions are ones that the community believes, or has found over time, to be important from either a just deserts or crime control perspective.

The Commission did not simply copy estimates of pre-guidelines practice as revealed by the data, even though establishing offense values on this basis would help eliminate disparity because the data represent averages. Rather, it departed from the data at different points for various important reasons. Congressional statutes, for example, suggested or required departure, as in the case of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 that imposed increased and mandatory minimum sentences. In addition, the data revealed inconsistencies in treatment, such as punishing economic crime less severely than other apparently equivalent behavior.

Despite these policy-oriented departures from pre-guidelines practice, the guidelines represent an approach that begins with, and builds upon, empirical data. The guidelines will not please those who wish the Commission to adopt a single philosophical theory and then work deductively to establish a simple and perfect set of categorizations and distinctions. The guidelines may prove acceptable, however, to those who seek more modest, incremental improvements in the status quo, who believe the best is often the enemy of the good, and who recognize that these guidelines are, as the Act contemplates, but the first step in an evolutionary process. After spending considerable time and resources exploring alternative approaches, the Commission developed these guidelines as a practical effort toward the achievement of a more honest, uniform, equitable, proportional, and therefore effective sentencing system.

#### **4. The Guidelines' Resolution of Major Issues (Policy Statement)**

The guideline-drafting process required the Commission to resolve a host of important policy questions typically involving rather evenly balanced sets of competing considerations. As an aid to understanding the guidelines, this introduction briefly discusses several of those issues; commentary in the guidelines explains others.

##### **(a) Real Offense vs. Charge Offense Sentencing.**

One of the most important questions for the Commission to decide was whether to base sentences upon the actual conduct in which the defendant engaged regardless of the charges for which he was indicted or convicted ("real offense" sentencing), or upon the conduct that constitutes the elements of the offense for which the defendant was charged and of which he was convicted ("charge offense" sentencing). A bank robber, for example, might have used a gun, frightened

bystanders, taken \$50,000, injured a teller, refused to stop when ordered, and raced away damaging property during his escape. A pure real offense system would sentence on the basis of all identifiable conduct. A pure charge offense system would overlook some of the harms that did not constitute statutory elements of the offenses of which the defendant was convicted.

The Commission initially sought to develop a pure real offense system. After all, the pre-guidelines sentencing system was, in a sense, this type of system. The sentencing court and the parole commission took account of the conduct in which the defendant actually engaged, as determined in a presentence report, at the sentencing hearing, or before a parole commission hearing officer. The Commission's initial efforts in this direction, carried out in the spring and early summer of 1986, proved unproductive, mostly for practical reasons. To make such a system work, even to formalize and rationalize the status quo, would have required the Commission to decide precisely which harms to take into account, how to add them up, and what kinds of procedures the courts should use to determine the presence or absence of disputed factual elements. The Commission found no practical way to combine and account for the large number of diverse harms arising in different circumstances; nor did it find a practical way to reconcile the need for a fair adjudicatory procedure with the need for a speedy sentencing process given the potential existence of hosts of adjudicated "real harm" facts in many typical cases. The effort proposed as a solution to these problems required the use of, for example, quadratic roots and other mathematical operations that the Commission considered too complex to be workable. In the Commission's view, such a system risked return to wide disparity in sentencing practice.

In its initial set of guidelines submitted to Congress in April 1987, the Commission moved closer to a charge offense system. This system, however, does contain a significant number of real offense elements. For one thing, the hundreds of overlapping and duplicative statutory provisions that make up the federal criminal law forced the Commission to write guidelines that are descriptive of generic conduct rather than guidelines that track purely statutory language. For another, the guidelines take account of a number of important, commonly occurring real offense elements such as role in the offense, the presence of a gun, or the amount of money actually taken, through alternative base offense levels, specific offense characteristics, cross references, and adjustments.

The Commission recognized that a charge offense system has drawbacks of its own. One of the most important is the potential it affords prosecutors to influence sentences by increasing or decreasing the number of counts in an indictment. Of course, the defendant's actual conduct (that which the prosecutor can prove in court) imposes a natural limit upon the prosecutor's ability to increase a defendant's sentence. Moreover, the Commission has written its rules for the treatment of multicount convictions with an eye toward eliminating unfair treatment that might flow from count manipulation. For example, the guidelines treat a three-count indictment, each count of which charges sale of 100 grams of heroin or theft of \$10,000, the same as a single-count indictment charging sale of 300 grams of heroin or theft of \$30,000. Furthermore, a sentencing court may control any inappropriate manipulation of the indictment through use of its departure power. Finally, the Commission will closely monitor charging and plea agreement practices and will make appropriate adjustments should they become necessary.

(b) Departures.

The sentencing statute permits a court to depart from a guideline-specified sentence only when it finds "an aggravating or mitigating circumstance of a kind, or to a degree, not adequately taken into consideration by the Sentencing Commission in formulating the guidelines that should result in a sentence different from that described." 18 U.S.C. § 3553(b). The Commission intends the sentencing courts to treat each guideline as carving out a "heartland," a set of typical cases embodying the conduct that each guideline describes. When a court finds an atypical case, one

to which a particular guideline linguistically applies but where conduct significantly differs from the norm, the court may consider whether a departure is warranted. Section 5H1.10 (Race, Sex, National Origin, Creed, Religion, and Socio-Economic Status), the third sentence of §5H1.4 (Physical Condition, Including Drug Dependence and Alcohol Abuse), and the last sentence of §5K2.12 (Coercion and Duress) list several factors that the court cannot take into account as grounds for departure. With those specific exceptions, however, the Commission does not intend to limit the kinds of factors, whether or not mentioned anywhere else in the guidelines, that could constitute grounds for departure in an unusual case.

The Commission has adopted this departure policy for two reasons. First, it is difficult to prescribe a single set of guidelines that encompasses the vast range of human conduct potentially relevant to a sentencing decision. The Commission also recognizes that the initial set of guidelines need not do so. The Commission is a permanent body, empowered by law to write and rewrite guidelines, with progressive changes, over many years. By monitoring when courts depart from the guidelines and by analyzing their stated reasons for doing so and court decisions with references thereto, the Commission, over time, will be able to refine the guidelines to specify more precisely when departures should and should not be permitted.

Second, the Commission believes that despite the courts' legal freedom to depart from the guidelines, they will not do so very often. This is because the guidelines, offense by offense, seek to take account of those factors that the Commission's data indicate made a significant difference in pre-guidelines sentencing practice. Thus, for example, where the presence of physical injury made an important difference in pre-guidelines sentencing practice (as in the case of robbery or assault), the guidelines specifically include this factor to enhance the sentence. Where the guidelines do not specify an augmentation or diminution, this is generally because the sentencing data did not permit the Commission to conclude that the factor was empirically important in relation to the particular offense. Of course, an important factor (e.g., physical injury) may infrequently occur in connection with a particular crime (e.g., fraud). Such rare occurrences are precisely the type of events that the courts' departure powers were designed to cover -- unusual cases outside the range of the more typical offenses for which the guidelines were designed.

It is important to note that the guidelines refer to two different kinds of departure. The first involves instances in which the guidelines provide specific guidance for departure by analogy or by other numerical or non-numerical suggestions. For example, the Commentary to §2G1.1 (Transportation for the Purpose of Prostitution or Prohibited Sexual Conduct) recommends a downward departure of eight levels where a commercial purpose was not involved. The Commission intends such suggestions as policy guidance for the courts. The Commission expects that most departures will reflect the suggestions and that the courts of appeals may prove more likely to find departures "unreasonable" where they fall outside suggested levels.

A second type of departure will remain unguided. It may rest upon grounds referred to in Chapter Five, Part K (Departures) or on grounds not mentioned in the guidelines. While Chapter Five, Part K lists factors that the Commission believes may constitute grounds for departure, the list is not exhaustive. The Commission recognizes that there may be other grounds for departure that are not mentioned; it also believes there may be cases in which a departure outside suggested levels is warranted. In its view, however, such cases will be highly infrequent.

(c) Plea Agreements.

Nearly ninety percent of all federal criminal cases involve guilty pleas and many of these cases involve some form of plea agreement. Some commentators on early Commission guideline drafts urged the Commission not to attempt any major reforms of the plea agreement process on the grounds that any set of guidelines that threatened to change pre-guidelines practice radically

also threatened to make the federal system unmanageable. Others argued that guidelines that failed to control and limit plea agreements would leave untouched a "loophole" large enough to undo the good that sentencing guidelines would bring.

The Commission decided not to make major changes in plea agreement practices in the initial guidelines, but rather to provide guidance by issuing general policy statements concerning the acceptance of plea agreements in Chapter Six, Part B (Plea Agreements). The rules set forth in Fed. R. Crim. P. 11(e) govern the acceptance or rejection of such agreements. The Commission will collect data on the courts' plea practices and will analyze this information to determine when and why the courts accept or reject plea agreements and whether plea agreement practices are undermining the intent of the Sentencing Reform Act. In light of this information and analysis, the Commission will seek to further regulate the plea agreement process as appropriate. Importantly, if the policy statements relating to plea agreements are followed, circumvention of the Sentencing Reform Act and the guidelines should not occur.

The Commission expects the guidelines to have a positive, rationalizing impact upon plea agreements for two reasons. First, the guidelines create a clear, definite expectation in respect to the sentence that a court will impose if a trial takes place. In the event a prosecutor and defense attorney explore the possibility of a negotiated plea, they will no longer work in the dark. This fact alone should help to reduce irrationality in respect to actual sentencing outcomes. Second, the guidelines create a norm to which courts will likely refer when they decide whether, under Rule 11(e), to accept or to reject a plea agreement or recommendation.

(d) Probation and Split Sentences.

The statute provides that the guidelines are to "reflect the general appropriateness of imposing a sentence other than imprisonment in cases in which the defendant is a first offender who has not been convicted of a crime of violence or an otherwise serious offense . . ." 28 U.S.C. § 994(j). Under pre-guidelines sentencing practice, courts sentenced to probation an inappropriately high percentage of offenders guilty of certain economic crimes, such as theft, tax evasion, antitrust offenses, insider trading, fraud, and embezzlement, that in the Commission's view are "serious."

The Commission's solution to this problem has been to write guidelines that classify as serious many offenses for which probation previously was frequently given and provide for at least a short period of imprisonment in such cases. The Commission concluded that the definite prospect of prison, even though the term may be short, will serve as a significant deterrent, particularly when compared with pre-guidelines practice where probation, not prison, was the norm.

More specifically, the guidelines work as follows in respect to a first offender. For offense levels one through six, the sentencing court may elect to sentence the offender to probation (with or without confinement conditions) or to a prison term. For offense levels seven through ten, the court may substitute probation for a prison term, but the probation must include confinement conditions (community confinement, intermittent confinement, or home detention). For offense levels eleven and twelve, the court must impose at least one-half the minimum confinement sentence in the form of prison confinement, the remainder to be served on supervised release with a condition of community confinement or home detention. The Commission, of course, has not dealt with the single acts of aberrant behavior that still may justify probation at higher offense levels through departures.

(e) Multi-Count Convictions.

The Commission, like several state sentencing commissions, has found it particularly difficult to develop guidelines for sentencing defendants convicted of multiple violations of law, each of which makes up a separate count in an indictment. The difficulty is that when a defendant engages in conduct that causes several harms, each additional harm, even if it increases the extent to which punishment is warranted, does not necessarily warrant a proportionate increase in punishment. A defendant who assaults others during a fight, for example, may warrant more punishment if he injures ten people than if he injures one, but his conduct does not necessarily warrant ten times the punishment. If it did, many of the simplest offenses, for reasons that are often fortuitous, would lead to sentences of life imprisonment -- sentences that neither just deserts nor crime control theories of punishment would justify.

Several individual guidelines provide special instructions for increasing punishment when the conduct that is the subject of that count involves multiple occurrences or has caused several harms. The guidelines also provide general rules for aggravating punishment in light of multiple harms charged separately in separate counts. These rules may produce occasional anomalies, but normally they will permit an appropriate degree of aggravation of punishment for multiple offenses that are the subjects of separate counts.

These rules are set out in Chapter Three, Part D (Multiple Counts). They essentially provide: (1) when the conduct involves fungible items (e.g., separate drug transactions or thefts of money), the amounts are added and the guidelines apply to the total amount; (2) when nonfungible harms are involved, the offense level for the most serious count is increased (according to a diminishing scale) to reflect the existence of other counts of conviction. The guidelines have been written in order to minimize the possibility that an arbitrary casting of a single transaction into several counts will produce a longer sentence. In addition, the sentencing court will have adequate power to prevent such a result through departures.

(f) Regulatory Offenses.

Regulatory statutes, though primarily civil in nature, sometimes contain criminal provisions in respect to particularly harmful activity. Such criminal provisions often describe not only substantive offenses, but also more technical, administratively-related offenses such as failure to keep accurate records or to provide requested information. These statutes pose two problems: first, which criminal regulatory provisions should the Commission initially consider, and second, how should it treat technical or administratively-related criminal violations?

In respect to the first problem, the Commission found that it could not comprehensively treat all regulatory violations in the initial set of guidelines. There are hundreds of such provisions scattered throughout the United States Code. To find all potential violations would involve examination of each individual federal regulation. Because of this practical difficulty, the Commission sought to determine, with the assistance of the Department of Justice and several regulatory agencies, which criminal regulatory offenses were particularly important in light of the need for enforcement of the general regulatory scheme. The Commission addressed these offenses in the initial guidelines.

In respect to the second problem, the Commission has developed a system for treating technical recordkeeping and reporting offenses that divides them into four categories. First, in the simplest of cases, the offender may have failed to fill out a form intentionally, but without knowledge or intent that substantive harm would likely follow. He might fail, for example, to keep an accurate record of toxic substance transport, but that failure may not lead, nor be likely to lead, to the release or improper handling of any toxic substance. Second, the same failure may be

accompanied by a significant likelihood that substantive harm will occur; it may make a release of a toxic substance more likely. Third, the same failure may have led to substantive harm. Fourth, the failure may represent an effort to conceal a substantive harm that has occurred.

The structure of a typical guideline for a regulatory offense provides a low base offense level (e.g., 6) aimed at the first type of recordkeeping or reporting offense. Specific offense characteristics designed to reflect substantive harms that do occur in respect to some regulatory offenses, or that are likely to occur, increase the offense level. A specific offense characteristic also provides that a recordkeeping or reporting offense that conceals a substantive offense will have the same offense level as the substantive offense.

(g) Sentencing Ranges.

In determining the appropriate sentencing ranges for each offense, the Commission estimated the average sentences served within each category under the pre-guidelines sentencing system. It also examined the sentences specified in federal statutes, in the parole guidelines, and in other relevant, analogous sources. The Commission's Supplementary Report on the Initial Sentencing Guidelines (1987) contains a comparison between estimates of pre-guidelines sentencing practice and sentences under the guidelines.

While the Commission has not considered itself bound by pre-guidelines sentencing practice, it has not attempted to develop an entirely new system of sentencing on the basis of theory alone. Guideline sentences, in many instances, will approximate average pre-guidelines practice and adherence to the guidelines will help to eliminate wide disparity. For example, where a high percentage of persons received probation under pre-guidelines practice, a guideline may include one or more specific offense characteristics in an effort to distinguish those types of defendants who received probation from those who received more severe sentences. In some instances, short sentences of incarceration for all offenders in a category have been substituted for a pre-guidelines sentencing practice of very wide variability in which some defendants received probation while others received several years in prison for the same offense. Moreover, inasmuch as those who pleaded guilty under pre-guidelines practice often received lesser sentences, the guidelines permit the court to impose lesser sentences on those defendants who accept responsibility for their misconduct. For defendants who provide substantial assistance to the government in the investigation or prosecution of others, a downward departure may be warranted.

The Commission has also examined its sentencing ranges in light of their likely impact upon prison population. Specific legislation, such as the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 and the career offender provisions of the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984 (28 U.S.C. § 994(h)), required the Commission to promulgate guidelines that will lead to substantial prison population increases. These increases will occur irrespective of the guidelines. The guidelines themselves, insofar as they reflect policy decisions made by the Commission (rather than legislated mandatory minimum or career offender sentences), are projected to lead to an increase in prison population that computer models, produced by the Commission and the Bureau of Prisons in 1987, estimated at approximately 10 percent over a period of ten years.

(h) The Sentencing Table.

The Commission has established a sentencing table that for technical and practical reasons contains 43 levels. Each level in the table prescribes ranges that overlap with the ranges in the preceding and succeeding levels. By overlapping the ranges, the table should discourage unnecessary litigation. Both prosecution and defense will realize that the difference between one level and another will not necessarily make a difference in the sentence that the court imposes. Thus, little purpose will be served in protracted litigation trying to determine, for example,

whether \$10,000 or \$11,000 was obtained as a result of a fraud. At the same time, the levels work to increase a sentence proportionately. A change of six levels roughly doubles the sentence irrespective of the level at which one starts. The guidelines, in keeping with the statutory requirement that the maximum of any range cannot exceed the minimum by more than the greater of 25 percent or six months (28 U.S.C. § 994(b)(2)), permit courts to exercise the greatest permissible range of sentencing discretion. The table overlaps offense levels meaningfully, works proportionately, and at the same time preserves the maximum degree of allowable discretion for the court within each level.

Similarly, many of the individual guidelines refer to tables that correlate amounts of money with offense levels. These tables often have many rather than a few levels. Again, the reason is to minimize the likelihood of unnecessary litigation. If a money table were to make only a few distinctions, each distinction would become more important and litigation over which category an offender fell within would become more likely. Where a table has many small monetary distinctions, it minimizes the likelihood of litigation because the precise amount of money involved is of considerably less importance.

## 5. A Concluding Note

The Commission emphasizes that it drafted the initial guidelines with considerable caution. It examined the many hundreds of criminal statutes in the United States Code. It began with those that were the basis for a significant number of prosecutions and sought to place them in a rational order. It developed additional distinctions relevant to the application of these provisions and it applied sentencing ranges to each resulting category. In doing so, it relied upon pre-guidelines sentencing practice as revealed by its own statistical analyses based on summary reports of some 40,000 convictions, a sample of 10,000 augmented presentence reports, the parole guidelines, and policy judgments.

The Commission recognizes that some will criticize this approach as overly cautious, as representing too little a departure from pre-guidelines sentencing practice. Yet, it will cure wide disparity. The Commission is a permanent body that can amend the guidelines each year. Although the data available to it, like all data, are imperfect, experience with the guidelines will lead to additional information and provide a firm empirical basis for consideration of revisions.

Finally, the guidelines will apply to more than 90 percent of all felony and Class A misdemeanor cases in the federal courts. Because of time constraints and the nonexistence of statistical information, some offenses that occur infrequently are not considered in the guidelines. Their exclusion does not reflect any judgment regarding their seriousness and they will be addressed as the Commission refines the guidelines over time.

Historical Note: Effective November 1, 1987. Amended effective November 1, 1989 (see Appendix C, amendments 67 and 68); November 1, 1990 (see Appendix C, amendment 307).

## PART B - GENERAL APPLICATION PRINCIPLES

### §1B1.1. Application Instructions

- (a) Determine the applicable offense guideline section from Chapter Two. See §1B1.2 (Applicable Guidelines). The Statutory Index (Appendix A) provides a listing to assist in this determination.
- (b) Determine the base offense level and apply any appropriate specific offense characteristics contained in the particular guideline in Chapter Two in the order listed.
- (c) Apply the adjustments as appropriate related to victim, role, and obstruction of justice from Parts A, B, and C of Chapter Three.
- (d) If there are multiple counts of conviction, repeat steps (a) through (c) for each count. Apply Part D of Chapter Three to group the various counts and adjust the offense level accordingly.
- (e) Apply the adjustment as appropriate for the defendant's acceptance of responsibility from Part E of Chapter Three.
- (f) Determine the defendant's criminal history category as specified in Part A of Chapter Four. Determine from Part B of Chapter Four any other applicable adjustments.
- (g) Determine the guideline range in Part A of Chapter Five that corresponds to the offense level and criminal history category determined above.
- (h) For the particular guideline range, determine from Parts B through G of Chapter Five the sentencing requirements and options related to probation, imprisonment, supervision conditions, fines, and restitution.
- (i) Refer to Parts H and K of Chapter Five, Specific Offender Characteristics and Departures, and to any other policy statements or commentary in the guidelines that might warrant consideration in imposing sentence.

### Commentary

#### Application Notes:

1. *The following are definitions of terms that are used frequently in the guidelines:*

- (a) *"Abducted" means that a victim was forced to accompany an offender to a different location. For example, a bank robber's forcing a bank teller from the bank into a getaway car would constitute an abduction.*
- (b) *"Bodily injury" means any significant injury; e.g., an injury that is painful and obvious, or is of a type for which medical attention ordinarily would be sought. As used in the guidelines, the definition of this term is somewhat different than that used in various statutes.*

- (c) *"Brandished" with reference to a dangerous weapon (including a firearm) means that the weapon was pointed or waved about, or displayed in a threatening manner.*
- (d) *"Dangerous weapon" means an instrument capable of inflicting death or serious bodily injury. Where an object that appeared to be a dangerous weapon was brandished, displayed, or possessed, treat the object as a dangerous weapon.*
- (e) *"Firearm" means any weapon which is designed to or may readily be converted to expel any projectile by the action of an explosive. A weapon, commonly known as "BB" or pellet gun, that uses air or carbon dioxide pressure to expel a projectile is a dangerous weapon but not a firearm.*
- (f) *"More than minimal planning" means more planning than is typical for commission of the offense in a simple form. "More than minimal planning" also exists if significant affirmative steps were taken to conceal the offense.*

*"More than minimal planning" is deemed present in any case involving repeated acts over a period of time, unless it is clear that each instance was purely opportune. Consequently, this adjustment will apply especially frequently in property offenses.*

*In an assault, for example, waiting to commit the offense when no witnesses were present would not alone constitute more than minimal planning. By contrast, luring the victim to a specific location, or wearing a ski mask to prevent identification, would constitute more than minimal planning.*

*In a commercial burglary, for example, checking the area to make sure no witnesses were present would not alone constitute more than minimal planning. By contrast, obtaining building plans to plot a particular course of entry, or disabling an alarm system, would constitute more than minimal planning.*

*In a theft, going to a secluded area of a store to conceal the stolen item in one's pocket would not alone constitute more than minimal planning. However, repeated instances of such thefts on several occasions would constitute more than minimal planning. Similarly, fashioning a special device to conceal the property, or obtaining information on delivery dates so that an especially valuable item could be obtained, would constitute more than minimal planning.*

*In an embezzlement, a single taking accomplished by a false book entry would constitute only minimal planning. On the other hand, creating purchase orders to, and invoices from, a dummy corporation for merchandise that was never delivered would constitute more than minimal planning, as would several instances of taking money, each accompanied by false entries.*

- (g) *"Otherwise used" with reference to a dangerous weapon (including a firearm) means that the conduct did not amount to the discharge of a firearm but was more than brandishing, displaying, or possessing a firearm or other dangerous weapon.*
- (h) *"Permanent or life-threatening bodily injury" means injury involving a substantial risk of death; loss or substantial impairment of the function of a bodily member, organ, or mental faculty that is likely to be permanent; or an obvious disfigurement that is likely to be permanent.*

- (i) "Physically restrained" means the forcible restraint of the victim such as by being tied, bound, or locked up.
  - (j) "Serious bodily injury" means injury involving extreme physical pain or the impairment of a function of a bodily member, organ, or mental faculty; or requiring medical intervention such as surgery, hospitalization, or physical rehabilitation. As used in the guidelines, the definition of this term is somewhat different than that used in various statutes.
  - (k) "Destructive device" means any article described in 18 U.S.C. § 921(a)(4) (including an explosive, incendiary, or poison gas - (i) bomb, (ii) grenade, (iii) rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces, (iv) missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than one-quarter ounce, (v) mine, or (vi) device similar to any of the devices described in the proceeding clauses).
2. Definitions or explanations of terms may also appear within the commentary to specific guidelines. Such commentary is not of general applicability. The term "includes" is not exhaustive; the term "e.g." is merely illustrative.
  3. The list of "Statutory Provisions" in the Commentary to each offense guideline does not necessarily include every statute covered by that guideline. In addition, some statutes may be covered by more than one guideline.
  4. The offense level adjustments from more than one specific offense characteristic within an offense guideline are cumulative (added together) unless the guideline specifies that only the greater (or greatest) is to be used. Within each specific offense characteristic subsection, however, the offense level adjustments are alternative; only the one that best describes the conduct is to be used. E.g., in §2A2.2(b)(3), pertaining to degree of bodily injury, the subdivision that best describes the level of bodily injury is used; the adjustments for different degrees of bodily injury (subdivisions (A)-(E)) are not added together.
  5. Where two or more guideline provisions appear equally applicable, but the guidelines authorize the application of only one such provision, use the provision that results in the greater offense level. E.g., in §2A2.2(b)(2), if a firearm is both discharged and brandished, the provision applicable to the discharge of the firearm would be used.
  6. In the case of a defendant subject to a sentence enhancement under 18 U.S.C. § 3147 (Penalty for an Offense Committed While on Release), see §2J1.7 (Commission of Offense While on Release).

Historical Note: Effective November 1, 1987. Amended effective January 15, 1988 (see Appendix C, amendment 1); November 1, 1989 (see Appendix C, amendments 69-72 and 303); November 1, 1990 (see Appendix C, amendment 361).

#### §1B1.2. Applicable Guidelines

- (a) Determine the offense guideline section in Chapter Two (Offense Conduct) most applicable to the offense of conviction (i.e., the offense conduct charged in the count of the indictment or information of which the defendant was convicted). *Provided*, however, in the case of conviction by a plea of guilty or nolo contendere containing a stipulation that specifically establishes a more serious offense than the offense of conviction, determine the offense guideline section in Chapter Two most applicable to the stipulated offense.

- (b) After determining the appropriate offense guideline section pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, determine the applicable guideline range in accordance with §1B1.3 (Relevant Conduct).
- (c) A conviction by a plea of guilty or nolo contendere containing a stipulation that specifically establishes the commission of additional offense(s) shall be treated as if the defendant had been convicted of additional count(s) charging those offense(s).
- (d) A conviction on a count charging a conspiracy to commit more than one offense shall be treated as if the defendant had been convicted on a separate count of conspiracy for each offense that the defendant conspired to commit.

### Commentary

#### Application Notes:

1. *This section provides the basic rules for determining the guidelines applicable to the offense conduct under Chapter Two (Offense Conduct). As a general rule, the court is to use the guideline section from Chapter Two most applicable to the offense of conviction. The Statutory Index (Appendix A) provides a listing to assist in this determination. When a particular statute proscribes only a single type of criminal conduct, the offense of conviction and the conduct proscribed by the statute will coincide, and there will be only one offense guideline referenced. When a particular statute proscribes a variety of conduct that might constitute the subject of different offense guidelines, the court will determine which guideline section applies based upon the nature of the offense conduct charged in the count of which the defendant was convicted.*

*However, there is a limited exception to this general rule. Where a stipulation as part of a plea of guilty or nolo contendere specifically establishes facts that prove a more serious offense or offenses than the offense or offenses of conviction, the court is to apply the guideline most applicable to the more serious offense or offenses established. The sentence that may be imposed is limited, however, to the maximum authorized by the statute under which the defendant is convicted. See Chapter Five, Part G (Implementing the Total Sentence of Imprisonment). For example, if the defendant pleads guilty to theft, but admits the elements of robbery as part of the plea agreement, the robbery guideline is to be applied. The sentence, however, may not exceed the maximum sentence for theft. See H. Rep. 98-1017, 98th Cong., 2d Sess. 99 (1984).*

*The exception to the general rule has a practical basis. In cases where the elements of an offense more serious than the offense of conviction are established by the plea, it may unduly complicate the sentencing process if the applicable guideline does not reflect the seriousness of the defendant's actual conduct. Without this exception, the court would be forced to use an artificial guideline and then depart from it to the degree the court found necessary based upon the more serious conduct established by the plea. The probation officer would first be required to calculate the guideline for the offense of conviction. However, this guideline might even contain characteristics that are difficult to establish or not very important in the context of the actual offense conduct. As a simple example, §2B1.1 (Larceny, Embezzlement, and Other Forms of Theft) contains monetary distinctions which are more significant and more detailed than the monetary distinctions in §2B3.1 (Robbery). Then, the probation officer might need to calculate the robbery guideline to assist the court in determining the appropriate degree of departure in a case in which the defendant pled guilty to theft but admitted committing robbery. This*

*cumbersome, artificial procedure is avoided by using the exception rule in guilty or nolo contendere plea cases where it is applicable.*

*As with any plea agreement, the court must first determine that the agreement is acceptable, in accordance with the policies stated in Chapter Six, Part B (Plea Agreements). The limited exception provided here applies only after the court has determined that a plea, otherwise fitting the exception, is acceptable.*

- 2. Section 1B1.2(b) directs the court, once it has determined the applicable guideline (i.e., the applicable guideline section from Chapter Two) under §1B1.2(a) to determine any applicable specific offense characteristics (under that guideline), and any other applicable sentencing factors pursuant to the relevant conduct definition in §1B1.3. Where there is more than one base offense level within a particular guideline, the determination of the applicable base offense level is treated in the same manner as a determination of a specific offense characteristic. Accordingly, the "relevant conduct" criteria of §1B1.3 are to be used, unless conviction under a specific statute is expressly required.*
- 3. In many instances, it will be appropriate that the court consider the actual conduct of the offender, even when such conduct does not constitute an element of the offense. As described above, this may occur when an offender stipulates certain facts in a plea agreement. It is more typically so when the court considers the applicability of specific offense characteristics within individual guidelines, when it considers various adjustments, and when it considers whether or not to depart from the guidelines for reasons relating to offense conduct. See §§1B1.3 (Relevant Conduct) and 1B1.4 (Information to be Used in Imposing Sentence).*
- 4. Subsections (c) and (d) address circumstances in which the provisions of Chapter Three, Part D (Multiple Counts) are to be applied although there may be only one count of conviction. Subsection (c) provides that in the case of a stipulation to the commission of additional offense(s), the guidelines are to be applied as if the defendant had been convicted of an additional count for each of the offenses stipulated. For example, if the defendant is convicted of one count of robbery but, as part of a plea agreement, admits to having committed two additional robberies, the guidelines are to be applied as if the defendant had been convicted of three counts of robbery. Subsection (d) provides that a conviction on a conspiracy count charging conspiracy to commit more than one offense is treated as if the defendant had been convicted of a separate conspiracy count for each offense that he conspired to commit. For example, where a conviction on a single count of conspiracy establishes that the defendant conspired to commit three robberies, the guidelines are to be applied as if the defendant had been convicted on one count of conspiracy to commit the first robbery, one count of conspiracy to commit the second robbery, and one count of conspiracy to commit the third robbery.*
- 5. Particular care must be taken in applying subsection (d) because there are cases in which the jury's verdict does not establish which offense(s) was the object of the conspiracy. In such cases, subsection (d) should only be applied with respect to an object offense alleged in the conspiracy count if the court, were it sitting as a trier of fact, would convict the defendant of conspiring to commit that object offense. Note, however, if the object offenses specified in the conspiracy count would be grouped together under §3D1.2(d) (e.g., a conspiracy to steal three government checks) it is not necessary to engage in the foregoing analysis, because §1B1.3(a)(2) governs consideration of the defendant's conduct.*

Historical Note: Effective November 1, 1987. Amended effective January 15, 1988 (see Appendix C, amendment 2); November 1, 1989 (see Appendix C, amendments 73-75 and 303).

**§1B1.3. Relevant Conduct (Factors that Determine the Guideline Range)**

- (a) Chapters Two (Offense Conduct) and Three (Adjustments). Unless otherwise specified, (i) the base offense level where the guideline specifies more than one base offense level, (ii) specific offense characteristics and (iii) cross references in Chapter Two, and (iv) adjustments in Chapter Three, shall be determined on the basis of the following:
- (1) all acts and omissions committed or aided and abetted by the defendant, or for which the defendant would be otherwise accountable, that occurred during the commission of the offense of conviction, in preparation for that offense, or in the course of attempting to avoid detection or responsibility for that offense, or that otherwise were in furtherance of that offense;
  - (2) solely with respect to offenses of a character for which §3D1.2(d) would require grouping of multiple counts, all such acts and omissions that were part of the same course of conduct or common scheme or plan as the offense of conviction;
  - (3) all harm that resulted from the acts or omissions specified in subsections (a)(1) and (a)(2) above, and all harm that was the object of such acts or omissions; and
  - (4) any other information specified in the applicable guideline.
- (b) Chapters Four (Criminal History and Criminal Livelihood) and Five (Determining the Sentence). Factors in Chapters Four and Five that establish the guideline range shall be determined on the basis of the conduct and information specified in the respective guidelines.

Commentary

Application Notes:

1. *Conduct "for which the defendant would be otherwise accountable," as used in subsection (a)(1), includes conduct that the defendant counseled, commanded, induced, procured, or willfully caused. (Cf. 18 U.S.C. § 2.) In the case of criminal activity undertaken in concert with others, whether or not charged as a conspiracy, the conduct for which the defendant "would be otherwise accountable" also includes conduct of others in furtherance of the execution of the jointly-undertaken criminal activity that was reasonably foreseeable by the defendant. Because a count may be broadly worded and include the conduct of many participants over a substantial period of time, the scope of the jointly-undertaken criminal activity, and hence relevant conduct, is not necessarily the same for every participant. Where it is established that the conduct was neither within the scope of the defendant's agreement, nor was reasonably foreseeable in connection with the criminal activity the defendant agreed to jointly undertake, such conduct is not included in establishing the defendant's offense level under this guideline.*

*In the case of solicitation, misprision, or accessory after the fact, the conduct for which the defendant "would be otherwise accountable" includes all conduct relevant to determining the offense level for the underlying offense that was known, or reasonably should have been known, by the defendant.*

### Illustrations of Conduct for Which the Defendant is Accountable

- a. Defendant A, one of ten off-loaders hired by Defendant B, was convicted of importation of marihuana, as a result of his assistance in off-loading a boat containing a one-ton shipment of marihuana. Regardless of the number of bales of marihuana that he actually unloaded, and notwithstanding any claim on his part that he was neither aware of, nor could reasonably foresee, that the boat contained this quantity of marihuana, Defendant A is held accountable for the entire one-ton quantity of marihuana on the boat because he aided and abetted the unloading, and hence the importation, of the entire shipment.
- b. Defendant C, the getaway driver in an armed bank robbery in which \$15,000 is taken and a teller is injured, is convicted of the substantive count of bank robbery. Defendant C is accountable for the money taken because he aided and abetted the taking of the money. He is accountable for the injury inflicted because he participated in concerted criminal conduct that he could reasonably foresee might result in the infliction of injury.
- c. Defendant D pays Defendant E a small amount to forge an endorsement on an \$800 stolen government check. Unknown to Defendant E, Defendant D then uses that check as a down payment in a scheme to fraudulently obtain \$15,000 worth of merchandise. Defendant E is convicted of forging the \$800 check. Defendant E is not accountable for the \$15,000 because the fraudulent scheme to obtain \$15,000 was beyond the scope of, and not reasonably foreseeable in connection with, the criminal activity he jointly undertook with Defendant D.
- d. Defendants F and G, working together, design and execute a scheme to sell fraudulent stocks by telephone. Defendant F fraudulently obtains \$20,000. Defendant G fraudulently obtains \$35,000. Each is convicted of mail fraud. Each defendant is accountable for the entire amount (\$55,000) because each aided and abetted the other in the fraudulent conduct. Alternatively, because Defendants F and G engaged in concerted criminal activity, each is accountable for the entire \$55,000 loss because the conduct of each was in furtherance of the jointly undertaken criminal activity and was reasonably foreseeable.
- e. Defendants H and I engaged in an ongoing marihuana importation conspiracy in which Defendant J was hired only to help off-load a single shipment. Defendants H, I, and J are included in a single count charging conspiracy to import marihuana. For the purposes of determining the offense level under this guideline, Defendant J is accountable for the entire single shipment of marihuana he conspired to help import and any acts or omissions in furtherance of the importation that were reasonably foreseeable. He is not accountable for prior or subsequent shipments of marihuana imported by Defendants H or I if those acts were beyond the scope of, and not reasonably foreseeable in connection with, the criminal activity he agreed to jointly undertake with Defendants H and I (*i.e.*, the importation of the single shipment of marihuana).
2. "Such acts and omissions," as used in subsection (a)(2), refers to acts and omissions committed or aided and abetted by the defendant, or for which the defendant would be otherwise accountable. "Offenses of a character for which §3D1.2(d) would require grouping of multiple counts," as used in subsection (a)(2), applies to offenses for which grouping of counts would be required under §3D1.2(d) had the defendant been convicted of multiple counts. Application of this provision does not require the defendant, in fact, to have been convicted of multiple counts. For example, where the defendant engaged in three drug sales of 10, 15, and 20 grams of cocaine, as part of the same course of conduct or common scheme or plan, subsection (a)(2) provides that the total quantity of cocaine involved (45 grams) is to be used to determine the offense level even if the defendant is convicted of a single count charging only one of the sales. If the

defendant is convicted of multiple counts for the above noted sales, the grouping rules of Chapter Three, Part D (Multiple Counts) provide that the counts are grouped together. Although Chapter Three, Part D (Multiple Counts) applies to multiple counts of conviction, it does not limit the scope of subsection (a)(2). Subsection (a)(2) merely incorporates by reference the types of offenses set forth in §3D1.2(d); thus, as discussed above, multiple counts of conviction are not required for subsection (a)(2) to apply.

3. "Harm" includes bodily injury, monetary loss, property damage and any resulting harm.
4. If the offense guideline includes creating a risk or danger of harm as a specific offense characteristic, whether that risk or danger was created is to be considered in determining the offense level. See, e.g., §2K1.4 (Arson); §2Q1.2 (Mishandling of Hazardous or Toxic Substances or Pesticides). If, however, the guideline refers only to harm sustained (e.g., §2A2.2 (Aggravated Assault); §2B3.1 (Robbery)) or to actual, attempted or intended harm (e.g., §2F1.1 (Fraud and Deceit); §2X1.1 (Attempt, Solicitation, or Conspiracy)), the risk created enters into the determination of the offense level only insofar as it is incorporated into the base offense level. Unless clearly indicated by the guidelines, harm that is merely risked is not to be treated as the equivalent of harm that occurred. When not adequately taken into account by the applicable offense guideline, creation of a risk may provide a ground for imposing a sentence above the applicable guideline range. See generally §1B1.4 (Information to be Used in Imposing Sentence); §5K2.0 (Grounds for Departure). The extent to which harm that was attempted or intended enters into the determination of the offense level should be determined in accordance with §2X1.1 (Attempt, Solicitation, or Conspiracy) and the applicable offense guideline.
5. A particular guideline (in the base offense level or in a specific offense characteristic) may expressly direct that a particular factor be applied only if the defendant was convicted of a particular statute. E.g., in §2K2.2, a base offense level of 16 is used "if the defendant is convicted under 18 U.S.C. § 922(o) or 26 U.S.C. § 5861." Unless such an express direction is included, conviction under the statute is not required. Thus, use of a statutory reference to describe a particular set of circumstances does not require a conviction under the referenced statute. Examples of this usage are found in §2K1.3(b)(4) ("If the defendant was a person prohibited from receiving explosives under 18 U.S.C. § 842(i), or if the defendant knowingly distributed explosives to a person prohibited from receiving explosives under 18 U.S.C. § 842(i), increase by 10 levels"); and §2A3.4(a)(2) ("if the offense was committed by the means set forth in 18 U.S.C. § 2242").

**Background:** This section prescribes rules for determining the applicable guideline sentencing range, whereas §1B1.4 (Information to be Used in Imposing Sentence) governs the range of information that the court may consider in adjudging sentence once the guideline sentencing range has been determined. Conduct that is not formally charged or is not an element of the offense of conviction may enter into the determination of the applicable guideline sentencing range. The range of information that may be considered at sentencing is broader than the range of information upon which the applicable sentencing range is determined.

Subsection (a) establishes a rule of construction by specifying, in the absence of more explicit instructions in the context of a specific guideline, the range of conduct that is relevant to determining the applicable offense level (except for the determination of the applicable offense guideline, which is governed by §1B1.2(a)). No such rule of construction is necessary with respect to Chapters Four and Five because the guidelines in those Chapters are explicit as to the specific factors to be considered.

Subsection (a)(2) provides for consideration of a broader range of conduct with respect to one class of offenses, primarily certain property, tax, fraud and drug offenses for which the guidelines depend substantially on quantity, than with respect to other offenses such as assault, robbery and

*burglary. The distinction is made on the basis of §3D1.2(d), which provides for grouping together (i.e., treating as a single count) all counts charging offenses of a type covered by this subsection. However, the applicability of subsection (a)(2) does not depend upon whether multiple counts are alleged. Thus, in an embezzlement case, for example, embezzled funds that may not be specified in any count of conviction are nonetheless included in determining the offense level if they were part of the same course of conduct or part of the same scheme or plan as the count of conviction. Similarly, in a drug distribution case, quantities and types of drugs not specified in the count of conviction are to be included in determining the offense level if they were part of the same course of conduct or part of a common scheme or plan as the count of conviction. On the other hand, in a robbery case in which the defendant robbed two banks, the amount of money taken in one robbery would not be taken into account in determining the guideline range for the other robbery, even if both robberies were part of a single course of conduct or the same scheme or plan. (This is true whether the defendant is convicted of one or both robberies.)*

*Subsections (a)(1) and (a)(2) adopt different rules because offenses of the character dealt with in subsection (a)(2) (i.e., to which §3D1.2(d) applies) often involve a pattern of misconduct that cannot readily be broken into discrete, identifiable units that are meaningful for purposes of sentencing. For example, a pattern of embezzlement may consist of several acts of taking that cannot separately be identified, even though the overall conduct is clear. In addition, the distinctions that the law makes as to what constitutes separate counts or offenses often turn on technical elements that are not especially meaningful for purposes of sentencing. Thus, in a mail fraud case, the scheme is an element of the offense and each mailing may be the basis for a separate count; in an embezzlement case, each taking may provide a basis for a separate count. Another consideration is that in a pattern of small thefts, for example, it is important to take into account the full range of related conduct. Relying on the entire range of conduct, regardless of the number of counts that are alleged or on which a conviction is obtained, appears to be the most reasonable approach to writing workable guidelines for these offenses. Conversely, when §3D1.2(d) does not apply, so that convictions on multiple counts are considered separately in determining the guideline sentencing range, the guidelines prohibit aggregation of quantities from other counts in order to prevent "double counting" of the conduct and harm from each count of conviction. Continuing offenses present similar practical problems. The reference to §3D1.2(d), which provides for grouping of multiple counts arising out of a continuing offense when the offense guideline takes the continuing nature into account, also prevents double counting.*

*Subsection (a)(4) requires consideration of any other information specified in the applicable guideline. For example, §2A1.4 (Involuntary Manslaughter) specifies consideration of the defendant's state of mind; §2K1.4 (Arson; Property Damage By Use of Explosives) specifies consideration of the risk of harm created.*

*This guideline and §1B1.4 clarify the intent underlying §1B1.3 as originally promulgated.*

**Historical Note:** Effective November 1, 1987. Amended effective January 15, 1988 (see Appendix C, amendment 3); November 1, 1989 (see Appendix C, amendments 76-78 and 303); November 1, 1990 (see Appendix C, amendment 309).

**§1B1.4. Information to be Used in Imposing Sentence (Selecting a Point Within the Guideline Range or Departing from the Guidelines)**

In determining the sentence to impose within the guideline range, or whether a departure from the guidelines is warranted, the court may consider, without limitation, any information concerning the background, character and conduct of the defendant, unless otherwise prohibited by law. See 18 U.S.C. § 3661.

## Commentary

**Background:** This section distinguishes between factors that determine the applicable guideline sentencing range (§1B1.3) and information that a court may consider in imposing sentence within that range. The section is based on 18 U.S.C. § 3661, which recodifies 18 U.S.C. § 3577. The recodification of this 1970 statute in 1984 with an effective date of 1987 (99 Stat. 1728), makes it clear that Congress intended that no limitation would be placed on the information that a court may consider in imposing an appropriate sentence under the future guideline sentencing system. A court is not precluded from considering information that the guidelines do not take into account. For example, if the defendant committed two robberies, but as part of a plea negotiation entered a guilty plea to only one, the robbery that was not taken into account by the guidelines would provide a reason for sentencing at the top of the guideline range. In addition, information that does not enter into the determination of the applicable guideline sentencing range may be considered in determining whether and to what extent to depart from the guidelines. Some policy statements do, however, express a Commission policy that certain factors should not be considered for any purpose, or should be considered only for limited purposes. *See, e.g., Chapter Five, Part H (Specific Offender Characteristics).*

**Historical Note:** Effective November 1, 1987. Amended effective January 15, 1988 (see Appendix C, amendment 4); November 1, 1989 (see Appendix C, amendment 303).

### **§1B1.5. Interpretation of References to Other Offense Guidelines**

Unless otherwise expressly indicated, a reference to another guideline, or an instruction to apply another guideline, refers to the entire guideline, *i.e.*, the base offense level plus all applicable specific offense characteristics and cross references.

## Commentary

### **Application Note:**

1. *References to other offense guidelines are most frequently designated "Cross References," but may also appear in the portion of the guideline entitled "Base Offense Level" (e.g., §§2D1.2(a)(1), 2H1.2(a)(2)), or "Specific Offense Characteristics" (e.g., §§2A4.1(b)(5)(B), 2Q1.2(b)(5)). These references may be to a specific guideline, or may be more general (e.g., to the guideline for the "underlying offense"). Such references are to be construed to incorporate the specific offense characteristics and cross references as well as the base offense level. For example, if the guideline reads "2 plus the offense level from §2A2.2 (Aggravated Assault)," the user would determine the offense level from §2A2.2, including any applicable adjustments for planning, weapon use, degree of injury and motive, and then increase by 2 levels.*

**Historical Note:** Effective November 1, 1987. Amended effective November 1, 1989 (see Appendix C, amendments 79, 80, and 302).

### **§1B1.6. Structure of the Guidelines**

The guidelines are presented in numbered chapters divided into alphabetical parts. The parts are divided into subparts and individual guidelines. Each guideline is identified by three numbers and a letter corresponding to the chapter, part, subpart and individual guideline.



*In stating that failure to follow certain commentary "could constitute an incorrect application of the guidelines," the Commission simply means that in seeking to understand the meaning of the guidelines courts likely will look to the commentary for guidance as an indication of the intent of those who wrote them. In such instances, the courts will treat the commentary much like legislative history or other legal material that helps determine the intent of a drafter.*

Historical Note: Effective November 1, 1987.

**§1B1.8. Use of Certain Information**

- (a) Where a defendant agrees to cooperate with the government by providing information concerning unlawful activities of others, and as part of that cooperation agreement the government agrees that self-incriminating information provided pursuant to the agreement will not be used against the defendant, then such information shall not be used in determining the applicable guideline range, except to the extent provided in the agreement.
- (b) The provisions of subsection (a) shall not be applied to restrict the use of information:
  - (1) known to the government prior to entering into the cooperation agreement;
  - (2) concerning the existence of prior convictions and sentences in determining §4A1.1 (Criminal History Category) and §4B1.1 (Career Offender);
  - (3) in a prosecution for perjury or giving a false statement; or
  - (4) in the event there is a breach of the cooperation agreement by the defendant.

Commentary

Application Notes:

1. *This provision does not authorize the government to withhold information from the court but provides that self-incriminating information obtained under a cooperation agreement is not to be used to determine the defendant's guideline range. Under this provision, for example, if a defendant is arrested in possession of a kilogram of cocaine and, pursuant to an agreement to provide information concerning the unlawful activities of co-conspirators, admits that he assisted in the importation of an additional three kilograms of cocaine, a fact not previously known to the government, this admission would not be used to increase his applicable guideline range, except to the extent provided in the agreement. Although this guideline, consistent with the general structure of these guidelines, affects only the determination of the guideline range, the policy of the Commission is that where a defendant as a result of a cooperation agreement with the government to assist in the investigation or prosecution of other offenders reveals information that implicates him in unlawful conduct not already known to the government, such defendant should not be subject to an increased sentence by virtue of that cooperation where the government agreed that the information revealed would not be used for such purpose.*

2. *Subsection (b)(2) prohibits any cooperation agreement from restricting the use of information as to the existence of prior convictions and sentences in determining adjustments under §4A1.1 (Criminal History Category) and §4B1.1 (Career Offender). The Probation Service generally will secure information relevant to the defendant's criminal history independent of information the defendant provides as part of his cooperation agreement.*
3. *On occasion the defendant will provide incriminating information to the government during plea negotiation sessions before a cooperation agreement has been reached. In the event no agreement is reached, use of such information is governed by the provisions of Rule 11 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure and Rule 410 of the Rules of Evidence.*
4. *As with the statutory provisions governing use immunity, 18 U.S.C. § 6002, this guideline does not apply to information used against the defendant in a prosecution for perjury, giving a false statement, or in the event the defendant otherwise fails to comply with the cooperation agreement.*

Historical Note: Effective June 15, 1988 (see Appendix C, amendment 5). Amended effective November 1, 1990 (see Appendix C, amendment 308).

#### **§1B1.9. Class B or C Misdemeanors and Infractions**

The sentencing guidelines do not apply to any count of conviction that is a Class B or C misdemeanor or an infraction.

#### Commentary

#### Application Notes:

1. *Notwithstanding any other provision of the guidelines, the court may impose any sentence authorized by statute for each count that is a Class B or C misdemeanor or an infraction. A Class B misdemeanor is any offense for which the maximum authorized term of imprisonment is more than thirty days but not more than six months; a Class C misdemeanor is any offense for which the maximum authorized term of imprisonment is more than five days but not more than thirty days; an infraction is any offense for which the maximum authorized term of imprisonment is not more than five days.*
2. *The guidelines for sentencing on multiple counts do not apply to counts that are Class B or C misdemeanors or infractions. Sentences for such offenses may be consecutive to or concurrent with sentences imposed on other counts. In imposing sentence, the court should, however, consider the relationship between the Class B or C misdemeanor or infraction and any other offenses of which the defendant is convicted.*

Background: *For the sake of judicial economy, the Commission has exempted all Class B and C misdemeanors and infractions from the coverage of the guidelines.*

Historical Note: Effective June 15, 1988 (see Appendix C, amendment 6). Amended effective November 1, 1989 (see Appendix C, amendment 81).

**1B1.10. Retroactivity of Amended Guideline Range (Policy Statement)**

- (a) Where a defendant is serving a term of imprisonment, and the guideline range applicable to that defendant has subsequently been lowered as a result of an amendment to the guidelines listed in subsection (d) below, a reduction in the defendant's term of imprisonment may be considered under 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(2). If none of the amendments listed in subsection (d) is applicable, a reduction in the defendant's term of imprisonment under 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(2) is not consistent with this policy statement.
- (b) In determining whether a reduction in sentence is warranted for a defendant eligible for consideration under 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(2), the court should consider the sentence that it would have originally imposed had the guidelines, as amended, been in effect at that time.
- (c) *Provided*, however, that a reduction in a defendant's term of imprisonment --
  - (1) is not authorized unless the maximum of the guideline range applicable to the defendant (from Chapter Five, Part A) has been lowered by at least six months; and
  - (2) may, in no event, exceed the number of months by which the maximum of the guideline range applicable to the defendant (from Chapter Five, Part A) has been lowered.
- (d) Amendments covered by this policy statement are listed in Appendix C as follows: 126, 130, 156, 176, 269, 329, and 341.

Commentary

Application Note:

1. Although eligibility for consideration under 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(2) is triggered only by an amendment listed in subsection (d) of this section, the amended guideline range referred to in subsections (b) and (c) of this section is to be determined by applying all amendments to the guidelines (*i.e.*, as if the defendant was being sentenced under the guidelines currently in effect).

Background: Section 3582 (c)(2) of Title 18, United States Code, provides: "[I]n the case of a defendant who has been sentenced to a term of imprisonment based on a sentencing range that has subsequently been lowered by the Sentencing Commission pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 994(o), upon motion of the defendant or the Director of the Bureau of Prisons, or on its own motion, the court may reduce the term of imprisonment, after considering the factors set forth in section 3553(a) to the extent that they are applicable, if such a reduction is consistent with applicable policy statements issued by the Sentencing Commission."

This policy statement provides guidance for a court when considering a motion under 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(2) and implements 28 U.S.C. § 994(u), which provides: "If the Commission reduces the term of imprisonment recommended in the guidelines applicable to a particular offense or category of offenses, it shall specify in what circumstances and by what amount the sentences of prisoners serving terms of imprisonment for the offense may be reduced."

*Among the factors considered by the Commission in selecting the amendments included in subsection (d) were the purpose of the amendment, the magnitude of the change in the guideline range made by the amendment, and the difficulty of applying the amendment retroactively.*

*The requirement in subsection (c)(1) that the maximum of the guideline range be lowered by at least six months for a reduction to be considered is in accord with the legislative history of 28 U.S.C. § 994(u) (formerly § 994(t)), which states: "It should be noted that the Committee does not expect that the Commission will recommend adjusting existing sentences under the provision when guidelines are simply refined in a way that might cause isolated instances of existing sentences falling above the old guidelines or when there is only a minor downward adjustment in the guidelines. The Committee does not believe the courts should be burdened with adjustments in these cases." S. Rep. 98-225, 98th Cong., 1st Sess. 180 (1983).*

**Historical Note:** Effective November 1, 1989 (see Appendix C, amendment 306). Amended effective November 1, 1990 (see Appendix C, amendment 360).