

Chinese will delay parts of new ocean rules

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WASHINGTON — The Chinese government said it will not implement rate-filing provisions of its controversial new shipping law until final regulations are drafted.

But China apparently is proceeding with other portions of the law that it made public in January, according to Bruce Carlton, acting deputy maritime administrator.

Carlton was a member of a United States delegation that accompanied Marad Administrator William Schubert to China two weeks ago.

"They will put rate-filing on hold until the implementation rules are finished," Carlton said.

China has put into effect a requirement that foreign companies register to provide liner service, he said. Companies already doing business in China were required to re-register.

"In the past, China required companies to apply for permission to provide service. The change now is that it's a notification registration," Carlton said. "We complimented them on that change."

Carlton said the deadline for registration has passed by now. The World Shipping Council, which comprises the leading liner companies, had no reports of problems during the registration process, according to WSC President Chris Koch.

A briefing of industry executives following the U.S.-China talks quoted the Chinese as saying that misunderstandings arose due to inadvertent "errors in draftsmanship" of the rules, and that new proposed "implementing rules" will detail not only the intent of the rules but also the reasons for them. The Chinese plan to published the new rules on the Internet and invite comments, but did not say when this would occur.

The Chinese are expected to issue the new rules following a fact-finding delegation's visit to Washington "to learn more about U.S. shipping laws and regulations and gain a better understanding on how they have been implemented."

— with contributions from R.G. Edmonson