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Elisa Grammer  
Civ. Pers.

**DECISION**



**THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL  
OF THE UNITED STATES  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20548**

FILE: B-187211

DATE: February 9, 1977

MATTER OF: John J. Costa - Relocation Expenses

**DIGEST:** Navy employee incurred expenses incident to transfer in excess of those authorized under commuted rate system for transportation of his household goods. He is not entitled to reimbursement of excess expenses since neither law nor regulations authorize reimbursement of any additional expenses incurred in excess of commuted rate when household goods are shipped under commuted rate system.

This is in response to a letter dated July 21, 1976, from Chief Warrant Officer R. J. Brown, a disbursing officer of the Naval Air Station at Lakehurst, New Jersey, requesting an advance decision concerning the claim of Mr. John J. Costa, a civilian employe of the Navy. Mr. Costa claims \$414.51, representing the difference between the amount he paid for transportation of his household goods and the amount reimbursed by the Government for such services under the commuted rate system, incident to his transfer to Lakehurst, New Jersey, from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

By Travel Order Number T1072 dated February 13, 1976, Mr. Costa was authorized an official change of station, travel for himself, and transportation for his family and his household goods from Philadelphia to Lakehurst. Reimbursement for the transportation of his household effects was to be made under the commuted rate system.

The actual amount Mr. Costa paid for the shipment of the household effects totaled \$1,219.70. Using the commuted rate system, the Government paid him \$805.19. Mr. Costa claims the difference of \$414.51.

We have been asked:

"[S]ince it was not the [employee's] request that he assume all responsibility for movement of household effects to be reimbursed via commuted rate schedule, can he be reimbursed for the actual costs incurred[?]"

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In other words, we are to determine whether Mr. Costa may be reimbursed the additional transportation expenses above the commuted rate.

Section 5724(c) of title 5, United States Code (1970), provides that under such regulations as the President may prescribe, an employee who transfers between points inside the continental United States, instead of being paid for the actual expenses of transporting his household goods and personal effects, shall be reimbursed on a commuted basis.

The regulations concerning the transportation of household goods of employees transferred in the continental United States in the interest of the Government implementing 5 U.S.C. § 5724(c) is contained in part 8 of the Federal Travel Regulations (FPMR 101-7) (May 1973). Paragraphs 2-8.3c(3) and 2-8.3c(4) provide as follows:

"c. Use of commuted rate or actual expense method.

\* \* \* \* \*

"(3) Policy. The general policy is that commuted rates shall be used for transportation of employee's household goods when individual transfers are involved, and that appropriate action, depending on the amount of goods to be transported, shall be taken to estimate and compare actual expense method costs with commuted rate costs when groups of employees are transferred between the same official stations at approximately the same time so that the method resulting in less cost to the Government may be used. Specific procedures to be followed are contained in 2-8.3c(4).

"(4) Criteria for use of the actual expense method.

"(a) Individual transfers. Agency experience with the actual expense method has shown that shipment by Government bill of lading does not result in savings simply because a line-haul discount

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is available. Therefore, the commuted rate system shall be used for individual transfers without consideration being given the actual expense method, except that the actual expense method may be used if the actual costs to be incurred by the Government for packing and other accessorial services are predetermined (at least as to price per 100 pounds) and if that method is expected to result in a real savings to the Government of \$100 or more. (For intrastate transfers, see 2-8.3c(4)(d).)"

Similar provisions are contained in paragraph C7051 of Volume 1 of the Joint Travel Regulations (change 122, December 1, 1975).

There is nothing in the record to indicate any administrative determination that shipment on an actual expense basis would have been less costly than the commuted rate applied. In fact, the actual cost exceeded the commuted rate.

Since no administrative determination was made to use the actual expense method, the commuted rate schedule was correctly applied to compute the reimbursement due Mr. Costa. Under the circumstances, no authority exists to compensate the employee for the difference between the commuted rate and the charges he was required to pay the commercial carrier.

*Shirley M. ...*  
Deputy Comptroller General  
of the United States