

**DECISION**

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

**FILE:** B-204294

**DATE:** July 7, 1982

**MATTER OF:** Howard Dricks-Transportation of Household  
Goods-Commuted Rate

**DIGEST:** Employee alleges that personnel at his agency informed him that his household goods would be shipped by Government Bill of Lading (GBL). The employee is not entitled to be reimbursed for shipment by commercial carrier on an actual expense basis since there is no evidence that appropriate officials made a determination to ship by the actual expense method and employee's effects were not shipped under GBL.

R.G. Bordley, Chief of the Accounting and Finance Division, Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), requests an advance decision on the claim of Mr. Howard Dricks, an employee of that agency, for the \$504.04 difference between the actual expense of shipping 11,000 pounds of his household effects by commercial bill of lading and the amount he was reimbursed on a commuted basis. Since there is no evidence that the appropriate officials authorized shipment of Mr. Dricks' effects under a Government Bill of Lading (GBL), and the goods were not shipped by GBL, Mr. Dricks' reimbursement is limited to the amount to which he is entitled under the commuted rate system. His actual expenses in excess of the commuted rate may not be reimbursed.

Travel orders issued to Mr. Dricks on July 24, 1979, authorized transportation of his household goods from New York, New York, to Atlanta, Georgia, because of his permanent change of station, but did not specify the method of shipment or indicate the applicable weight limitation. Personnel at DLA's New York office allegedly advised Mr. Dricks that his goods would be shipped under GBL and furnished him with the names of approved commercial carriers. In accordance with that advice, Mr. Dricks made his own shipping arrangements with a moving company, and, in response to the company's notification that no GBL had been received, Mr. Dricks obtained a letter written by personnel at the New York office stating that the Government would be responsible for moving expenses.

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After Mr. Dricks shipped 14,880 pounds of his household goods at a cost of \$6,481.31, DLA issued amended travel orders limiting the authorized weight of the shipment to 11,000 pounds. In settling Mr. Dricks' claim for relocation expenses, the agency limited his reimbursement for household goods transportation to \$4,287.25, the applicable commuted rate determined under General Services Administration (GSA) Bulletin FPMR A-2.

While DLA acknowledges that shipment of Mr. Dricks' effects by GBL would have entitled him to additional shipping costs of \$504.04, it is the agency's position that Mr. Dricks is not entitled to actual expenses because no administrative determination was made to ship the goods under GBL.

Section 5724(c) of title 5 of the United States Code (1976), 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 rate basis unless the head of the agency determines that payment of actual expenses is more economical. Implementing regulations in Chapter 2, Part 8, of the Federal Travel Regulations, FPMR 101-7 (May 1973)(FTR), in effect at the time Mr. Dricks' move was accomplished, define the circumstances under which household goods may be transported on an actual expense basis under GBL, rather than under the commuted rate system. See FTR paragraph 2-8.3.

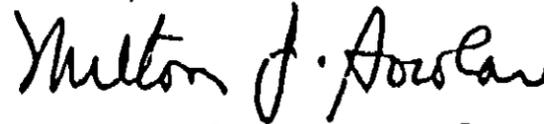
Under the commuted rate system, an employee makes his own arrangements for transporting his household goods and is reimbursed on the basis of the rates found in GSA Bulletin FPMR A-2. He may be reimbursed more or less than the actual transportation cost he incurs. Under the actual expense method, the employee bears no risk that the full cost of transporting his household goods (within applicable weight limitations) will not be borne by the Government. The Government issues a GBL and pays all moving expenses incurred thereunder. Though the employee may incidentally benefit from a determination to ship his household goods by GBL, that determination is required to be made on the basis of a potential cost benefit to the Government. Paragraph 2-8.3 of the FTR provides that, except for certain intrastate moves, household goods may be transported under the actual expense

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method only on the basis of a predetermination that shipment by GBL will be less costly to the Government than reimbursement on a commuted rate basis.

There is nothing in the record to show that authorized DLA officials made a determination to ship Mr. Dricks' effects by the actual expense method. In the absence of such predetermination, and in view of the fact that the move was not accomplished by GBL, no authority exists to compensate Mr. Dricks for the difference between the commuted rate and the charges he was required to pay the commercial carrier.  
Richard G. Dunnington, B-201632, October 8, 1981;  
Andres Villarosa, B-201615, September 1, 1981.

Accordingly, Mr. Dricks' entitlement was properly determined under the commuted rate system. The employee's claim for actual expenses in excess of the commuted rate may not be allowed.



Acting Comptroller General  
of the United States