

DECISION

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

PH/1-11
Metzger
30868

FILE: B-216921

DATE: April 2, 1985

MATTER OF: L. Fred Glenn

DIGEST: An employee who pays for authorized travel costing in excess of \$100 with personal funds contrary to the Federal Travel Regulations may be reimbursed the transportation costs which would have been properly chargeable to the Government if the transportation service had been procured with a Government Transportation Request. The fact that the airline tickets involved were purchased from a travel agent does not affect his reimbursement in this case since the travel agent was authorized for use by Government travelers under a contract with the General Services Administration.

A Federal employee claims reimbursement for travel expenses incurred when he purchased airline tickets for more than \$100 with personal funds from a travel agent contrary to the provisions of Federal Travel Regulations, para. 1-10.2(b) (September 1981).^{1/} We conclude that the employee may be reimbursed up to the amount he paid, but not to exceed the cost of the transportation if it had been procured directly from the carrier with a Government Transportation Request.

Mr. L. Fred Glenn, an employee of the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Juneau, Alaska, was authorized travel for himself and his immediate family from Juneau, Alaska, to Malad, Idaho, and return while on leave between tours of duty.

Mr. Glenn's wife secured airline tickets in September and November 1983 for the travel which took place in December 1983 and January 1984. She purchased the tickets from the Travel Center in Juneau, a Travel Management Center under contract with the General Services Administration. However, the tickets were not purchased under the General

^{1/} C. E. Tipton, Certifying Officer, Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture, submitted this request for a decision.

031659

Services Administration contract using a Government Transportation Request, but were purchased with personal funds instead. Mr. Glenn has worked for the Government for several years and is a frequent traveler. His explanation for the use of cash in excess of \$100 to purchase the transportation states: "Wife purchased tickets. I was unaware and actually too busy at the time to get involved." The submission questions the propriety of the cash purchase of transportation in excess of \$100 outside the General Services Administration contract with the travel agency and its compliance with the Federal Travel Regulations.

At the time Mrs. Glenn purchased the airline tickets, 4 C.F.R. § 53.2 (1984) prohibited the use of travel agents to secure transportation service by passengers traveling within the United States at the expense of the Government. However, an exemption from this particular section of the Code of Federal Regulations was granted when the General Services Administration was authorized by the Comptroller General to contract with commercial travel agents to serve Federal agencies and offices in certain locations. B-203171, July 9, 1981. Since the Travel Center was a Travel Management Center under contract with the General Services Administration, the use of this particular travel agent to obtain Mr. Glenn's airline tickets did not violate the prohibition against the use of travel agents.

Under the Federal Travel Regulations the tickets should have been purchased from the carrier or the Travel Center with a Government Transportation Request. FTR para. 1-10.2. Although Mr. Glenn was an experienced and frequent Government traveler knowledgeable in the use of the Government Transportation Request, apparently his wife was unaware of the requirement and made an inadvertent purchase of the tickets for cash. Had the tickets been purchased with a Government Transportation Request, a lower special Government fare under the General Services Administration contract might have been applicable.

We have held that, except for emergency situations, where an employee has failed to observe the requirements of paragraph 1-10.2 of the Federal Travel Regulations requiring, in most cases, the use of a Government Transportation Request to purchase tickets costing in excess of \$100, reimbursement is limited to the cost of a lower special

B-216921

Government fare. Marsha Weiss, B-215024, November 13, 1984. Since this case did not involve an emergency situation, Mr. Glenn's reimbursement should be limited to the Government fare available had a Government Transportation Request been used.

The voucher with attachments is returned so payment may be made in accordance with this decision.

for *Larry R. Van Clone*
Comptroller General
of the United States