



The Comptroller General  
of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20548

## Decision

Matter of: Dale Conn - Transportation of Household Goods  
to Alaska

File: B-229259

Date: July 25, 1988

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### DIGEST

The Army may not reimburse an employee under the commuted rate system for the costs of storage and transportation of household goods by privately owned vehicle from the continental United States to Alaska incident to a permanent change of station. The employee's travel order erroneously authorized storage and transportation under the commuted rate system; the commuted rate system is applicable only to transfers where both old and new stations are within the conterminous 48 states and the District of Columbia. However, the employee may be reimbursed his actual moving expenses (such as gasoline, oil, truck rental and tolls) and temporary storage costs not to exceed what the constructive cost would have been to the government under the Government Bill of Lading method.

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### DECISION

This responds to a request for a decision as to whether an employee, who travels incident to a permanent change of station from the continental United States to Alaska, may be reimbursed storage costs and the costs of transporting his household goods by privately owned vehicle.<sup>1/</sup> The employee may be reimbursed for the shipment of his household goods to the extent that the total cost to the government does not exceed the amount that would have been incurred if the goods had been shipped in one lot on the actual expense basis by Government Bill of Lading (GBL) to Alaska by the low cost carrier, and since the goods were stored incident to the

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<sup>1/</sup> The request was made by a Finance and Accounting Officer of the Department of the Army, Headquarters, 6th Infantry Division (Light) and U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Richardson, Alaska. The matter was assigned Control No. 87-21 by the Per Diem, Travel and Transportation Allowance Committee.

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transportation, he may also be reimbursed the expense of temporary storage of his maximum weight allowance up to the maximum 90 days of storage authorized by his travel order.

#### BACKGROUND

The Department of the Army issued an order on December 9, 1986, authorizing Dale Conn, incident to a permanent change of station from St. Louis, Missouri, to ship up to 18,000 pounds of household goods from Collinsville, Illinois, to Fort Greely, Alaska, and to store the goods for 90 days. When the employee expressed the desire to move his goods by privately owned vehicle the Army issued an amendment to the travel order on January 8, 1987, authorizing the delayed shipment of his goods by the commuted rate system.

Mr. Conn transported his household goods with equipment he owned or leased, placing part of the goods into storage for several months under a storage agreement that he arranged. The Army denied Mr. Conn's claim for reimbursement on the basis that there was no authority to reimburse an employee under the commuted rate system for transportation of household goods incident to a transfer of duty station from the continental United States to Alaska. The issue raised is whether there is authority to reimburse the employee for any of his transportation and storage costs under the described circumstances.

#### DISCUSSION

At the time in question, February 1987, Mr. Conn was entitled to the storage and shipment of household goods up to a maximum of 18,000 pounds at government expense. See 5 U.S.C. § 5724(a)(2) (Supp. III 1985). The regulations implementing the entitlements are contained in Chapter 2, Part 8 of the Federal Travel Regulations (1981 ed.) (FTR), incorp. by ref., 41 C.F.R. § 101-7.003 (1987).

Under the commuted rate system the employee makes his own arrangements for shipping household goods, and either pays a carrier to perform the moving or moves the goods himself. He is then reimbursed by the government in accordance with schedules of commuted rates designed to cover a carrier's line-haul charges plus packing and other accessorial charges. FTR, para. 2-8.3a. Reimbursement under the commuted rate system is limited by law to transfers between points inside the continental United States, and the term "continental United States" is defined by statute in this context to exclude Alaska. See 5 U.S.C. § 5724(c) and

5721(3); see also FTR, para. 2-1.4a (Supp. 13, Oct. 12, 1984), and 46 Comp. Gen. 439 (1966). Pertinent regulations provide that movement of household goods to overseas locations will be accomplished by the Government Bill of Lading method. See FTR, para. 2-8.4c(1); see also Joint Travel Regulations, vol. 2, para. C8002-5a (Change 248, June 1, 1986). Under the GBL method the government assumes responsibility; the property is shipped on a GBL by commercial carrier, and the government pays the transportation bills directly to the carrier. FTR, para. 2-8.3b. Therefore, authorizing reimbursement to Mr. Conn under the commuted rate system was in error, and, as the Army advised him, he is precluded from reimbursement under that system by applicable law and regulation.

Under similar circumstances as here, where an agency erroneously authorized reimbursement under the commuted rate system for the costs of transporting household goods incident to an employee's transfer to Alaska, we held that the employee should be reimbursed to the extent that the total cost to the government does not exceed the amount that would have been incurred if the goods had been shipped in one lot under the GBL method. Douglas C. Staab, B-185514, Sept. 2, 1976. Pertinent regulations further refine the standard by limiting reimbursement to the cost by the low cost carrier available at the time the GBL method is authorized. See 41 C.F.R. § 101-40.203-2(d) (1987); compare Timothy Shaffer, B-223607, Dec. 24, 1986, and Berry T. Kuntz, B-215614, Apr. 18, 1985.

The regulation covering transportation outside the conterminous United States provides that where the employee elects means of transportation other than those selected by the government the employee is required to absorb the costs that exceed the charges for the authorized means. FTR, para. 2-8.4e. Here, where movement of household goods to Alaska is involved and reimbursement is limited by law and regulation to the GBL method, an employee who chooses a self-move by rental truck or private conveyance is further limited to the actually incurred expenses, that is, truck rental fees, packing materials, gasoline, labor expenses, toll charges, etc. Timothy Shaffer, B-223607, *supra*; 41 C.F.R. § 101-40.203-2)(d); see also John S. Phillips, 62 Comp. Gen. 375 (1983) and Kenneth W. Sloop, B-229375, May 12, 1988. There is no provision in the regulations authorizing reimbursement for the purchase of a conveyance, such as a truck or trailer, or for payment to the employee for his own labor.

For the foregoing reasons, Mr. Conn may be reimbursed for the transportation costs he incurred in moving his household goods to Alaska up to the amount that the Government would have paid under the GBL method. Concerning reimbursement for storage expenses, the regulations recognize that the government normally arranges for temporary storage and pays the reasonable costs thereof. FTR, para. 2-8.5b(2). In a case where an employee arranged for the storage of his household goods incident to their transportation we held that the constructive transportation costs could include an appropriate amount for such storage. See George Walters, B-182723, Apr. 2, 1975. The storage arranged here by Mr. Conn clearly was incident to the transportation of his household goods; therefore, the costs to temporarily store the goods, up to his authorized maximum weight allowance for the 60 days authorized in his travel order, may be considered in computing his overall allowable, constructive transportation costs.

For the above reasons, the vouchers submitted with the request for decision are being returned.



Acting Comptroller General  
of the United States