



The Comptroller General
of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20548

Decision

Matter of: John F. Clarke - Claim for Cost of Exchanging
Airline Tickets

File: B-209764.2

Date: September 26, 1988

DIGEST

An employee on temporary duty was forced to miss his scheduled flight so that he could board his young son on a delayed flight. The unforeseen delay in his son's flight resulted in an additional \$411 cost because only business class space was available on the later flight the employee took. The additional expense for the employee's flight may not be allowed under the Federal Travel Regulations. When an employee changes travel plans for personal or family reasons, he must bear any additional cost incurred.

DECISION

This decision is in response to a voucher submitted by Dr. John F. Clarke, a Department of Energy employee,^{1/} in which he claims an additional \$411 cost incurred by him when he altered his travel schedule so as to board his young son on a flight prior to his own departure overseas for temporary duty.

Dr. Clarke's permanent duty station was Washington, D.C. In order to accommodate his vacation plans, he was authorized to travel on temporary duty from New York to Paris, not to exceed the cost from Washington, D.C., to Paris. About 2 weeks in advance of this travel, Dr. Clarke was issued an airline ticket on Pan Am for this trip.

Dr. Clarke was on vacation with his 4-year-old son in New York before his scheduled departure for Paris, and he planned to place his son on a flight to Knoxville prior to his scheduled departure. However, his son's flight was delayed, which forced Dr. Clarke to reschedule his own

^{1/} The question was submitted by the Director, Financial Receipts & Disbursements Division, Department of Energy.

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travel, exchange his ticket, and take a later flight at a business class fare on Trans World Airlines at an additional cost of \$411. This was the only space available that would assure Dr. Clarke's arrival in Paris in time for his scheduled meeting.

Dr. Clarke believes he is entitled to be reimbursed the additional fare since he could not abandon his son at the airport. He adds that he cut his vacation short to attend the meeting in Paris, and, due to circumstances beyond his control, he was forced to change his scheduled flight. The agency denied Dr. Clarke's request for reimbursement of the \$411 on the basis that it could find no authority to reimburse him.

We agree with the denial of Dr. Clarke's claim because the Federal Travel Regulations contain no authority that would allow reimbursement under the circumstances presented.^{2/} Paragraph 1-2.5b of the FTR provides that when a person interrupts travel for his own convenience, the extra expense shall be borne by him. We note that Dr. Clarke's travel orders and ticket were issued 2 weeks in advance of his travel. Thus, the employee was not forced to make last minute travel plans to accommodate official business; rather, he changed his travel plans for personal reasons.

We have also interpreted FTR, para. 1-3.4c to require an employee who changes his travel plans to bear the added expense for the purchase of the higher cost airline tickets, absent an agency determination that the higher cost service is more advantageous to the government. Judith A. Holm, B-230371, Apr. 5, 1988; Dr. Francis G. Stehli, B-225352, Sept. 21, 1987. No determination was made by the agency that Dr. Clarke's change in itinerary or that his use of higher cost airline service was more advantageous to the government, nor do the facts seem to support such a finding.

We recognize that Dr. Clarke had no choice but to delay his flight in order to make sure that his son was safely boarded on the delayed flight to Knoxville. However, there is simply no authority to reimburse him for the additional cost necessitated by that delay. When an employee changes plans for personal or family reasons, he must bear any added cost incurred.

^{2/} FTR (Supp. 1, Nov. 19, 1981), incorp. by ref., 41 C.F.R. § 101-7.003 (1985).

Accordingly, we conclude that Dr. Clarke's claim must be denied.

for James F. Hackman

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of the United States