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*John Carter
Comptroller*



DECISION

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

FILE: B-137420

DATE: February 23, 1977

MATTER OF: Joseph A. Pupello - Reimbursement for
shipment of privately owned automobile

DIGEST: Employee seeks reimbursement for shipment of automobile to new duty station in Hawaii. Shipment at Government expense was not authorized initially because designated authorizing official determined shipment not to be in interest of Government. Absent statutorily required determination by agency that shipment is in interest of United States, we have no basis to authorize payment. See 5 U.S.C. 5727(b)(2) (1970). Voucher may not be certified for payment.

: An authorized certifying officer of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Department of the Treasury, has requested our determination whether Mr. Joseph A. Pupello may be reimbursed for the expense of shipment of his privately owned automobile from the continental United States to Hawaii incident to a transfer of duty station.

In March 1975 Mr. Pupello was transferred by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms from Oakland, California, to Honolulu, Hawaii. The designated authorizing official of the Bureau determined that Mr. Pupello did not meet the requirements established by the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR), FPMR 101-7 (May 1973), for the shipment of his automobile to Hawaii at Government expense and declined to authorize shipment of Mr. Pupello's car. Mr. Pupello shipped his car to Hawaii at his personal expense in June 1975 and now seeks reimbursement for the expense incurred. He asserts that his situation does satisfy the criteria of the FTR for the required determination that it is in the interest of the Government for him to have his automobile in Hawaii. The certifying officer questions whether Mr. Pupello may be reimbursed for the expense of shipping a vehicle in advance of authorization to do so.

We do not need to reach the question posed by the certifying officer in this case. The authority for the transportation of motor vehicles belonging to employees transferred to, from or between posts of duty outside the continental United States is provided in 5 U.S.C. 5727. This section provides in part that an employee's vehicle may be transported at Government expense when:

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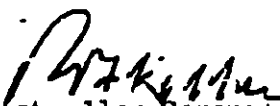
"(2) the head of the agency concerned determines that it is in the interest of the Government for the employee to have the use of a motor vehicle at the post of duty." 5 U.S.C. 5727(b)(2) (1970).

The regulations issued under this section set forth the same requirement and establish criteria for its determination. FTR para. 2.10.2c.

As we noted above, the Bureau's designated authorizing official declined initially to make the required determination and the present record provides no evidence of any subsequent determination that it is in the Government's interest for Mr. Pupello to have his car in Hawaii. Absent such an administrative determination, there is no basis upon which we may authorize payment of Mr. Pupello's claim.

Accordingly, the voucher, which is returned herewith, may not be certified for payment.

Acting


Comptroller General
of the United States