

DOCUMENT RESUME

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[Travel Expenses: Liability for Loss of Air Travel Ticket].
B-187879. July 11, 1977. 4 pp.

Decision re: John W. Zerolis; by Robert F. Keller, Deputy
Comptroller General.

Issue Area: Personnel Management and Compensation: Compensation
(305).

Contact: Office of the General Counsel: Civilian Personnel.

Budget Function: General Government: Central Personnel
Management (805).

Organization Concerned: Department of State.

Authority: B-149026 (1962). 4 Foreign Affairs Manual 461. 5 GAO
Policy and Procedures Manual, sec. 2058.

An appeal was made to a prior disallowance of a State
Department employee's claim for the amount of an air fare
ticket. The employee allegedly returned the unused ticket. There
was no record of its surrender or its serial number. It was thus
impossible to determine whether unauthorized use was made of
ticket, and the air carrier refused refund. Under agency
regulations, the employee was responsible for recording number
of unused tickets. The prior disallowance was affirmed. (DJM)

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DECISION



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

*Civ. Per
AGAZARIAN*

FILE: B-187879

DATE: July 11, 1977

**MATTER OF: John W. Zerolis - Travel expenses - Liability
for loss of air travel ticket**

DIGEST: State Department employee claims to have returned to American Embassy in Paris unused tourist class ticket for travel of pregnant wife from Paris to Washington, D.C., incident to home leave, when wife's accommodations were increased to first class. State Department has no record of surrender of ticket or serial number thereof and air carrier has refused refund. Employee is liable for lost ticket as under agency regulations he was responsible for record of number of returned unused tickets and without number it is not feasible to determine that no unauthorized use of ticket has been made.

By letter dated October 29, 1976, Mr. John W. Zerolis, an employee of the State Department appealed Settlement Certificate No. Z-2557763, dated October 19, 1976, issued by our Claims Division which disallowed his claim in the amount of the cost of the tourist class air fare ticket issued for his wife's travel from Paris, France, to Washington, D.C.

The record shows that on March 21, 1972, Mr. Zerolis and his wife were authorized home leave transportation and travel expenses from Bamako, Mali, to San Francisco, California, prior to his reporting to his new duty station at Port of Spain, Trinidad.

Mr. Zerolis was initially authorized under GTR LO 253, 224 tourist class air travel from Bamako to Washington, D.C., with a stopover in Paris. As a result of Mrs. Zerolis being pregnant, her accommodations were upgraded in Paris, to first class air travel for the remainder of her travel. The ticket for first class air travel was issued by the American Embassy in Paris under GTR L5 146, 571 issued June 7, 1972. Mr. Zerolis claims that he surrendered to the American Embassy in Paris the unused portion of his wife's tourist class ticket, issued under GTR LO 253, 224 in Bamako, for air travel from Paris to Washington, D.C. However, the Embassy in Paris has no record of having received

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the unused ticket. In addition, neither the State Department nor Mr. Zerolis has a record of the serial number of the missing unused portion of the ticket which was issued in Bamako. The air carrier, Trans World Airline, has refused to refund the price of the lost ticket.

The provision pertaining to the liability of travelers for lost or stolen tickets is found in the General Accounting Office Policy and Procedure Manual for guidance of Federal agencies at 5 GAO 2058 which provides as follows:

"SECTION 2058—LOST OR STOLEN TICKETS

"2058.10 LOST OR STOLEN TICKETS. Travelers or other accountable persons are responsible for the custody of tickets and other transportation documents received in exchange for transportation requests or other procuring instruments, and the failure to safeguard such documents to the extent that they are used by unauthorized persons may result in the personal liability to the traveler or other accountable person. Administrative regulations issued in accordance with section 2075 below should caution travelers or other accountable persons in this respect."

In decision B-149026, July 10, 1962, this Office held that in view of the fact that railroad carriers would generally allow a refund on properly identified lost tickets, that the above-cited regulation indicates that a traveler will bear the cost of a lost ticket only when such ticket is used by an unauthorized person.

Our Office has informally ascertained that air carriers, including Trans World Airlines, will refund to the Government the purchase price of unused tickets provided that certain essential information be provided. One of the required items of information is the serial number of the lost ticket which is necessary for the carrier to be able to determine that the ticket has not been used. As noted above, the serial number of the lost ticket was not available to the Government.

The provisions of 4 Foreign Affairs Manual 461 (FAM), pertaining to travel of employees of the Department of State, provide in pertinent part as follows:

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"461 Travelers' Accountability

"Travelers are responsible for the use and/or disposition of tickets, transportation requests, and airline-denied boarding compensation payments.

"Immediately upon completion of travel, travelers turn in any unused tickets, transportation requests, and airline-denied boarding compensation checks to the post administrative officer or, in Washington, to BF/FS. The documents are supported by an itemized list, in duplicate, which must include, as applicable, GTR number, ticket number, name of traveler, points of travel involved, unused transportation request number, compensation check number, etc. * * *.

"The traveler must obtain a receipted copy of the itemized list from the office receiving the documents. This receipted copy must be submitted with traveler's claim for travel reimbursement."

The above provision indicates that Mr. Zerolis was not only responsible for the return of the unused ticket, but that he was also responsible for obtaining a receipt for the unused ticket which receipt should have included the serial number of the ticket. Since Mr. Zerolis failed to follow this procedure, he apparently prevented the Government from securing a refund on the lost ticket since the carrier would not be able to determine whether the lost ticket had been used.

In view of the existing policy of air carriers with regard to refunds of the cost of lost tickets, and the provisions of 4 FAM pertaining to the responsibility of travelers for the disposition of unused tickets, travelers or other accountable persons, are not only liable for the unauthorized use of a lost ticket, but are also liable for the cost of the ticket when due to their negligence or fault, it is not possible to ascertain whether an unauthorized use of the ticket has been made.

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Due to Mr. Zerolis' failure to act in accordance with 4 FAM 461 and 5 GAO 2058.10, he is at fault in this matter. Accordingly, we sustain the Certificate of Settlement issued October 19, 1976, which disallowed Mr. Zerolis' claim.

R. W. K. 11/14
Deputy Comptroller General
of the United States