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**DECISION**



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

**FILE:** B-198768

**DATE:** September 24, 1981

**MATTER OF:** Daniel M. Doyle - Mileage rate during  
Househunting trip

**DIGEST:** GAO employee requests reimbursement for a househunting trip at the rate of 15 cents per mile instead of the 8 cents per mile rate paid on his claim. Although employee could reasonably have interpreted his travel order as authorizing higher rate, that by itself, does not entitle him to higher rate. Record clearly indicates that GAO did not consider househunting trip as falling within the category of trips that may be reimbursed at 15 cents per mile rate under Federal Travel Regulations.

Mr. Daniel M. Doyle, an employee of the General Accounting Office, appeals our Claims Group settlement No. Z-2812310, dated December 18, 1980, which disallowed his claim for \$36.54 representing the difference between the 15 cents per mile rate stated in his travel orders and the 8 cents per mile rate he actually received in connection with his househunting trip upon relocation.

The record shows that on December 7, 1976, Travel Order No. 7150000064 was issued to Mr. Doyle authorizing the use of a privately owned vehicle (POV) at the rate of 15 cents per mile upon his transfer from Washington, D.C., to his new duty station in New York, New York. The orders noted that the employee would need his car for official business at the new location and the orders also authorized a househunting trip in connection with the transfer. The orders did not specify what mileage rate was to be provided for reimbursement of the househunting trip.

Mr. Doyle claimed reimbursement in the amount of \$78.30 computed at 15 cents per mile for 522 miles in connection with the househunting trip. He was reimbursed at the rate of 8 cents per mile or \$41.76 resulting in a disallowance of \$36.54.

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Mr. Doyle then submitted his claim for the additional mileage expense to our Claims Group which in the above-mentioned settlement of December 18, 1980, disallowed his claim. The Claims Group settlement stated that it was GAO's policy to provide reimbursement for househunting trips at the rate of 8 cents per mile.

The statutory authority for payment of househunting expenses is 5 U.S.C. § 5724 a(a)(2) (1976). The implementing regulations for mileage for transfers of station, including househunting trips, are contained in the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) (FPMR 101-7, May 1973) which provide in para. 2-2.3 in pertinent part:

"b. Mileage rates prescribed. Payment of mileage allowances when authorized or approved in connection with the transfer, shall be allowed as follows:

<u>Occupants of automobile</u>	<u>Mileage rate (cents)</u>
Employee only, or one member of immediate family	8

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"c. Mileage rates in special circumstances. Heads of agencies may prescribe that travel orders or other administrative determinations specify higher mileage rates not in excess of 15 cents for individual transfers of employees or transfers of groups of employees when:

"(1) Employees are expected to use the privately owned automobiles on official business while assigned to the new duty stations;

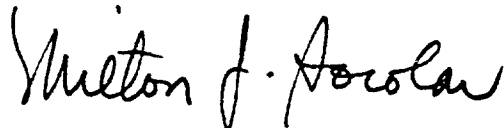
"(2) The common carrier rates for the facilities provided between the old and new stations, the related constructive taxicab fares to and from terminals, and the per diem allowances prescribed under 2-2 justify a

higher mileage rate as advantageous to the Government; or

"(3) The costs of driving the privately owned automobile to, from, or between official stations located outside the conterminous United States justify a higher mileage rate as advantageous to the Government."

Mr. Doyle states that his travel orders indicated that "employee will need car for official business at new location" which fulfills the above condition in para. 2-2.3c(1). However, the record shows that GAO did not consider the employee's househunting trip as falling within the category of trips that may be reimbursed at the 15 cents per mile rate pursuant to 2-2.3c. The 15 cents per mile rate is applicable to Mr. Doyle's travel to the new duty station since he is expected to use his POV at the new duty station for official business. As indicated above, only 8 cents per mile is allowable under the mileage regulations, absent a showing that the requirements of para. 2-2.3c have been satisfied. No such showing has been made in this case for the househunting trip.

Accordingly, the Claims Group settlement disallowing the claim is sustained.



Acting Comptroller General  
of the United States