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Mr. Metcalf

DECISION

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

FILE: B-201281 DATE: July 7, 1981

MATTER OF: Mr. Earl D. Cleland - Mileage between home and common carrier terminal

DIGEST: Defense Logistics Agency employee who was driven on two round trips (each trip over 200 miles) by privately owned vehicle to and from an airport primarily for personal convenience when travel by common carrier was reasonably available may not be reimbursed for the difference in the mileage allowance and one round-trip bus fare between the same points.

The Accounting and Finance Officer, Defense Contract Administration Services Region Atlanta, Defense Logistics Agency, requests an advance decision concerning payment in connection with an employee's temporary duty travel of a claim for the difference between mileage allowance for two round trips by privately owned vehicle from Columbia, Mississippi, to the New Orleans airport and one round-trip bus ticket between the same points.

Payment of the claim is denied since travel by common carrier was reasonably available and the use of personal transportation was made on the basis of personal preference or minor inconvenience to the traveler from common carrier scheduling.

Mr. Earl D. Cleland, a civilian employee of the Defense Logistics Agency, was ordered to travel on temporary duty from his home in Columbia, Mississippi, to New Orleans, Louisiana, to San Antonio, Texas, returning the same way. He accompanied others departing by airline from New Orleans in a last minute substitution for an individual unable to make the trip. His supervisor authorized round-trip mileage from Columbia, Mississippi, to New Orleans, for a distance of 400 miles in his travel orders and he was verbally instructed that his wife could drive him to the New Orleans airport and pick him up at the end of the temporary duty. However, bus service was available from Columbia to New Orleans departing late Sunday afternoon and Monday morning at 5:30 a.m. which would have enabled him to arrive in New Orleans prior to departure for San Antonio. Bus service was also available so that upon his

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return he could have left New Orleans at 4:30 p.m. after returning from San Antonio.

The submission indicates that it would appear that paragraph C4657 of Volume 2, Joint Travel Regulations (2 JTR), limits reimbursement to the cost of round-trip bus travel between Columbia and New Orleans and taxi or limousine fares between the bus terminal and the airport. Partial payment of the claim has been made using this limitation. However, since paragraph C2001 of 2 JTR states that the official directing the travel will be responsible for the mode of transportation selected, clarification is requested whether or not that responsibility includes the authority to override the use of the available common carrier. Further inquiry is made whether the employee should be penalized when he had used his automobile based on authorization provided in his travel orders.

Federal Travel Regulations (FPMR 101-7), para. 1-2.2c (FPMR Temp. Reg. A-11, Supp. 4, Attach. A), provides that travel by common carrier shall be used whenever it is reasonably available since it will generally result in the most efficient use of energy resources and in the least costly and most expeditious way of performing travel. Other methods of transportation may be authorized as advantageous only when the use of common carrier transportation would seriously interfere with the performance of official business or impose undue hardship upon the traveler, or when the total cost by common carrier would exceed the cost of some other method of transportation. The determination that another mode of transportation would be more advantageous to the Government than common carrier transportation shall not be made on the basis of personal preference or minor inconvenience to the traveler resulting from common carrier scheduling. See also paragraph C2001-1c(1)(a), 2 JTR (change 167, September 1, 1979).

While mileage is payable for use of a private automobile for travel to and from airports, the amount payable is limited to the cost of taxi or limousine fares. In this case in view of the distance involved the available bus service obviously should have been used as a measure rather than taxi.

The record before us indicates that common carrier (bus) service was available to Mr. Cleland from Columbia to the New Orleans airport and returning to Columbia. Since travel by bus on the available schedules would have caused him only minor inconvenience, it appears that the use of his private automobile was primarily for his own convenience. Such travel would not have interfered with the performance of official business and could have been made at considerably less expense than two round trips by his privately owned vehicle. His supervisor could authorize the use of Mr. Cleland's automobile only within the constraints of the existing regulations. Therefore, even though Mr. Cleland used his automobile based on such authorization, he may not be paid an amount in excess of that authorized by the regulations. Accordingly, Mr. Cleland's claim for additional payment is denied.

Milton J. Socolar

Acting Comptroller General
of the United States