



Comptroller General
of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20548

Decision

Matter of: Fraudulent Travel Claim

File: B-247574

Date: March 18, 1992

DIGEST

Claimant submits a fraudulent travel voucher and is paid for travel and transportation expenses for his dependents who did not travel at the time the expenses were claimed in connection with a permanent change of station. Because of this fraud, claimant cannot later reclaim these expenses even when these expenses are actually incurred by his dependents, since the fraudulent submissions are viewed as vitiating any payment arising out of the transaction.

DECISION

This decision is in response to an Air Force member's claim for dependent travel and transportation costs and a dislocation allowance, in connection with his permanent change of station move from Thule Air Force Base, Greenland, to Francis E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming. The Air Force denied payment and forwarded the member's claim to this Office.

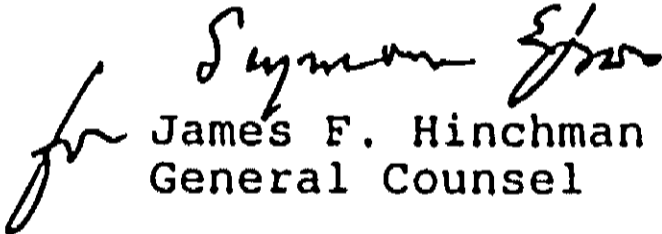
On March 14, 1990, the member was ordered to make a permanent change of station to Wyoming, and his dependents were authorized to travel from Colorado Springs, Colorado to Wyoming. The member submitted a claim for dependent travel and a dislocation allowance on June 28, 1990. However, an Air Force investigation found this claim to be fraudulent because the member's family had not moved from their home in Colorado. The government recouped the amount paid.

On April 28, 1991, the member's dependents actually moved to Cheyenne, Wyoming. At that time, the member resubmitted a claim for their travel and transportation expenses and a dislocation allowance for relocating his household. There is no allegation of fraud on this second claim. However, the Air Force denied this second claim, arguing that there can only be one entitlement per permanent change of station order, and the first fraudulent claim nullifies this second claim.

After review, we have determined that the second claim for travel allowances cannot be paid. In 1976, we denied relief to an Army member who had made a fraudulent claim for his dependent's travel, and then tried to reclaim these costs when the dependent actually relocated several months later. Thomas G. Overfield, B-186020, June 28, 1976. In that case, the member's wife did not actually relocate, in connection with the change of station order, until after a fraudulent claim had been submitted and paid, and then questioned and recouped. Under these circumstances, we said that we would not authorize payment for the member's claim.

On similar facts, we also refused to authorize payment for a civilian employee who had first submitted a fraudulent claim for change of station dependent travel costs, and later actually moved his family and reclaimed the travel allowances. Fraudulent Travel Claims, B-220119, Nov. 14, 1988. In that case, we said "we view the fraudulent submissions as vitiating any payment of travel and transportation claims arising out of this transaction."

Accordingly, since in the present case the member's dependents did not actually relocate pursuant to the change of station until after the fraudulent claim had been submitted and paid, we view the subsequented travel claim as tainted by the initial fraudulent claim and it must be denied.


James F. Hinchman
General Counsel