



Comptroller General
of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20548

B-227726.2

September 9, 1988

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to 31 U.S.C. § 3702(d) (1982), we submit the following report on the claim of Ms. [REDACTED], which we believe deserves the consideration of the Congress as a meritorious claim.

Ms. [REDACTED] is the spouse of Lieutenant Colonel [REDACTED], USAF, Retired. In October 1985, the Air Force invited Colonel [REDACTED] to be a guest speaker at a conference and award ceremony at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, in November 1985. The Air Force issued special travel orders inviting Ms. [REDACTED] to travel with her husband to the conference. The orders stated that Ms. [REDACTED] would be reimbursed for transportation expenses.

Pursuant to the special orders, Ms. [REDACTED] performed round-trip travel with her husband from their residence in Big Springs, Texas, to Offutt Air Force Base during the period November 3 to November 9, 1985. Upon completion of the travel, Ms. [REDACTED] submitted her settlement voucher and was reimbursed \$154.75 for per diem and \$754.50 for transportation costs. However, Ms. [REDACTED] was not entitled to any of these expenses because the Joint Travel Regulations, vol. 2, para. C6001-3 and -4 (Change No. 253, Oct. 1, 1986) prohibit departments from authorizing invitational travel at government expense for dependents and relatives to attend conferences and award ceremonies.

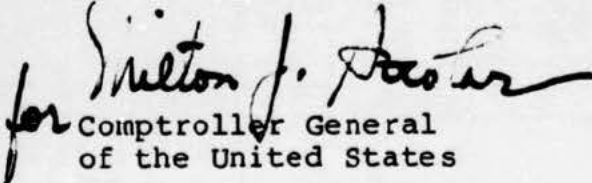
The Department of the Air Force submitted a report to our Office on this matter dated February 18, 1988 (copy enclosed). According to the report, the Air Force found that Ms. [REDACTED] had incurred the travel expenses in good faith, based on the special travel orders which had been erroneously issued to her. However, since there is no legal basis for allowing Ms. [REDACTED] to retain the travel expenses, the government will have to pursue collection action unless Congress enacts legislation relieving her of liability for repaying the expenses.

We recommend that the Congress enact legislation relieving Ms. [REDACTED] of liability based on the equitable considerations present in her case. The record indicates that Ms. [REDACTED] performed travel under the reasonable belief

that her expenses would be paid, as provided for in the special travel orders, and that she had no knowledge or reason to know that the payments for travel were, in fact, erroneous. In these circumstances we believe that collection action would be against equity and good conscience and not in the best interests of the United States.

If the Congress concurs in our recommendation, enactment of a statute in substantially the following language will accomplish the relief recommended:

"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that _____, the spouse of a former member of the United States Air Force, is hereby relieved of liability to the United States in the sum of \$909.25, representing erroneous payments of travel expenses incident to her attendance at a conference and award ceremony conducted by the Air Force in 1985. In the audit and settlement of the accounts of any certifying or disbursing officer of the United States, credit shall be given for the amount for which liability is relieved by this Act."

for 
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Enclosure