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

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Dear Senator Fong:

On August 31, 1971, you forwarded for our review a letter you had received from Mr. R. Donald Brough, concerning the use of Military Airlift Command (MAC) flights by Government employees. In his letter Mr. Brough stated that the use of MAC flights, as segments of flights while en route to or from commercial airports, is not advantageous to either the Government or the passenger under any of the usual criteria--cost, time, or convenience. Mr. Brough cited two personal experiences to support his contention--a trip from Honolulu, Hawaii, to Hong Kong and a trip from Honolulu to Syracuse, New York.

Presented below is a report of our findings.

ROUTING VIA MAC SOMETIMES MORE COSTLY THAN VIA COMMERCIAL CARRIERS

Mr. Brough attempted to show, through comparative cost calculations, that it cost the Government more to route him on MAC than to route him on commercial air carriers--taking into account his salary, per diem, ground transportation, and waiting time. Although we found inaccuracies in his calculations for both trips, our calculations confirmed Mr. Brough's contention that the use of a MAC flight for a segment of his transportation to Hong Kong had resulted in excess cost to the Government. On the trip to Syracuse, we found that the use of MAC facilities had resulted in savings to the Government.

Based on our calculation, the cost to the Government for a round trip to Hong Kong from Honolulu (as Mr. Brough was routed) was \$460.75, compared with a cost of \$358.20 had he been routed by commercial carrier at category Z¹ rates. Details of our calculation follow.

¹Category Z is service on regular commercial flights at reduced rates when transportation is procured by using a Government Transportation Request.

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	<u>Cost</u>
As routed:	
Honolulu to Hong Kong--category Z	\$180.60
Hong Kong to Tokyo, Japan--commercial coach	155.60
Tokyo to Yokota Air Base, Japan--taxi	8.85
Salary and per diem	115.70
Yokota Air Base to Honolulu--MAC	<u>-</u>
Total	<u>\$460.75</u>
Commercial carrier:	
Honolulu to Hong Kong--category Z	\$180.60
Hong Kong to Honolulu--category Z	<u>177.60</u>
Total	<u>\$358.20</u>

The MAC charge for the flight from Yokota Air Base to Honolulu was \$89, based on an industrial fund calculation. We did not include this charge in our calculation because the use of the seat on the MAC aircraft by Mr. Brough did not result in additional cost to the Government. The aircraft was under charter to the Government and would have made the flight whether or not Mr. Brough had been a passenger.

In calculating actual costs to the Government for Mr. Brough's idle time, we applied his actual salary rate at the time of travel (excluding any overhead) against the number of working days that he was in a waiting status. Mr. Brough was earning \$14,287 annually or \$54.96 a day. His cost-of-living allowance in Hawaii was \$8.24. He arrived at Yokota on Thursday evening and departed early on Sunday morning. Therefore only 1 workday was lost, not the 3 workdays Mr. Brough included in his calculation. Our calculation of the cost of idle time compared with Mr. Brough's calculation follows.

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	<u>Mr. Brough's calculation</u>	<u>Our calculation</u>
Daily salary	\$ (a)	\$ 54.96
Cost-of-living allowance (15 percent)	(a)	8.24
Per diem	<u>(a)</u>	<u>21.00</u>
Total daily cost	<u>\$125.00</u>	<u>\$ 84.20</u>
3 workdays	\$375.00	
1 workday		\$ 84.20
Additional per diem for nonworkdays (1-1/2 days at \$21 a day)	<u> </u>	<u>31.50</u>
Total	<u>\$375.00</u>	<u>\$115.70</u>

^aMr. Brough did not submit a breakdown of his \$125 figure.

We found that the use of a MAC flight for the trip to Syracuse had resulted in savings of about \$60. Details follow.

	<u>Cost</u>
As routed:	
Honolulu to Travis Air Force Base, California--MAC	\$ -
Travis to San Francisco, California, airport--bus	3.10
San Francisco to Syracuse and return via Chicago, Illinois--commercial coach	278.00
San Francisco to Honolulu--category Z	<u>81.00</u>
Total	<u>\$362.10</u>
Commercial carrier:	
Honolulu to Chicago via San Francisco--category Z	\$172.00
Chicago to Syracuse and return--commercial coach	78.00
Chicago to Honolulu via San Francisco--category Z	<u>172.00</u>
Total	<u>\$422.00</u>

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We did not include the MAC charge of \$50 from Honolulu to Travis Air Force Base in our calculation because, as in the case of the Hong Kong trip, Mr. Brough's presence did not affect the cost of the flight. The aircraft was scheduled to make the flight and the additional passenger did not increase the Government's cost.

In his calculation Mr. Brough added \$125 in salary and per diem to cover an overnight stay in San Francisco, which he indicated was attributable to poor MAC flight schedules. Our subsequent review of his travel voucher showed, however, that Mr. Brough arrived at Travis Air Force Base at about 7:30 p.m. and transferred to San Francisco International Airport, arriving at the airport about 10 p.m. He departed San Francisco on a commercial flight about midnight--some 4-1/2 hours after his arrival at Travis. This was confirmed during our discussions with Mr. Brough. Since delays of this duration can and do occur in making connections on flights that are entirely commercial, we have not considered salary and per diem in our calculation.

AIR FORCE INSTRUCTIONS
REQUIRE USE OF MAC FLIGHTS

Air Force instructions require that passengers generally be routed via MAC, unless the transportation officer determines that MAC-scheduled service will not meet the passengers' travel requirements indicated in travel orders.

Mr. Brough was routed from Honolulu to Hong Kong on a commercial flight (category Z) because MAC service would not have had him in Hong Kong within the required time. On his return trip he was routed to Tokyo on a regularly scheduled commercial coach flight for subsequent booking aboard a MAC flight departing Yokota Air Base for Honolulu but was delayed at Yokota because, as will be discussed later, he had not obtained an advance reservation.

Air Force instructions require also that travelers use the regularly scheduled MAC service between Honolulu and the

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west coast. On his trip to Syracuse, Mr. Brough was transported to Travis Air Force Base by MAC to link up with a commercial flight from San Francisco to Syracuse. On his return trip he was flown by commercial coach to San Francisco and continued on to Honolulu by commercial carrier (category Z) because MAC space at Travis Air Force Base was not available.

COSTS NOT COMPARED BETWEEN
COMMERCIAL AND MAC FLIGHTS

Transportation officials at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, do not compare the overall costs of commercial and MAC flights when routing passengers. The transportation officer told us that he routed passengers by MAC flights regardless of the financial implications because, in one section, Air Force instructions required the use of such flights.

The Air Force instructions are ambiguous since, in another section, these same regulations give the transportation officer some latitude for considering costs, such as loss of productive time, subsistence, and per diem, in deciding the mode of transportation to be used.

As long as there is ambiguity in the regulations, the possibility of uneconomical routing and undue inconvenience to travelers will remain. When we called this matter to the attention of the transportation officer, he said that, if instructions were clarified, many more passengers would fly on regularly scheduled commercial flights because it would be cheaper and more convenient to the passenger.

REASON FOR MR. BROUGH'S DELAY AT YOKOTA

Air Force instructions provide that a passenger reporting for transportation without a confirmed reservation be placed on a MAC flight within a certain time and that, if this is not possible, consideration be given to scheduling him on a commercial flight. At Yokota the transportation officer had 72 hours in which to get Mr. Brough on a MAC flight to Honolulu and got him on one within 61 hours.

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The delay probably could have been avoided if Mr. Brough had made an advance flight reservation. He told us that he did not do so before leaving Honolulu because he was not sure how long he would be in Hong Kong and that he did not do so in Hong Kong because it was his experience in the past that either the reservation would be lost or he would be bumped from the flight.

In any event the transportation officials at Yokota had no advance notice of his need for a flight to Honolulu.

CONCLUSIONS

Our findings raise important questions about military booking practices, particularly the instructions concerning the use of MAC flights. Obviously there is a need for the military to consider all aspects of these flights to see whether, and under what specific circumstances, they should be used.

We did not ask the Department of the Air Force to comment on our findings. We do, however, plan to review the passenger-routing practices of the Department of Defense, to determine whether the apparent ambiguity in the instructions results in a significant amount of uneconomical routings. We will furnish you with a copy of any report that may be issued as a result of our further work in this area.

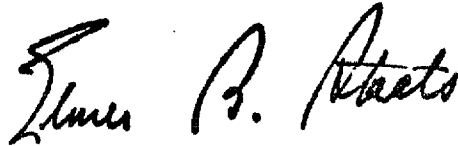
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We plan to make no further distribution of this report unless copies are specifically requested, and then we shall

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make distribution only after your agreement has been obtained or public announcement has been made by you concerning the contents of the report.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James B. Stewart". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Comptroller General
of the United States

The Honorable Hiram L. Fong
United States Senate