



The Comptroller General
of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20548

Decision

Matter of: Armando Reyes
File: B-221153
Date: August 21, 1986

DIGEST

An Air Force member sought to move his household goods under the do-it-yourself program upon his separation from the service. Applicable regulations require that in order for an incentive payment to be made for such a move, the member must provide certified weight certificates establishing the weight of goods actually moved. Since the record does not establish that these requirements of the program were met, and it appears there were other irregularities involved in the move and the submission of the claim, incentive pay is not payable to the former service member. Actual expenses of the move may, however, be paid.

DECISION

This action is in response to a request for an advance decision regarding the moving expenses of Mr. Armando Reyes under the do-it-yourself moving program.^{1/} We conclude that the cost of the rental truck, an actual expense of the move, was properly paid, although the incentive payment is not payable to the former member.

BACKGROUND

Mr. Reyes, formerly an enlisted member of the Air Force, was authorized moving expenses upon his separation from the service in January 1985. The move was authorized from Blytheville Air Force Base, Arkansas, to Stuart, Florida. Mr. Reyes chose to move under the do-it-yourself program which provides an incentive payment to a member for moving his household goods himself.

^{1/} The request was made by Captain Bobby G. McKinnon, USAF, Accounting and Finance Officer, Headquarters 97th Bombardment Wing (SAC), Blytheville Air Force Base, Arkansas, and has been assigned Per Diem, Travel and Transportation Allowance Committee number 86-5.

Under the do-it-yourself program, a service member who moves his own household goods may receive an incentive payment equal to 80 percent of the amount it would have cost the Government to ship those goods, less the costs incurred by the Government for the actual move. Participation in the program requires approval from the Traffic Management Office prior to the move, and incentive payments are made after the move is completed on the basis of household goods actually moved. Thus, weight certificates showing the weight of the vehicle used, when empty and then loaded with the goods, are required. Actual costs for the move such as truck rentals are paid by the Government and are arranged through the Traffic Management Office.

Mr. Reyes was authorized to participate in the Air Force program and rental of a truck was arranged for him. Prior to the moving date, however, Mr. Reyes requested cancellation of the truck rental so that he could move his household goods with a privately owned vehicle. The record contains a statement which indicates that he proposed to use a truck which belonged to a friend. Mr. Reyes initially submitted weight certificates with his claim for expenses and incentive payment under the program in April 1985.

Upon receiving the claim, the agency noted a discrepancy between the weight of the vehicle shown on the weight certificate and the type of vehicle Mr. Reyes was to have used for moving his goods. Mr. Reyes subsequently admitted that he had not moved his goods to Florida. Instead, he had rented a truck, weighed the truck, packed the truck, weighed the truck again, and placed his household goods in storage locally, in Blytheville, Arkansas. Mr. Reyes then used the weight certificates to substantiate his claim for incentive pay.

On the basis of this information, the claim for incentive pay was denied by the service, but the service then made arrangements for a rental truck to be made available for Mr. Reyes' use for his actual move to Florida between May 7 and 12, 1985. The Air Force now asks whether it has properly denied payment of the incentive allowance in the circumstances, and also whether it properly paid the cost of rental equipment for the actual move to Florida for Mr. Reyes.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

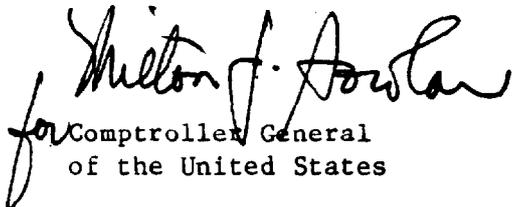
The do-it-yourself household goods shipment program and monetary incentive payment plan for members of the uniformed services is authorized under 37 U.S.C. § 406(k). This provision authorizes payment of a monetary allowance to members of the uniformed services who move their household goods by a privately owned or rental vehicle under the programs established by the Secretaries concerned.

Implementing joint-service regulations for the program are in Volume 1, Joint Travel Regulations (1 JTR), chapter 8, Part H. The incentive pay is set at 80 percent of what it would have cost the Government to move the goods, less the cost actually incurred for the move. 1 JTR para.

M8400. The constructive cost of transporting the goods at Government expense is established by weighing the goods at the time of the move. 1 JTR para. M8401.

We have consistently denied incentive payments to members who fail to submit proper weight certificates, since actual weight of the household goods at the time of the move is the most accurate means for establishing moving costs. See 60 Comp. Gen. 145 (1980); and Major William MacKinley, USA, B-217623/B-217946, July 31, 1985. We have also specifically held that an incentive allowance was not payable in the case of a former service member who attempted to collect an allowance in advance of his move, since we concluded that the weight obtained in advance of the actual move could not properly be used, and that the moving procedures and the claim were otherwise too irregular to warrant payment of the allowance. In that case, however, we also indicated that we would have no objection to reimbursement of the actual expenses of the move. Roger M. Tubbs, B-198476, July 28, 1980.

In the present case, although Mr. Reyes was authorized to participate in the program, with eligibility for an incentive allowance, the claim he presented was irregular since he had not moved when he presented it for payment. Further, it appears that the only weight certificates he presented to the Air Force were those which were submitted with the irregular claim. In our view this does not establish the weight of the goods which were actually moved by Mr. Reyes to Florida. Accordingly, we conclude that the incentive payment may not be made to Mr. Reyes under the circumstances, but we have no objection to the payment for the rental truck as an actual expense of the move.^{2/}


for Comptroller General
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^{2/} Compare Robert M. Tubbs, B-198476, supra. We note that Air Force regulations now require the collection of "all costs paid by the Government" when a member or separatee attempts to collect incentive pay without making or without completing the move. AFR 75-33, para. 2-20(f) (C2, September 8, 1983). We do not view this provision as precluding payment or reimbursement of actual expenses, however, if the claimant actually completes the move at a later date.