

Wanna



The Comptroller General
of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20548

Decision

Matter of: Richard E. Shore--Travel Expenses--Airline
Ticket Purchased with Personal Funds
File: B-225921
Date: June 12, 1987

DIGEST

Upon arrival at the airport an employee discovered that his ticket was not waiting for him but was at his agency travel office. After receiving instructions from his supervisor to proceed with payment for new ticket from personal funds, employee did so. An employee who pays for travel on official business with more than \$100 of personal funds, contrary to paragraph 1-10.2b of the Federal Travel Regulations and paragraph C4704 of Volume 2 of the Joint Travel Regulations which requires the use of a Government Transportation Request to procure passenger transportation costing in excess of \$100, may be reimbursed when receipt or other evidence of purchase is provided. Further, the employee may be reimbursed the amount he actually paid in excess of that which has already been reimbursed.

DECISION

The question presented is whether a Federal employee traveling on Government business may be reimbursed for travel expenses when the employee expended more than \$100 of his own funds for an airline ticket contrary to the provisions of Federal Travel Regulations, FPMR 101-7 (September 1981) incorp. by ref., 41 C.F.R. § 101-7.003 (1985) (FTR), 2 Joint Travel Regulations (2 JTR) C4704. These provisions require the use of Government Transportation Requests (GTR) for the procurement of passenger transportation which costs more than \$100.^{1/} We hold that the employee, Mr. Richard E. Shore, may be reimbursed up to the amount he paid for the airline ticket under the circumstances described below as he

^{1/} The matter was forwarded to this Office by a certifying officer of the U. S. Army Finance and Accounting Center because of doubtful questions of law.

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had no reasonable alternative and undertook the trip pursuant to the explicit instructions of his supervisor.

BACKGROUND

Mr. Shore, an employee of the Department of the Army, who is officially stationed at Fort Knox, Kentucky, was directed to travel to Rock Island, Illinois, to attend a training course during the period November 3 to November 8, 1985. Mr. Shore was issued a transportation request by his agency but failed to obtain his airline ticket prior to arriving at the airport on the day his flight was scheduled for departure. Mr. Shore explained that prior to the date of his departure he received a memorandum from the clerk in his agency travel office which explained the travel arrangements which had been made for him including flight information, motel reservations, and dates. However, Mr. Shore states that he was not told that he needed to pick up his airline ticket in advance of arriving at the airport on the date of his departure. On the date of departure when Mr. Shore checked in with the airline he was told that his ticket had already been issued. Since he did not have the ticket in his possession, he was told that new tickets would have to be issued at a cost of \$576 with immediate payment in full required. After receiving this information, and before purchasing the ticket, Mr. Shore telephoned his supervisor for instructions. His supervisor has stated that he advised Mr. Shore to purchase the ticket with his own funds and proceed to the site of his scheduled training. The supervisor explained his reasoning was based on the fact that the agency was already committed to pay the costs of the training and while the Army would incur a greater transportation expense than had been anticipated, a net savings would result by Army not having to forfeit the cost of the training.

Mr. Shore has explained that he had been a Government employee for less than 5 years at the time of the travel and had previously only travelled on official business three times, in each instance another member of the travelling party either obtained the ticket or provided vehicle transportation. Mr. Shore reiterated that for this particular trip, he was advised by his agency travel clerk who prepared his travel orders that reservations were confirmed but he was not told to pick up his airline ticket at the agency transportation office. The record indicates that the agency had secured tickets for Mr. Shore's flights at a cost of \$290 which amount has subsequently been reimbursed to Mr. Shore leaving a balance of \$286 for which Mr. Shore now seeks reimbursement.

DISCUSSION

Ordinarily, agencies must require employees to use a GTR for common carrier transportation costing over \$100, in which case the Government buys the ticket and no reimbursement or receipt is required. See FTR paras. 1-10.2 and 1-11.3; and 41 C.F.R. § 101-41-203-2; 2 JTR 4704. However, we have allowed reimbursement for a ticket exceeding the \$100 limitation purchased with personal funds absent a GTR, provided the employee submits a receipt, passenger coupon, or other evidence showing that the amount claimed was actually paid. Patrick G. Orbin, B-215550, October 23, 1984; and Esther O. Kaloa, B-198950, July 18, 1980. Thus, in Patrick G. Orbin, cited above, we held that an employee who traveled to the wrong destination through an administrative error in airline reservations could be reimbursed for the \$284 he spent to secure a ticket for the proper destination. Furthermore, we have held that an employee who negligently failed to use a GTR that had been issued to him, and instead purchased a ticket with personal funds pursuant to authorized official travel, could be reimbursed for the costs of the ticket. B-168260, November 14, 1969.

Mr. Shore's failure to use a GTR to secure his airline ticket resulted from a communications failure in that Mr. Shore was not adequately apprised of the necessary procedures to be followed in securing his ticket from his agency prior to date of travel and related to circumstances which were not within his control. Once Mr. Shore learned the whereabouts of his airline tickets, he did not have time to either obtain them or request the issuance of a new GTR. Mr. Shore prudently sought advice and instructions from his supervisor. He had no choice at that time but to purchase another ticket with his own funds. Under these circumstances, we hold that Mr. Shore may be reimbursed for the full cost of the airline ticket he purchased with personal funds. We note that an agency may approve purchase of transportation tickets with cash instead of a GTR under certain circumstances where the use of a GTR is not possible. See 41 C.F.R. § 101-41.203-2 (1985), 2 JTR C4704, and Winifred B. Sidle, B-215796, December 26, 1984.

Accordingly, for the reasons stated above, Mr. Shore's claim for transportation expenses in the amount of \$286 may be allowed.

for *Harry R. Van Cleave*
Comptroller General
of the United States