



The Comptroller General
of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20548

Decision

Matter of: Sidney A. Motte & Laura S. Wilbourn - Temporary
Duty - Local Travel by Privately Owned Vehicle

File: B-233218
Date: August 24, 1989

DIGEST

Two employees, who were temporarily assigned to an alternate duty site approximately 1 mile from their regular place of work, claim mileage reimbursement for their commuting between their residences and that location. Under the Joint Travel Regulations, such travel must be approved as advantageous to the government. Absent such approval, these claims may not be paid.

DECISION

This decision is in response to a request from a Disbursing Officer, Corps of Engineers, Department of the Army.^{1/} It concerns the entitlement of two employees to be reimbursed mileage for use of their privately owned vehicles while performing temporary duty at an alternate duty point which was in close proximity to their permanent duty station. We conclude that they may not be reimbursed, for the following reasons.

BACKGROUND

In December 1986, the U.S. Army Engineer Division (Division), Huntsville, Alabama, was conducting an evaluation of a number of proposals on a complex procurement matter. Because of the volume of material and amount of work involved, the Division leased several rooms at the Amberly Suite Hotel, which is located approximately 1 mile from the Division's main building.

^{1/} This matter has been assigned Control No. 88-16 by the Per Diem, Travel and Transportation Allowance Committee.

046359/139443

Mr. Sidney A. Motte, a procurement clerk in the Division's Word Processing Center, was assigned to provide administrative support for the evaluation team at the hotel. Although he was informed by his supervisor that the assignment would be of several months' duration, he was never formally assigned to the hotel as his new regular place of duty. No written orders were issued, and while his supervisor verbally instructed him about the new arrangements, they did not discuss whether Mr. Motte should commute directly to the hotel or whether he should first stop at the main building before going on to the hotel. Mr. Motte chose to drive directly to the hotel from his residence each day he worked with the evaluation team.

Following completion of that assignment, Mr. Motte claimed 61 days of mileage expenses in the amount of \$1,075.43 for round-trip travel between his residence and the hotel. The agency report states that while his supervisor and others knew he was using his own vehicle for this commute, they were unaware that Mr. Motte planned to seek reimbursement since he never requested authorization for such use. The report states further that the agency transportation officer, who is the only person authorized to approve local travel, did not know about such use and if he had known, he would not have authorized it as advantageous to the government. The facts in the case of Ms. Laura S. Wilbourn are identical to those in Mr. Motte's case, except for the amount of the claim and the period of travel, and the disbursing officer asks whether the claims should be allowed.

OPINION

Paragraph C2153 of 2 JTR, provides in part:

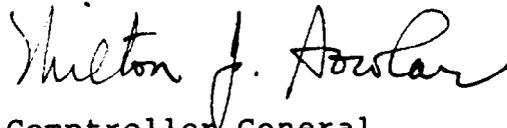
"C2153 USE OF A PRIVATELY OWNED CONVEYANCE BETWEEN PLACE OF ABODE AND AN ALTERNATE DUTY POINT

When use of a privately owned conveyance is authorized or approved as advantageous to the Government for travel between the employee's place of abode and an alternate duty point (a duty point within or outside the employee's permanent duty station other than his regular place of work), instead of reporting to his regular place of work and then to the alternate duty point, the employee is entitled to reimbursement on a mileage basis for the distance traveled between the employee's place of abode and the alternate duty point."

See also paras. C2100-1; C2150 and C2151-1 of 2 JTR regarding the need to determine that it is advantageous to

the government to authorize use of a vehicle at the employee's permanent duty station.

The threshold requirement of paragraph C2153 of 2 JTR is that use of a vehicle to travel between an employee's residence and an alternate duty point be approved as advantageous to the government. See also para. C4458 of 2 JTR, which permits authorization of travel directly to the place of temporary duty assignment without requiring the employee to report first to the regular place of duty. In the present situation, the record establishes that neither Mr. Motte nor Ms. Wilbourn received the requisite approval. Absent such approval, these travel vouchers may not be certified for payment.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Milton J. Fowler".

Acting Comptroller General
of the United States