



# Decision

**Matter of:** Captain David A. Wilkins, USAF

**File:** B-256295

**Date:** July 15, 1994

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## DIGEST

Member states that he purchased frequent flyer coupons from his father to secure airline tickets for two dependents in connection with a permanent change of station. Member may not be reimbursed the purchase price, however, since although the airline's frequent flyer program allows the transfer of coupons among family members, it prohibits the sale of coupons.

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## DECISION

Air Force Captain David A. Wilkins has appealed the determination of our Claims Group denying his request for reimbursement of \$810 he spent to purchase frequent flyer coupons in connection with his permanent change of station (PCS) from Ramstein AB, Germany, to the United States Air Force Academy, Colorado. We affirm the Claims Group's action.

Captain Wilkins and his dependents made the PCS move under orders dated May 26, 1993. He was issued three airline tickets for himself and two dependents. Captain Wilkins asserts that for his other dependents he purchased frequent flyer coupons from his father for \$810 (\$405 each), to secure two more tickets. Captain Wilkins has submitted signed statements from his father and himself that the coupons were purchased for the claimed amount. The record shows that it would have cost the government \$420.15 per ticket to transport each dependent.

The Air Force and our Claims Group found that Captain Wilkins was entitled to be reimbursed \$15.85 per ticket, since that was the cost shown on the tickets. Captain Wilkins states that amount was merely for taxes (fuel surcharge, airport utilization tax, etc.) and did not reflect their value, \$405 each.

Paragraph U3110D.1 of the Joint Federal Travel Regulations provides that when travel by government or government-procured transportation is authorized and transoceanic travel is performed by common carrier at personal expense, the member is entitled to reimbursement for the cost of

transportation used not to exceed the amount the government would have paid for the available transportation.

Regarding the use of these frequent flyer coupons, however, the rules and conditions of the specific airlines award program involved provide that while coupons may be freely transferred to a family member or dependent, the program awardee is prohibited from bartering, selling or assigning the coupons. Therefore, while Captain Wilkins' father evidently could transfer the coupons to him for use by his family, his father was precluded from selling the coupons under the terms of the airline program. We do not think it appropriate for the government to endorse a violation of the program's terms by reimbursing Captain Wilkins for the purchase. Cf., 65 Comp. Gen. 171 (1985), where an employee used her husband's frequent flyer coupon to obtain a ticket for official travel and reimbursement on a constructive cost basis was denied.

We affirm the actions of the Claims Group.

Robert P. Murphy  
Acting General Counsel

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/s/ Seymour Efros  
for Robert P. Murphy

Acting General Counsel