

DECISION**THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES**

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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FILE: B-186798

DATE: SEP 16 1976

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MATTER OF: Television Services on St. Paul Island, Alaska

- DIGEST:
1. Expenditure from appropriated funds by National Weather Service (NWS) for television services provided to remote Government-owned recreational facility was proper since expenditure for recreation is specifically authorized by § 202 of the Fur Seal Act of 1966, as amended, 16 U.S.C. § 1162.
 2. Cost of providing television services to National Weather Service Government-owned employee homes may be paid with appropriated funds if Secretary determines that such services are necessary and he charges for them at a rate he determines to be reasonable under the circumstances. 16 U.S.C. § 1163(a)(2).

By letter of June 18, 1976, Mr. Anthony J. Rudez, Jr., an authorized certifying officer with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), a division of the Department of Commerce, requests our determination of the propriety of making payments out of appropriated funds for television services provided to a Government-owned recreational facility and homes occupied by National Weather Service (NWS) employees and their families located on St. Paul Island, Alaska, a constituent of the Pribilof Island chain in the Bering Sea.

NWS, a major line component of NOAA, operates a forecast office on St. Paul Island. To provide for the entertainment of employees located at that remote location, a Government-owned recreational facility, equipped with one television set, was erected and maintained for Government employees and their dependents. The city of St. Paul supplies the facility with television services, generally consisting of old movies, in return for which NWS pays a program rental fee to the city. The fee for fiscal year 1976 was \$1,000. Similar charges for slightly larger amounts have been paid in prior years.

obviated the need to use two-way radios as required in the past. The current method of communications has been determined to be more practical and expeditious than the radios. NWS can also use the broadcasting facilities to show training films to its employees. The Certifying Officer states that having television service in their residences, in addition to that available at the recreational facility located approximately four miles away, is expected by NWS to have a favorable effect on employee morale and personnel turnover.

The primary purpose of home television is (in most cases), for entertainment and recreation. In the instant situation it appears that the employees on the island purchased their own television sets for the sole purpose of their own entertainment without NOAA's being aware that television services were available to them.

Based on the record presently before us, we reach the following conclusions. First, the Government is liable only for those services specified in its contract with the provider of television services. If the applicable agreement provides for services to be furnished to the central facility, but the contract billing contains an amount for services furnished to the Government-owned, employee occupied dwellings, only that amount attributable to the central facility may be paid.

Second, 16 U.S.C. § 1163(a)(2) authorizes the Secretary to provide his employees and others with such facilities, services and equipment as he deems necessary. This authority is broad enough to allow him to provide television services to those employees in their homes. Unlike such similar services which he might provide to the natives of the Pribilof Islands under 16 U.S.C. § 1163(a)(1), however, the Secretary is not given the discretion to provide such services without making a reasonable charge therefor. Therefore, as with the rental he is required to charge for any Government-owned dwellings he provides, the Secretary may furnish television services to those dwellings only if he charges a reasonable rate therefor.

In view of all the facts and circumstances here involved, however, we will not object to the payment of the instant voucher, even though it covers the cost of television services provided to

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employees' homes. In the future, however, appropriated funds may not be used to provide such television services unless the Secretary establishes a reasonable charge therefor.

R. F. Keller
Deputy, Comptroller General
of the United States