

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Memorandum

June 13, 1980

B-198883-O.M

TO : Chief, Administrative Finance Section, OBFM - Judith B. Czarsty

FROM : General Counsel, OGC *D. Harry R. Van Cleave* for Milton J. Socolar

SUBJECT: B-198883-O.M.

Latin American Branch Request to use
Panama Canal Commission Ticketing Office

You requested our review of a proposal by our Latin American Branch to participate in a Central Commercial Airlines Reservation and Ticketing Office (CARTO) which will be operated by the Panama Canal Commission's (PCC) Transportation Branch. The airlines have agreed to install reservation terminals to their main computer, a hard copy printer and a ticketing machine provided the PCC handles reservation and ticketing for all United States Government agencies on the Panama Isthmus. The airlines will bill PCC and PCC will, in turn, bill and collect monies due from the other agencies. The service will be identical to that provided by the airlines now, making reservations, giving fare quotations and providing tickets. However, PCC has outlined at least four benefits from this centralized system. PCC anticipates its plan will reduce delays now experienced in obtaining reservations and tickets, reduce transportation costs, allow instant communication to all points of the hemisphere for reservations and increase the use of discount fares. The Latin American Branch believes that with respect to advantages to the General Accounting Office (GAO) specifically, the procedure will be much simpler, more efficient and will reduce the time needed to make reservations, although it is stated that it may not necessarily result in lower transportation costs.

We can find no legal objection to the proposed participation in the PCC system. In fact, prior GAO rulings on similar plans to provide more efficient and less costly ticketing procedures support favorable consideration of the proposal.

For example, we have determined that agency use of "ticketing by mail" or "tele-mail" airline service whereby the Government traveler orders tickets by telephone and the carrier mails the tickets to the traveler is not precluded by travel or audit regulations. 44 Comp. Gen. 219 (1964).

B-198883 - O.M.,

We permitted use of the procedure because we believed the service would facilitate ticket procurement without detriment to the interests of the Government, doing so with the proviso that such Governmental functions as selection of economical routes, preparation of Government transportation requests (GTR) and travel vouchers, and maintenance of both records and liason with carriers would remain within the Government.

Similarly, we have also approved proposals for the use of teleticketing machines for the procurement of airline transportation because of perceived advantages and savings to the agencies and airlines by the elimination of issuing GTRs for each individual ticket issued under a teleticketing system and centralizing ticket procurement services for a number of agencies in one region. See 39 Comp. Gen. 554 (1960); B-140659 March 22, 1961. More recently, we approved a master contract between the General Services Administration and the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) to facilitate rail ticket procurement by allowing individual agencies to issue Amtrak tickets and to institute automatic payment procedures for the tickets issued by use of a blanket GTR where ticket sale volumes permitted such an operation. B-160548-O.M. February 22, 1974.

Given the discretion we have permitted in the past with regard to the development and operation of more efficient and less costly Government transportation reservation and ticketing services, we believe that our participation in the CARTO is not objectionable and is, in fact, consistent with prior GAO rulings. We would, however, recommend a report be prepared after one year's experience under this plan to determine whether the anticipated advantages have resulted and if any significant problems have developed.

TRANSPORTATION

Requests

Issuance, use, etc.

Teleticketing contracts

TRANSPORTATION

Requests

Issuance, use, etc.

Quantity ticket purchases