

DECISION

**THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES**
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20548

FILE: B-212362

DATE: June 28, 1984

MATTER OF: Margaret J. Janes - Training Expenses - Thesis
Preparation Costs

DIGEST:

Defense Logistics Agency civilian employee requests reimbursement for full cost of typing and copying a thesis prepared in association with a long-term training program. Agency has broad discretion to pay all or part of the expenses of training, including all or part of thesis preparation costs. In employee's travel orders agency limited reimbursement to \$200, and stated that it was agency policy to so limit reimbursement unless orders specified differently. Based on the record before us, we will not overrule the agency's denial of reimbursement for these expenses. However, it is clear that the agency has authority to pay these expenses and we would have no objection if the agency chooses to do so.

This action responds to a request for an advanced decision on a claim submitted by Margaret J. Janes, a Defense Logistics Agency civilian employee, for the full cost of preparation of a thesis incurred incident to long-term training. The request for advance decision was submitted by R. G. Bordley, Chief, Accounting and Finance Division, Office of the Comptroller, Defense Logistics Agency, Alexandria, Virginia. In view of the agency's discretion to pay all or part of the costs of training, and the agency's decision here not to pay the entire cost of thesis preparation, we find no basis to allow this claim.

FACTS

Margaret J. Janes, a civilian employee of the Defense Logistics Agency, was sent on long-term training to participate in the Alfred P. Sloan Fellows Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) from June 19, 1981, to May 31, 1982. Submission of a thesis was one of

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the requirements of the MIT program. Costs for typing and copying a thesis were programmed in the original estimate of training costs as a miscellaneous expense in the amount of \$200. This is reflected on Ms. Janes' travel orders which provided \$200 for miscellaneous expenses. Actual expenses for typing and copying the thesis prepared by Ms. Janes amounted to \$1,465.34.

After completing the program, Ms. Janes submitted a request for full reimbursement of these expenses from the agency. The request for reimbursement, for the amount above the \$200 provided in the original estimate, was disapproved on the basis that the employee should have submitted justification for and requested additional funds prior to expending \$1,465.34 without agency approval. Defense Logistics Agency policy is to limit reimbursement for typing and copying expenses to \$200 unless travel orders state otherwise. There is nothing in the record that indicates whether this policy is contained in any written regulations or policy guidance. Ms. Janes stated that she had not submitted an earlier request for increased thesis preparation expenses because she had not realized that such expenses were reimbursable until she prepared her final voucher.

ANALYSIS

The authority for training Government employees in Government or non-Government facilities is contained in Chapter 41 of Title 5, United States Code (1982) and 5 C.F.R. Part 410 (1983). See also Federal Personnel Manual (FPM), Chapter 410 and Department of Defense Instruction 1430.5 (June 26, 1978). It is within the discretion of the head of each agency to pay all or part of the necessary expenses of training including the necessary costs of "services or facilities directly related to the training of the employee." 5 U.S.C. § 4109. See also 5 C.F.R. Part 410, Subpart F. Thus, there is no legal objection to payment of these expenses by the agency if it wishes to exercise its discretion in that manner.

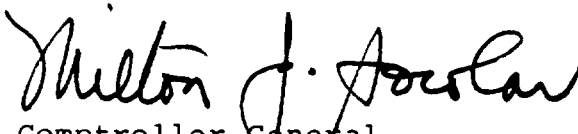
Under the guidance of the FPM, the head of each agency is urged to establish policies to assure just and equitable financial assistance and, to the extent possible, provide that payment of expenses for training result in neither financial gain nor loss to the employee. FPM Chapter 410, Subchapter 6-1(b). Subchapter 6-4 of the FPM

Chapter 410 further recognizes that it is within the authority of the agency head to require an employee to bear certain expenses of training. That subchapter provides the following, in pertinent part:

"The head of each agency is required to establish the procedure he/she considers necessary to protect the Government's interests * * *. They may wish, for example, to pay for certain types of training (e.g., correspondence courses) only upon completion of the training or to require employees to share the costs of training under certain circumstances.
* * *"

See also Thomas B. Cox, B-187213, October 1, 1976;
B-167156, July 10, 1969.

The decision of the Defense Logistics Agency to limit reimbursement of typing and copying costs associated with preparation of a thesis to \$200 reflects the broad discretionary authority granted to an agency to pay all or part of training expenses. In light of this authority, we are unable to find that the agency has been arbitrary or capricious in limiting reimbursement to \$200 in this case. However, the Defense Logistics Agency has the discretion to reimburse Ms. Janes for all or part of the expenses associated with preparation of her thesis. This Office would have no objection to full reimbursement by either amendment to her original travel orders or supplemental voucher if the agency, in its discretion, decides to do so.


Acting Comptroller General
of the United States