

**DECISION****THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL  
OF THE UNITED STATES  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20548****FILE:** B-214117**DATE:** June 26, 1984**MATTER OF:** Vonie M. Martin - Personal Travel Expenses  
Incident to Canceled Temporary Duty  
Assignment**DIGEST:**

Employee scheduled personal travel and leave, and purchased round-trip excursion airline ticket, but later changed travel arrangements because of temporary duty assignment at end of period of leave. After employee departed on leave, she was notified the temporary duty assignment was canceled, and additional costs were incurred for her personal travel. She is obligated to reimburse agency only in the amount of her original expenses since, but for temporary duty assignment, she would have not incurred the additional expenses.

ISSUE

The issue in this decision involves the proper allocation of travel expenses when an employee scheduled annual leave in one location prior to being assigned to temporary duty in another location. After departing on annual leave, the employee was notified that the temporary duty assignment had been canceled, and additional travel expenses were incurred due to the cancellation of the temporary duty assignment. We hold that she is obligated to reimburse the agency only in the amount of her original travel expenses since she would not have incurred the additional expenses but for the temporary duty assignment.

BACKGROUND

This decision is in response to a request from Robert A. Carlisle, a certifying officer in Region X, Seattle, Washington, Department of Health and Human Services. The request involves the travel expenses of Ms. Vonie M. Martin, an employee of the Social Security Administration.

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In August 1983, Ms. Martin requested and received approval for a period of annual leave from September 28 to October 11, 1983. She then purchased a 14-day excursion fare ticket from Frontier Airlines for personal travel during this period from Seattle to Des Moines to Denver and return to Seattle at a cost of \$279.

On September 15, she was notified of a temporary duty assignment in Baltimore, Maryland, scheduled for October 12 to 14, 1983. With agency approval, Ms. Martin made travel arrangements with the government-contract travel agent, Doug Fox Travel, for travel from Seattle to Des Moines to Baltimore and return to Seattle. She paid the difference between direct travel from Seattle to Baltimore and return (\$360) and the indirect travel via Des Moines (\$553.50), or \$193.50. This was a 7-day excursion fare. She then returned the 14-day excursion ticket she had purchased earlier to Frontier Airlines and received a refund of the purchase price.

After departing on annual leave, Ms. Martin was notified in Des Moines on October 5 that the temporary duty assignment in Baltimore was canceled. Ms. Martin immediately contacted Frontier Airlines which arranged for her return travel from Des Moines to Denver to Seattle, but the additional cost of this travel was \$279.

Of the total original cost of \$553.50 for the ticket purchased for travel from Seattle to Des Moines to Baltimore and return to Seattle, \$193.50 had been apportioned to and paid by Ms. Martin as the cost to her of the circuitous route traveled for her convenience. However, when she did not use the full ticket, the price advantage gained because it was a 7-day excursion fare was lost, and the cost then attributed to Ms. Martin's travel from Seattle to Des Moines was \$199.50. In addition, the cost of her return travel to Seattle was \$279, and this was applied against the original cost of \$553.50, with the balance of \$75 being credited to the agency. Thus, in addition to the amount she has already paid, the full additional cost of her trip is \$285, i.e., \$6 from Seattle to Denver and \$279 from Des Moines to Seattle.

The agency notes that the cancellation of the temporary duty assignment was out of Ms. Martin's control and that the annual leave was scheduled and approved before notification of the trip to Baltimore. Based on these facts, the agency now asks whether Ms. Martin should

be charged \$85.50, which is the difference between her share of the ticket purchased, \$193.50, and the original cost of her personal travel for annual leave, \$279, or should she be charged the full \$285 additional cost of her travel.

#### DISCUSSION

Our decisions have denied claims where official business delays personal travel resulting in increased personal travel expenses to the employee. John W. Keys, III, 60 Comp. Gen. 629 (1981), and decisions cited therein. In the present case Ms. Martin did not perform any official travel or conduct any official business during her travel to Des Moines and return.

However, Ms. Martin's situation is similar to several decisions involving employees who traveled on annual leave to one location prior to scheduled temporary duty assignments at another location. In those decisions we held that the employee who departed for annual leave should not be penalized due to the subsequent cancellation of the temporary duty assignment. 52 Comp. Gen. 841 (1973); 30 Comp. Gen. 56 (1950); and B-171804, March 2, 1971. The distinction in those prior decisions is that in each case we concluded that, but for the temporary duty assignment, the employee would not have gone on annual leave.

In the present case it is clear that Ms. Martin's personal travel to Des Moines was scheduled prior to notification of the temporary duty assignment. Nevertheless, it is clear that Ms. Martin would not have incurred the additional airline fare expenses but for the subsequent scheduling and then cancellation of the temporary duty assignment by her agency. She had already purchased a round-trip excursion fare for \$279 for her personal travel before she was notified of the temporary duty assignment. When that assignment was canceled subsequent to her departure on annual leave, the additional expenses were incurred. The agency's proposed charge of \$285 to her for her round-trip travel under the government travel arrangements would mean that she would pay a total of \$478.50 for her trip, solely because of the government's actions herein.

We believe that the logic of the prior decisions cited above compel the conclusion that no additional cost attributable to the government's actions should be charged to Ms. Martin. In that way, she will not be penalized because of the subsequent cancellation of her temporary

duty assignment. Therefore, we conclude that Ms. Martin is obligated to reimburse the agency only the balance that she would have paid for her personal travel had she not been asked to go to Baltimore on temporary duty. Since she has already paid \$193.50, she only owes the agency an additional \$85.50.

*Milton J. Fowler*  
for Comptroller General  
of the United States