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The Comptroller General
of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20548

Decision

Matter of: Robin L. Miller--Fee for Electronic Transfer of Funds

File: B-235659

Date: September 18, 1989

DIGEST

An employee, who failed to negotiate a travel advance check prior to her departure on temporary duty, may not be reimbursed for the fee incurred when a relative sent funds via wire service.

DECISION

This responds to a request for an advance decision submitted by C. K. Hardy, Finance and Accounting Officer, United States Army White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico, concerning the claim of Ms. Robin L. Miller, an Army employee, for reimbursement of a \$75 fee for electronic transfer of funds. The matter was forwarded to our Office by the Per Diem, Travel and Transportation Allowance Committee, PDTATAC Control No. 89-9. For the reasons stated below, we hold that the employee is not entitled to reimbursement of the fee as part of her expenses for temporary duty travel.

BACKGROUND

Ms. Miller, an employee of the Department of the Army stationed in New Mexico, was issued a travel advance by United States Treasury check dated November 1, 1988, in the amount of \$1,874. On November 13, 1988, she left her permanent duty station for a 6-day training course in New Jersey, without cashing the check. After attempting unsuccessfully to negotiate the check in New Jersey, Ms. Miller had her mother send her \$1,874 through Western Union. Ms. Miller now requests reimbursement of the \$75 fee charged for the wire service.

OPINION

The agency asks whether the wire service fee may be reimbursed as a check cashing fee similar to the one considered in Wayne J. Henderson, 61 Comp. Gen. 585 (1982),

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or whether reimbursement may be allowed as a cost of transporting personal funds necessary for normal expenses under para. C4709-1-13 of volume 2 of the Joint Travel Regulations.

In Henderson, supra, we held that although the Federal Travel Regulations specifically allow exchange fees for cashing government checks issued for expenses incurred for travel in foreign countries, no such allowance exists for check cashing costs incurred incident to travel within the United States. That decision would not apply to this case since Ms. Miller did not incur the claimed expense as a result of cashing a check in a foreign country.

The Joint Travel Regulations authorize the reimbursement of the "costs of traveler's checks, money orders, or certified checks purchased in connection with official travel inside or outside the continental United States for the safe transportation of personal funds necessary for normal expenses." 2 JTR para. C4709-1-13 (Change No. 251, Sept. 1, 1986).

Although this provision does not specifically exclude reimbursement for electronic transfer of funds, the facts in this case do not warrant an inference that Ms. Miller incurred the wire service fee in an effort to protect herself against the loss of her travel advance.

Finally, in Tracy L. Huckaby, B-225992, July 13, 1987, we allowed reimbursement of a wire service fee incurred in obtaining a passport required for overseas travel. In that case we held that reimbursement was authorized under the Federal Travel Regulations and agreed with the agency's determination that the employee's action was necessary to the transaction of official business.^{1/} See also William T. Kemp, B-223186, Feb. 27, 1987. In Huckaby we held it was appropriate for the employee to use a wire service to obtain the necessary documents in order to procure the passport in time to meet her travel requirements.

In the present case the agency determined that Ms. Miller had ample opportunity to negotiate the check at her permanent duty station prior to departing on temporary duty. We agree with that determination. Furthermore, the facts do not indicate that Ms. Miller incurred the wire fees while procuring urgently needed documents necessary to her transacting official business or to protect the funds

^{1/} FTR, para. 1-9.1(c)(4) (Supp. 1, Sept. 28, 1981), Incorp. by ref., 41 C.F.R. § 101-7.003 (1988).

against loss or theft while she was in transit. Accordingly, we deny the claim for reimbursement for the wire service fee.

Milton J. Fowler
for Comptroller General
of the United States