



The Comptroller General
of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20548

140/82

Decision

Matter of: Department of the Navy--Purchase of Employee
Identification Tags

File: B-237236

Date: December 11, 1989

DIGEST

An agency may use appropriated funds to purchase employee identification tags which, unlike calling or business cards, are not personal in nature and are reasonably necessary to the operations of the agency.

DECISION

An authorized certifying officer of the Naval Telecommunications Command, Department of the Navy, asks whether the Navy may use its operations and maintenance appropriation to purchase identification tags for senior staff officials. The officer requests our opinion in light of our decisions disallowing the use of appropriated funds to purchase business or calling cards. For the following reasons, we conclude that the Navy may use appropriated funds to purchase identification tags.

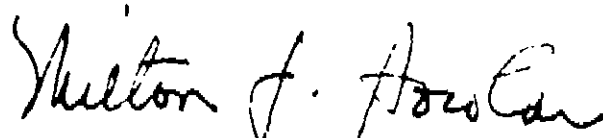
BACKGROUND

The Naval Telecommunications Command plans to require senior staff officials to wear identification tags. Each tag will be engraved with the command crest and identify the individual by name and rank or, if civilian, by title.

DISCUSSION

We have long held that the costs of calling or business cards constitute personal rather than official expenses and, as such, may not be paid for with government funds in the absence of specific statutory authority to do so. B-231830, June 5, 1989. However, an early decision of the Comptroller General distinguished the purchase of employee identification tags from the purchase of calling or business cards. 2 Comp. Gen. 429 (1923). Identification tags are not personal in nature; their use will be mandated and they will remain the property of the government. The Command has

justified a determination that their use is reasonably necessary to carry on the operations of the Navy. Therefore, the Navy may use appropriated funds to purchase the employee identification tags.


Acting Comptroller General
of the United States