



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

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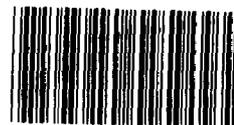
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MAY 27, 1981

RELEASED

The Honorable Charles H. Percy  
United States Senate



115409

Dear Senator Percy:

Subject: Travel By Certain Noncareer Government Officials  
(FPCD-81-49)

On January 30, 1981, you asked us to review records in seven departments for travel performed by Schedule C employees during the post-election transition period. Representatives of your office later modified this request to include executive level and noncareer Senior Executive Service employees in Washington, D.C., and Chicago, Illinois. As of November 7, 1980, the seven departments had 944 employees in these positions.

Our objectives were to determine (1) how many of the specified noncareer employees traveled between November 7, 1980 (the date specified in your letter), and January 20, 1981, (2) their destination, (3) the cost of the trips, and (4) the purpose.

We performed our work at the Washington, D.C., headquarters of the seven departments--Agriculture, Commerce, Energy, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, the Interior, and Labor. We reviewed copies of travel authorizations and travel vouchers for noncareer employees who traveled during the transition period, and we summarized data from those documents. As your office requested, we did not take the additional time to obtain agency comments on this report.

We found that 333 noncareer officials took 798 trips during the transition period. Those trips cost about \$454,000. About 94 percent were domestic trips; that is, within or among the 50 States, U.S. territories and possessions, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. These trips lasted an average of 4 days and cost an average of \$474. The remaining 6 percent were trips to foreign countries, which lasted an average of 9 days and cost an average of \$2,089. About 70 percent of the trips began during the 5-week period immediately following the November election. (See enclosure.)

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We could not determine the purpose of 187, or 23 percent, of the trips because the purpose was not documented. We classified the remaining 611 trips as "representational" travel (such as travel to conferences, seminars, dinners, award ceremonies, meetings, and speaking engagements) and training travel. On the basis of the documents available on the 611 trips and because these individuals traveled for these and other mission-related purposes throughout the year, we have no reason to question the justification for these trips.

In reviewing travel records, we noted three areas of concern:

- Use of foreign carriers.
- Use of first-class accommodations.
- Failure to document the purpose of the trips.

#### USE OF FOREIGN CARRIERS

Of the 47 foreign trips, 25 (or 53%) included travel on a foreign carrier. Section 5 of the International Air Transportation Fair Competitive Practices Act of 1974, as amended (49 U.S.C. 1517), requires executive branch agencies to use, within reason, available U.S. carriers for foreign travel. The Comptroller General's guidelines concerning the availability of service state that the traveler's preference or personal convenience cannot be a factor when deciding between use of a U.S. carrier or foreign carrier. (On October 31, 1978, we reported on the use of foreign carriers, LCD-78-235.)

We will review further those trips that involved use of a foreign carrier to determine whether they violated the law. If we find that the use of a foreign carrier was not justified, we will disallow appropriated funds for the transportation and ask the department that paid for the ticket to collect the cost from the traveler. We will send you the results of this review.

#### FIRST-CLASS ACCOMMODATIONS

Federal travel regulations state:

"It is the policy of the Government that employees who use commercial air carriers for domestic and international travel on official business shall use less-than-first-class accommodations."

The regulations allow agency heads and their deputies to authorize first-class accommodations when

- other space is not available,

- first class is necessary because of an employee's physical handicap or impairment,
- first class is necessary for security or because of exceptional circumstances, or
- less-than-first-class accommodations on foreign carriers do not provide adequate sanitation or health standards.

Travelers used first-class accommodations in 34 instances. Only the Department of the Interior had no such trips. In 26 instances, agency records did not justify the use of first-class accommodations as required by Federal travel regulations. In the other eight instances, records showed medical necessity (three instances), security (two instances), and exceptional circumstances (three instances) as justifications. We will bring to the attention of the respective department heads and their inspectors general the lack of justification for first-class accommodations and ask them to recover the additional costs when the use of first-class accommodations cannot be justified, as required by the Federal travel regulations.

#### FAILURE TO DOCUMENT PURPOSE

We have long been concerned that agencies have not focused enough management attention on the purpose of trips. In prior reports, <sup>1/</sup> we have recommended to the Director, Office of Management and Budget, that agencies budget for and report travel costs according to purpose. No actions have been taken to accomplish this, and the Director has not yet commented on our December 1980 recommendations.

In a recent study of travel management, the Interagency Travel Management Improvement Project sampled 13,000 travel vouchers covering trips during fiscal year 1979. The purpose of the travel could not be identified on 27 percent of the vouchers. Agreeing with our concern, the project's draft report recommends that all travel authorizations clearly state the purpose for approving travel. The project report says that "conduct of official business" or similar statements should not be used as a purpose for travel.

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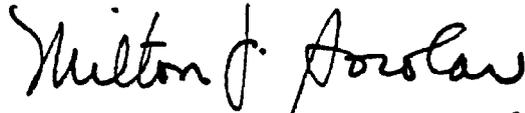
<sup>1/</sup>"Travel in the Management and Operation of Federal Programs" (FPCD-77-11, Mar. 17, 1977); "Temporary Duty Travel in the Management and Operation of Department of Defense Programs" (FPCD-77-84, Oct. 28, 1977); and, most recently, "Proposals for Improving the Management of Federal Travel" (FPCD-81-13, Dec. 24, 1980).

Our concern with agencies' failure to document the purpose of travel may be resolved when the Director, Office of Management and Budget, responds to our December 1980 recommendations and the recommendations of the Interagency Travel Management Improvement Project.

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As arranged with your office, unless you publicly announce the contents of this letter earlier, we will not distribute this report until 10 days after its issue date. At that time, we will send copies to interested parties and make copies available to others upon request.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Milton J. Aorolan".

Acting Comptroller General  
of the United States

Enclosure

## TRAVEL BY NONCAREER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

NOVEMBER 7, 1980 - JANUARY 20, 1981

	<u>Agriculture</u>	<u>Commerce</u>	<u>Energy</u>	<u>Health and Human Services</u>	<u>Housing and Urban Development</u>	<u>Interior</u>	<u>Labor</u>	<u>Total</u>
Number of trips								
Domestic (note a)	152	99	65	141	90	87	117	751
Foreign	<u>9</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>47</u>
Total	<u>161</u>	<u>108</u>	<u>76</u>	<u>143</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>88</u>	<u>127</u>	<u>798</u>
Number of travelers								
Domestic (note a)	56	52	35	53	42	37	46	321
Foreign trips	6	7	9	2	5	1	9	39
All trips (note b)	56	56	37	54	44	37	49	333
Cost of trips								
Domestic (note a)	\$ 85,912	\$38,727	\$33,938	\$60,908	\$34,759	\$45,653	\$55,765	\$355,662
Foreign	<u>19,005</u>	<u>16,474</u>	<u>16,292</u>	<u>5,365</u>	<u>10,916</u>	<u>368</u>	<u>29,756</u>	<u>98,176</u>
Total	<u>\$104,917</u>	<u>\$55,201</u>	<u>\$50,230</u>	<u>\$66,273</u>	<u>\$45,675</u>	<u>\$46,021</u>	<u>\$85,521</u>	<u>\$453,838</u>
								<u>Average</u>
Average cost of trips								
Domestic (note a)	\$ 565	\$ 391	\$ 522	\$ 432	\$ 386	\$ 525	\$ 477	\$ 474
Foreign	2,112	1,830	1,481	2,682	2,183	368	2,976	2,089
Average length of trips (days)								
Domestic (note a)	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4
Foreign	7	9	6	15	12	2	10	9

a/Domestic trips include trips to any State, territory, or possession, plus the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

b/Does not add because some travelers took more than one trip.

	<u>Agriculture</u>	<u>Commerce</u>	<u>Energy</u>	<u>Health and Human Services</u>	<u>Housing and Urban Development</u>	<u>Interior</u>	<u>Labor</u>	<u>Total</u>
Beginning dates for trips								
Nov. 7-13	33	23	13	21	12	10	16	128
Nov. 14-20	20	17	10	29	18	19	28	141
Nov. 21-27	8	9	5	11	3	3	14	53
Nov. 28-Dec. 4	30	22	16	20	20	14	18	140
Dec. 5-11	24	14	11	17	12	14	16	108
Dec. 12-18	12	6	6	11	4	10	8	57
Dec. 19-25	4	3	2	1	4	3	5	22
Dec. 26-Jan. 1	1	1	1	1	3	1	3	11
Jan. 2-8	15	5	8	10	7	9	9	63
Jan. 9-15	12	7	3	16	11	5	9	63
Jan. 16-20	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>12</u>
Total	<u>161</u>	<u>108</u>	<u>76</u>	<u>143</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>88</u>	<u>127</u>	<u>798</u>

	<u>Agriculture</u>	<u>Commerce</u>	<u>Energy</u>	<u>Health and Human Services</u>	<u>Housing and Urban Development</u>	<u>Interior</u>	<u>Labor</u>	<u>Total</u>
Purpose of travel (note a)								
A	39	27	13	46	35	13	16	189
B	35	7	8	19	16	9	10	104
C	8	9	11	2	5	2	8	45
D	7	14	2	12	3	6	3	47
E	20	4	21	15	9	1	7	77
F	4	11	9	4	1	1	1	31
G	1	0	0	4	1	1	0	7
H	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	4
I	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	4
J	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
K	22	30	0	23	4	40	68	187
Multiple purposes (note b)	<u>23</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>101</u>
Total	<u>161</u>	<u>108</u>	<u>76</u>	<u>143</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>88</u>	<u>127</u>	<u>798</u>

a/ Meaning of purpose codes.

- A - Meetings, conferences, seminars, award ceremonies, dedications, etc, with public interest groups and the public.
- B - Meetings, conferences, seminars, etc., with other personnel of the agency.
- C - Meetings, conferences, seminars, negotiating sessions, etc., with international organizations and foreign governments.
- D - Meeting with or briefing local, State, and Federal officials, boards, and commissions.
- E - Deliver a speech.
- F - Monitoring or inspecting field activities, including, visits with Government contractors.
- G - Public hearings, court appearances.
- H - Recruiting.
- I - Teach a training course.
- J - Take a training course.
- K - Unknown (official business).

b/Detail on multiple purposes.

	<u>Agriculture</u>	<u>Commerce</u>	<u>Energy</u>	<u>Health and Human Services</u>	<u>Housing and Urban Development</u>	<u>Interior</u>	<u>Labor</u>	<u>Total</u>
3 AB	1 AC	2 AB	1 ABF	3 AB	4 AB	1 AD	12 AB	
2 AC	1 AF	1 AC	2 AD	1 ABE	1 ABE	6 AE	2 ABE	
2 AD	1 EC	4 AE	3 AE	8 AE	2 AD	3 BE	1 ABF	
3 AE		1 AF	1 AEF	1 AF	1 ADE	2 EK	4 AC	
1 AF		1 BD	4 AF	6 BD	1 AE		7 AD	
1 BC		1 BF	1 BF	2 DF	1 AF		1 ADE	
3 BD		1 EF	2 DE		1 BE		25 AE	
1 BDE			1 DF		1 DE		1 AEF	
4 BF			2 EF		1 DEK		9 AF	
1 BFJ					1 EK		1 BC	
1 DE							10 BD	
1 EF							1 BDE	
							4 BE	
							6 BF	
							1 BFJ	
							4 DE	
							1 DEK	
							3 DF	
							1 EC	
							4 EF	
							3 EK	