

15952 Mr. Schwimer



DECISION

**THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES**

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20548

FILE: B-198824

[Claim for]

DATE: January 23, 1981

MATTER OF: Alex Perge - Reimbursement for travel expenses

DIGEST: An employee on official travel may not be reimbursed for expenses incurred because he locked a key in his hotel room. Regulations do not allow reimbursement since fee incurred was not in connection with the transaction of official business. The employee was at fault for locking the key in his room and the fee is in the nature of a fine or penalty incurred through negligence. Such fee would be personal to the employee and not payable by the Government.

This decision is in response to a request by an authorized certifying officer of the Department of Energy (DOE), concerning a claim of Mr. Alex Perge for reimbursement of a \$37.85 fee paid to a hotel as a penalty for locking his key in his hotel room while on temporary duty. For the following reasons, Mr. Perge may not be reimbursed his claimed amount.

Mr. Perge, an employee of DOE, was on official business in Vienna, Austria. Mr. Perge stayed at the Pension Suzanne. He locked his key in his hotel room on the day he was scheduled to return to the United States. The Pension Suzanne would not release him until he paid a fee of \$37.85 for locking the key in his room. Mr. Perge paid the fee and claimed reimbursement. He says the fee was necessary and incident to his travel since the hotel would not release him until the fee was paid. The DOE Travel Audit Section disallowed the claim on the basis that the fee was not essential to the transacting of official business.

We agree with DOE's contention. There is no specific statute or regulation allowing reimbursement for a room key fee. The Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) paragraph 1-9.1d (FPMR 101-7, May 1973),

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provides for reimbursement of approved miscellaneous expenses not enumerated within the regulations when "necessarily" incurred by the traveler in connection with the transaction of official business. However we do not believe that Mr. Perge's key fee was necessarily incurred in connection with official business. Mr. Perge was at fault for locking his key in his room, and the fee is in the nature of a fine or penalty incurred through negligence. Such fee would be personal to the employee and not payable by the Government.

Accordingly, there is no authority to reimburse Mr. Perge for the key fee. His claim is denied.

Milton J. Fowler

For The Comptroller General
of the United States