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*D. Ryz...*  
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**DECISION**



**THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL  
OF THE UNITED STATES  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20540**

**FILE:** B-190330

**DATE:** February 23, 1978

**MATTER OF:** Ramon V. Romero - Reimbursement of travel and relocation expenses

- DIGEST:**
1. Employee transferred from Washington, D.C., to San Francisco, California, was authorized travel expenses of househunting trip for spouse. Spouse, accompanied by dependent child, traveled to and from San Diego, California, to seek residence. Reimbursement therefor may not be allowed as travel expenses for househunting trip is authorized under para. 2-1.4a of Federal Travel Regulations only for travel to new duty station of employee.
  2. Employee was transferred from Washington, D.C., to San Francisco, California, and dependents and household goods were transported to San Diego, California. Under paras. 2-2.2a and 2-8.2d of Federal Travel Regulations reimbursement of transportation expenses may be allowed not to exceed constructive cost of transportation to new duty station, San Francisco. However, cost of shipping two pets is not allowable since para. 2-1.4h excludes pets as household goods and there is no authority to ship them at Government expense.

This matter involves a request for an advance decision from Ms. Marian L. Hinson, an authorized certifying officer of the United States Department of Commerce, as to whether Mr. Ramon V. Romero, an agency employee, may be reimbursed for certain relocation expenses which were incurred in connection with his transfer from Washington, D.C., to San Francisco, California, effective on or about October 1, 1973.

The record shows that incident to his transfer the Department of Commerce authorized reimbursement of travel and relocation expenses of Mr. Romero and his dependents. Included in Mr. Romero's travel orders was the authorization of a househunting trip for his wife. Mr. and Mrs. Romero decided that

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Mrs. Romero and their dependent children would establish a residence in San Diego and that he would reside in the San Francisco area.

During the period May 30 to June 1974, Mrs. Romero, accompanied by one of her children, performed round-trip air travel to the San Diego area in order to seek permanent residence quarters. The agency asks whether it may reimburse Mr. Romero for the transportation expenses of his wife and child and pay per diem for her incident to this househunting trip. The agency also questions whether it was proper to allow the transportation of Mr. Romero's family, his household goods, and two pets to San Diego.

Paragraph 2-4.1a of the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) (FPMR 101-7, May 1973) provides in pertinent part as follows:

"Payment of travel and transportation expenses of the employee and spouse traveling together, or the employee or spouse traveling individually in lieu of travel by the other or together, for one round trip between the localities of the old and new duty stations for the purpose of seeking residence quarters, may be authorized when circumstances warrant. \* \* \* Such a round trip by the spouse, when authorized in lieu of a round trip by or with the employee, may be accomplished at any time before relocation of the family to the new official station but not beyond the maximum time for beginning allowable travel and transportation. \* \* \*"

Paragraph 2-1.41 of the FTR defines official station or post of duty in pertinent part as follows:

"Official station or post of duty.  
The building or other place where the officer or employee regularly reports for duty. (For eligibility for change of station allowances, see 2-1.3 and 2-1.5b.) With respect to entitlement under these regulations relating to the residence and the household goods and personal

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Effects of an employee, official station or post of duty also means the residence or other quarters from which the employee regularly commutes to and from work. \* \* \*

Accordingly, since Mrs. Romero's househunting trip was to the San Diego area, from which Mr. Romero does not regularly commute to and from work, the employee may not receive reimbursement for the expenses of the househunting trip. Also, under the FTR, para. 2-4.1, reimbursement for the travel expenses of a househunting trip is only allowable for the employee and the employee's spouse.

Mr. Romero's wife and four dependent children traveled by commercial air carrier from Washington to San Diego incident to his transfer. In addition, Mr. Romero's household goods were transported under Government Bill of Lading from Washington to San Diego. The agency questions its reimbursement of such travel and transportation. In connection with travel expenses of an employee's dependents incident to transfer para. 2-2.2a of the FTR provides as follows:

"Transportation. Except as specifically provided in these regulations, allowable travel expenses for the employee's immediate family, including transportation, are governed by Chapter 1. Travel of the immediate family may begin at the employee's old official station or some other point, or partially at both, or may end at the new official station or some other place selected by the employee, or partially at both. However, the cost to the Government for transportation of the immediate family shall not exceed the allowable cost by the usually traveled route between the employee's old and new official station."

With regard to the transportation of household goods para. 2-8.2d of the FTR provides as follows:

"Origin and destination. Cost of transportation of household goods may be paid by the Government whether the shipment

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originates at the employee's last official station or place of residence or at some other point, or if part of the shipment originates at the last official station and the remainder at one or more other points. Similarly, these expenses are allowable whether the point of destination is the new official station or some other point selected by the employee, or if the destination for part of the property is the new official station and the remainder is shipped to one or more other points. However, the total amount which may be paid or reimbursed by the Government shall not exceed the cost of transporting the property in one lot by the most economical route from the last official station of the transferring employee (or the place of actual residence of the new appointee at time of appointment) to the new official station. In connection with return from overseas for separation see 2-1.5g(4). No property acquired by the employee en route between old and new official stations shall be eligible for transportation under this part."

Accordingly, reimbursement of the expenses of transporting Mr. Romero's family and household goods may not exceed the constructive cost of transportation from Washington to San Francisco, the employee's new duty station.

The agency's final question concerns whether Mr. Romero may be reimbursed for the transportation of two pets as baggage. There is no authority under the FTR which would provide authority for the payment for the transportation of household pets and para. 2-1.4h of the FTR specifically excludes pets as household goods. Therefore, reimbursement may not be allowed for the transportation cost of Mr. Romero's pets.

The certifying officer should take appropriate action in accordance with the above.

*R. G. K. K.*  
Deputy Comptroller General  
of the United States