



UNITED STATES
CIVILIAN BOARD OF CONTRACT APPEALS

March 10, 2008

CBCA 972-TRAV

In the Matter of DEBORAH E. KENNEY

Deborah E. Kenney, California, MD, Claimant.

Judy Hughes, Standards and Compliance, Finance Mission Area-Travel Pay, Defense Finance and Accounting Service, Columbus Center, Columbus, OH, appearing for Department of Defense.

STEEL, Board Judge.

Claimant, Deborah E. Kenney, requests reimbursement in the amount of \$90 for cash withdrawal fees charged by her bank to her personal credit card prior to her travel to a temporary duty assignment (TDY) in Cotonou, Benin, in November 2006, as well as two \$2 automated teller machine (ATM) fees charged to her personal credit card while she was on travel.

Background

Ms. Kenney is a civilian employee of the Department of Defense and is the holder of a government-sponsored, contractor-issued charge card. On October 30, 2006, Ms. Kenney was informed that she would be traveling for an initial conference planning meeting to Cotonou, Benin, between November 25 and December 8, 2006. She requested approval to travel and was issued a travel authorization for the Benin trip on November 7, 2006.

As required by Department of Defense (DoD) Financial Management Regulation (DoD FMR) 7000.14-R, vol. 9, ch. 3 (Sept. 2000) ¶ 030101, Ms. Kenney's travel authorization stated, *inter alia* (capitalizations and errors in the original):

GOVERNMENT TRAVEL CARDHOLDERS SHALL OBTAIN CASH, AS AUTHORIZED, FROM AN ATM [Automated Teller Machine] (RATHER THAN FROM PSD [Personnel Support Detachment]). “The travel and transportation Reform Act of 1998 stipulates that the government-sponsored, contractor- issued travel card shall be used by all U.S. Government personnel (Civilian and Military) to pay for costs incident to official business travel unless specifically exempted by authority of the Administrator of General Services or the head of the agency.”

On November 20, 2006, Ms. Kenney was advised by the conference coordinator that she would need to carry cash in new colored bills and that credit cards should not be used in Benin since credit card numbers are regularly stolen there. Ms. Kenney had a credit limit of \$5000 on her government charge card and a balance of \$4448.93, leaving her with available credit of \$501.07. She did not make a payment on her government card and was unsuccessful in securing an increase in her credit limit prior to departure for Benin. On November 22, Ms. Kenney secured a cash advance in the amount of \$3000 from her personal credit card. She was charged a \$90 transaction fee by her bank for that extension of credit.

Ms. Kenney is requesting reimbursement of the \$90 transaction fee. She also asks for reimbursement of \$2 fees for each of two ATM withdrawals from her personal card to pay for plastic wrapping of her luggage in Johannesburg, South Africa, while on route to Benin. The Government has agreed to pay the cost of the wrapping.

Discussion

Ms. Kenney’s November 7, 2006, Benin travel authorization clearly stated that she was to use her government-issued travel card to obtain cash for her trip from an ATM. The Joint Travel Regulations (JTR) state that travelers are authorized reimbursement for certain necessary travel and transportation-related miscellaneous expenses incurred on official business. But civilian personal charge card administrative expenses are *not* reimbursable. JTR app. G, 3b. (May 1, 2006).

The Government encourages government travelers to use government-issued charge cards by reimbursing administrative fees only when government-sponsored cards are used. In fact, use of the government-sponsored, contractor-issued travel charge card is mandatory for all DoD personnel for expenses arising from official government travel, unless otherwise exempted. DoD FMR § 0301 (Sept. 2000). According to the DoD FMR, the card is used to “improve DoD cash management and reduce DoD and traveler administrative workloads” *Id.* ¶ 030102. The Government also benefits from this policy because the Government receives rebates based upon usage from the charge card company which issues the

Government's travel cards. *Daniel J. Granstrom*, GSBICA 13682-TRAV, 97-1 BCA ¶ 28,711 (1996); DoD FMR ¶ 030102 .

Ms. Kenney could have sought amendment to her travel authorization so as to exempt her from the mandatory requirements that she use the government charge card and to authorize her to secure cash before she traveled from her personal credit card. DoD FMR § 0303. The \$90 might then have been a reimbursable transaction fee. However, she did not request an amendment of her travel authorization. Instead, Ms. Kenney withdrew money on her personal credit card. She lacked authorization for reimbursement of the fees associated with use of her personal credit card. Without authority, the Government may not reimburse Ms. Kenney for these fees.

Likewise, Ms. Kenney did not use her government charge card for the ATM withdrawals in Johannesburg, and instead used her personal credit card. Since ATM fees on personal cards are not reimbursable to civilian employees, her claim for reimbursement of the \$4 in ATM fees is denied.

The Government properly denied Ms. Kenney's claim for reimbursement of additional travel expenses.

CANDIDA S. STEEL
Board Judge