

DIGEST - L-CF

DECISION



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

FILE: B-195787

DATE: June 11, 1980

MATTER OF: Peter Cardoza, Jr.

DIGEST: Employee may be reimbursed for house hunting trip expenses even though he did not return to former station as house hunting trip was accomplished in the interest of the Government after arrival at his new duty station location but before employee was scheduled to report to work. Further, expenses may be reimbursed for the allowable 6 calendar days.

R. A. Hicks, an authorized certifying officer of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, requests an advance decision on the propriety of paying the reclaim of Mr. Peter Cardoza, Jr., for expenses incurred during a house hunting trip in connection with a permanent change of station from Huntington Beach, California, to Augusta, Maine. Mr. Cardoza's original claim was disallowed based upon the certifying officer's view that he had reported to his new official station prior to completing his house hunting. He may be reimbursed for a maximum of 6 calendar days' expenses incurred.

The record shows that Mr. Cardoza was transferred on October 30, 1977. Prior to reporting to his new duty station he reported to the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glynco, Georgia, for about 4 months of special training. Upon completion of the training, he was directed to return to his former duty station in California (which he did on February 18, 1978) and then to proceed to his new duty station at Augusta, Maine. His travel authorization included house hunting expenses and he was informed that he would be allowed to perform his house hunting upon arrival at his new duty station location. He departed his old duty station February 20, 1978, and arrived at his destination March 1, 1978. He immediately took 6 days to seek a residence.

The submission indicates that since the house hunting occurred after Mr. Cardoza arrived in the area of the duty station, but prior to his reporting to work, payment of house hunting expenses might now be made. However, since he would have been entitled to such expenses for no more than 6 days,

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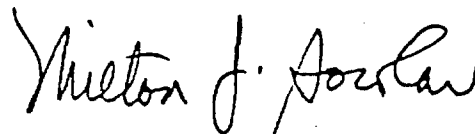
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including traveltime, if he had completed his house hunting prior to moving to his new duty station, the allowance of the full 6 days after arrival from California where no additional travel is involved is questioned.

In B-165825, January 29, 1969, we allowed payment for the expenses of a house hunting trip where the employee remained at his new duty station. In that decision we pointed out that although the regulations authorize round-trip travel for an employee and his wife to seek permanent quarters, the regulations also contain guidelines to eliminate unnecessary trips. In the instant case, as in B-165825, the house hunting trip and the reporting date were so close together that it was in the interest of the Government for the employee to have remained at his new duty station instead of creating unnecessary travel expenses by returning to his former station. Cf. B-183908, November 14, 1975.

Expenses of a house hunting trip are authorized "for one round trip between the localities of the old and new duty stations. * * *" Paragraph 2-4.1a of the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR). The maximum number of calendar days for the trip is 6 under paragraph 2-4.2 of the FTR. Since the employee's travel in this case was performed incident to his change of station, no travel for house hunting was required. As stated above this does not prevent the employee from being reimbursed the costs of house hunting. We find no indication in the applicable regulations or in prior decisions which would require a reduction in time allowed for house hunting based upon the amount of time consumed in travel. Accordingly, Mr. Cardoza may be paid the allowances for the full 6 calendar days.

The voucher is returned and may be certified for payment, if otherwise correct.



For The Comptroller General
of the United States