

Board of Contract Appeals

General Services Administration
Washington, D.C. 20405

April 14, 2006

GSBCA 16827-RELO

In the Matter of DAVID J. MITCHELL

David J. Mitchell, APO Area Europe, Claimant.

MSgt. J. M. Ogden, Command Travel Manager, Department of the Air Force, Headquarters United States Air Forces in Europe, APO Area Europe, appearing for Department of the Air Force.

PARKER, Board Judge.

Background

When David J. Mitchell was transferred in July 2004 by the Department of the Air Force from Colorado to the United Kingdom (UK), his family -- including the family dog -- came with him. To comply with the UK's requirements for bringing pets into the country, Mr. Mitchell incurred a number of expenses. The expenses, totaling \$906.89, included those for blood tests, insertion of an identification microchip, an export certificate, "UK pet scheme" costs charged by the airline to comply with UK guidelines, a health certificate, ground transportation to the new residence, express mailing of the export certificate, and a pet shipping container.

Mr. Mitchell's travel voucher included the above-listed expenses as itemized miscellaneous expenses. The Air Force reimbursed Mr. Mitchell a total of \$1537.41 for itemized miscellaneous expenses, but that amount did not include the pet-related expenses, which the Air Force considered to be unallowable. Mr. Mitchell disagrees with the Air Force's determination and has asked the Board to review it.

Discussion

An employee who is transferred in the interest of the Government is entitled to reimbursement for certain miscellaneous expenses. 5 U.S.C. § 5724(f) (2000). This entitlement is implemented by part 302-16 of the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR). The Joint Travel Regulations (JTR), which implement and supplement the FTR for civilian employees of the Department of Defense, also provide for payment of a miscellaneous expenses allowance in connection with an authorized permanent change of station. The purpose of the miscellaneous expenses allowance is to defray various contingent costs associated with discontinuing a residence at one location and establishing a residence at a new location. 41 CFR 302-16.2 (2004); JTR C9000. The types of costs covered include such items as fees for disconnecting and connecting appliances; cutting and fitting rugs moved from one residence to another; unrefunded utility fees or deposits; forfeiture losses on medical, dental, and other non-transferrable contracts; and costs of automobile registration and driver's license. 41 CFR 302-16.1; JTR C9000. A transferring employee with an immediate family is automatically entitled to the lesser of \$1000 or two weeks' basic pay. If additional amounts are justified, miscellaneous expenses may be reimbursed up to a maximum of two weeks' basic pay, not to exceed the maximum rate payable for a position at GS-13 of the General Schedule. 5 U.S.C. § 5724(f)(1), (2); 41 CFR 302-16.103; JTR C9004; *Jacques E. Moss*, GSBCA 16150-RELO, 03-2 BCA ¶ 32,392; *Troy W. Cavenee*, GSBCA 15635-RELO, 02-1 BCA ¶ 31,683; *Samuel G. Baker*, GSBCA 15408-RELO, 01-1 BCA ¶ 31,276; *John McAveney*, GSBCA 15202-RELO, 00-1 BCA ¶ 30,818.

With regard to pets, the FTR allows reimbursement, as miscellaneous expenses, for the following:

Only costs associated with dogs, cats and other house pets are included. . . . Costs are limited to transportation and handling costs, required to meet the more stringent rules of air carriers, not included are inoculations, examinations, boarding quarantine or other costs in the moving process.

41 CFR 302-16.1(b). The Air Force correctly applied the FTR in denying reimbursement for the claimed costs. All of the costs, including the "UK pet scheme" costs paid to the airline, relate to special health and safety requirements for bringing a pet into the UK, rather than transportation and handling costs required to meet more stringent rules of air carriers. Although certainly necessary for a transferred employee who wants to bring a pet along to a new duty station in the UK, these costs are by regulation to be borne by the transferee, and not reimbursable as miscellaneous expenses.

Accordingly, the claim is denied.

ROBERT W. PARKER
Board Judge