

**Board of Contract Appeals**  
General Services Administration  
Washington, D.C. 20405

---

May 13, 2002

---

GSBCA 15675-TRAV

In the Matter of ANNA MARIA ABRIGO

Anna Maria Abrigo, Orange Park, FL, Claimant.

Charles N. Stockwell, Vendor Pay Branch, Defense Finance and Accounting Service, Denver, CO, appearing for Defense Finance and Accounting Service.

**WILLIAMS**, Board Judge.

A civilian employee of the Department of Defense (DoD) who purchases an airline ticket for official travel commercially rather than from a military commercial travel office (CTO) is entitled to reimbursement up to the amount of a ticket available through the CTO.

Background

Claimant, Anna Maria Abrigo, a physician with the Department of the Air Force, attended a medical conference between April 20 and April 27, 2001, in San Francisco, California. Claimant is requesting reimbursement for transportation expenses for procuring her own travel from Robins Air Force Base (AFB), Georgia, to San Francisco. Robins AFB has a commercial travel office (CTO) which offers a contract air carrier ticket between Robins AFB and San Francisco for a roundtrip air fare of \$520. Dr. Abrigo purchased a roundtrip ticket for \$422, going outside the CTO. Dr. Abrigo made her travel reservations prior to her receipt of travel orders to ensure that she arrived at the conference in time to attend a basic curriculum segment which was mandatory for her proficiency in occupational medicine. Claimant's travel orders were issued on April 12, 2001, and her departure date was April 19.

Although claimant's air fare was lower than that available through the CTO, the agency denied reimbursement in any amount because Dr. Abrigo did not purchase her ticket through the CTO.

Discussion

The agency bases its refusal to reimburse claimant for these tickets upon section C2207-A.1 (Feb. 1, 2001) of the Joint Travel Regulations (JTR) of DoD. Pursuant to this section as it read when claimant traveled, employees were required to make travel arrangements using a CTO, an in-house travel office, or a General Services Administration travel management center. This provision contained some exceptions to the general rule, but none applied here.<sup>1</sup> As a civilian employee of DoD, Dr. Abrigo is subject to the JTR.

As the Board has consistently noted, the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR), which also applies to civilian DoD employees, provides the guidance that we need to resolve a claim such as that brought here. D. Gregory Arnold, GSBCA 15692-TRAV (Jan. 18, 2002); Richard C. Mutzman, GSBCA 15533-TRAV, 01-2 BCA ¶ 31,538. The FTR does not make an employee liable for the entire cost of an airline ticket if he or she purchases the ticket from an unauthorized travel agent or travel management center. Instead, the FTR limits the employee's liability to "any additional costs" that result. 41 CFR 301-50.2 (2000). The employee, therefore, is entitled to reimbursement but not beyond what would have been paid had the ticket been purchased pursuant to regulation. Vivian E. Nichols, GSBCA 15493-TRAV, 01-1 BCA ¶ 31,366; Doris N. Lee, GSBCA 15451-TRAV, 01-1 BCA ¶ 31,279.

Because there are no additional costs associated with the ticket purchased by Dr. Abrigo, she should be reimbursed the entire amount paid for the ticket. Mutzman; Manuel F. Casiano, GSBCA 15304-TRAV, 00-2 BCA ¶ 31,004.

---

MARY ELLEN COSTER WILLIAMS  
Board Judge

---

<sup>1</sup>This regulation was subsequently changed to express a preference for using a CTO and to permit reimbursement for tickets purchased commercially up to the amount of a ticket purchased through the CTO.