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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D C 20548

CIVIL DIVISION

MAY 25 1970

AGC 60009

Dear Mr. Werts

We have made a review of air travel performed by employees of the Washington, D.C. headquarters office of the Department of Labor (DOL) for the period January 1 through June 30, 1969. DOL regulations require that the use of first-class air travel either be authorized in advance or be adequately justified in writing on the travel voucher. We found, however, many instances where the use of first-class air travel had not been authorized in advance or justified on the travel vouchers.

Section 3.6c(1) of the Standardized Government Travel Regulations states that persons who use commercial air carriers for transportation on official business should use less-than-first-class accommodations instead of those designated first-class, with due regard to efficient conduct of Government business and the travelers' convenience, safety, and comfort. Paragraph 7-123 of DOL's Manual of Administration states that air travel authorizations are to specify "lower-than-first-class" unless the necessity for first-class accommodations has been established in writing to the authorizing officials, and if unforeseen circumstances necessitate the use of first-class accommodations not previously authorized, written justification for using first-class must be made on the travel reimbursement voucher and specifically approved by the authorizing official.

As the basis for our test, we selected the names of all employees of the Washington, D.C. office whose travel by first-class air accommodations was paid in April 1969 (40 employees). We then examined all the vouchers involving air travel by these employees for the period January 1 through June 30, 1969. Of the 312 trips which were made during this period by the 40 employees, 144 were by first-class air accommodations. The results of our test are tabulated below.

	<u>Trips</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Total via first-class air accommodations	144	\$19,378
Justification shown on travel authorization and/or voucher	<u>25</u>	<u>3,421</u>
Justification not shown on travel authorization and/or voucher	<u>119</u>	15,957
Cost of less-than-first-class air accommodations		<u>13,855</u>
Extra cost of first-class air accommodations		<u>\$ 2,102</u>

7/1/70 092744

As shown above, neither the travel authorizations nor the vouchers for the 119 trips, or 83 percent of the total trips via first-class, had written justification for using first-class air accommodations or indicated specific approval by an authorizing official. In our opinion, our test indicates a need for strengthening administrative procedures to ensure compliance with the departmental regulations previously cited.

Accordingly, we recommend that the Department reemphasize to its officials and other employees the need for compliance with the departmental regulations concerning the justification and approval of first-class air accommodations.

We wish to acknowledge the cooperation given to our representatives during our review and would appreciate being advised of any action you propose to take on the matter discussed in this report.

We are furnishing copies of this letter to the Associate Assistant Secretary of Labor for Administration and to the Chief, Division of Internal Audit, Office of Program Review and Audit.

Sincerely yours,

Henry Eschwege
Henry Eschwege
Associate Director

The Honorable Leo R. Werts
Assistant Secretary for Administration
Department of Labor

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