



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

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RELEASED

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Accounting Office  
by the Chief of Office

DECEMBER 16, 1981

B-205308

The Honorable Mark O. Hatfield  
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate



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The Honorable William Proxmire  
Ranking Minority Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate

Subject: Federal Employees' Use Of Annual Leave While  
On Official Travel (FPCD-82-7)

On June 10, 1981, you asked us to review the extent to which Federal employees take annual leave while away from their duty station on official travel. Representatives of your office later modified this request to exclude travel for relocation and entitlement purposes from the study. Federal employees frequently have to take annual leave for personal reasons when moving their residences from one location to another, and entitlement travel includes trips for home leave for employees stationed overseas. In October 1981, we briefed representatives of your office on the results of our study.

Our objectives were to (1) determine how often Federal employees took annual leave while on official travel and (2) gather descriptive information on trips during which employees used annual leave. As agreed with representatives of your office, we used information available at the General Services Administration (GSA) in Washington, D.C. Under Public Law 96-346, GSA is required to report to the Congress on the use of travel funds by each agency which spends more than \$5 million on the transportation of persons during fiscal years 1979, 1980, and 1981. For its report on fiscal year 1980, GSA requested agencies, which spent more than the \$5 million, to submit a random sample of 200 vouchers. We used these samples because (1) they were readily available, (2) employees are required to record the use of annual leave on their travel vouchers, and (3) the samples allowed us to project our findings to almost all Government travel during fiscal year 1980.

GSA received samples from 26 Government departments and agencies. While each agency submitted about 200 vouchers, the vouchers often represented more than one trip. GSA did not

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use the Department of State sample because it did not contain enough vouchers for accurate projection. We also excluded the Department of State from our computations. GSA estimated that the other 25 agencies spent about \$3 billion in fiscal year 1980 for about 14.3 million trips. Eliminating trips for relocation and entitlement reduced this number to about 12 million trips during that year.

We found 96 instances in the voucher sample of 10,761 trips where employees took 1 or more days of annual leave while in travel status. Thus, about 1 percent of the trips involved leave. Because our sample was developed separately by agency, we weighted the data for each agency. On a weighted basis, we estimate that employees took leave on about 135,000 of the 12 million trips. At the 95-percent confidence level, the approximate sampling error of this estimate is plus or minus 0.28 percent.

The average trip on which an employee took annual leave in the sample included 9.5 official business days <sup>1/</sup> and 3.4 days of annual leave. The number of official business days and the amount of annual leave used are shown, by agency, in enclosure I. The 96 trips are categorized by purpose in enclosure II.

As requested by representatives of your office, we are bringing an additional matter to your attention. We noted that the Census Bureau may have authorized an excessive per diem rate for some of its employees. We found five instances where Census Bureau personnel were authorized a flat per diem rate of \$35 for travel of 9 to 10 months' duration. During the 1 month covered by their vouchers in the sample, these personnel obtained lodgings for \$2.67 to \$10.67 per day and were paid \$35 per day for per diem. Under normal per diem rules in effect at that time, travelers' per diem would be their average cost of lodgings plus \$16, not to exceed \$35 per day, or their actual and necessary costs.

We sent copies of these vouchers to the Inspector General at the Department of Commerce. We suggested to him that this practice may have been widespread in the Census Bureau and that he may wish to review Census' actions. The Inspector General informed us that his office plans to pursue this matter during December 1981.

As arranged with your office, we did not take the additional time needed to obtain agency comments on the matters discussed in this report.

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<sup>1/</sup>Official business days are normal workdays; that is, exclusive of weekends, holidays, and annual and sick leave days.

As also arranged with your office, unless you publicly announce the contents of this letter earlier, we will not further distribute this report until 7 days after its issue date. At that time, we will send copies to interested parties and make copies available to others upon request.



Comptroller General  
of the United States

Enclosures - 2

NUMBER OF TRIPS, OFFICIAL BUSINESS DAYS,  
AND DAYS OF ANNUAL LEAVE USED

<u>Department/agency</u>	<u>Number of trips involving annual leave</u>	<u>Total official business days</u>	<u>Total days of leave used</u>
<b>Departments</b>			
Agriculture	5	31	36
Commerce	6	36	13
Defense	2	8	5
Education	7	47	16
Energy	-0-	-0-	-0-
Health and Human Services	10	41	25
Housing and Urban Development	1	5	4
Interior	2	18	2
Justice	4	21	22
Labor	1	3	2
Transportation	11	235	46
Treasury	2	7	6
<b>Other agencies</b>			
ACTION	2	73	3
Agency for International Development	9	207	39
Environmental Protection Agency.	4	16	4
Federal Home Loan Bank Board	-0-	-0-	-0-
General Accounting Office	2	14	3
General Services Administration	3	13	12
International Communications Agency	6	23	39
National Aeronautics and Space Admin.	4	38	14
Nuclear Regulatory Commission	4	20	5
Office of Personnel Management	1	14	1
Small Business Administration	4	13	14
Tennessee Valley Authority	2	16	5
Veterans Administration	4	17	9
<b>Total</b>	<u>96</u>	<u>916</u>	<u>325</u>
<b>Average</b>		9.5	3.4

PURPOSE OF TRIPS INVOLVING ANNUAL LEAVE

<u>Purpose of trip</u>	<u>Number of trips involving annual leave</u>	<u>All trips included in voucher sample</u>
Site visit	41	7,942
Training	20	634
Information meeting	11	760
Speech or presentation	10	180
Conference attendance	9	497
Other travel	4	594
Special mission travel	<u>1</u>	<u>154</u>
Total	<u>96</u>	<u>10,761</u>