



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

U.S. Department of Energy

# SPECIAL REPORT

DOE-OIG-18-31

May 2018

**NON-COMMERCIAL TRAVEL BY NON-CAREER DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY EMPLOYEES**



**Department of Energy**  
Washington, DC 20585

May 23, 2018

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

*April Stephenson*

FROM: April G. Stephenson  
Principal Deputy Inspector General

SUBJECT: INFORMATION: Special Report on “Non-Commercial Travel by Non-Career Department of Energy Employees”

BACKGROUND

On October 12, 2017, the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce requested that the Office of Inspector General review the Department of Energy’s compliance with policies and procedures related to the use of non-commercial travel by the Secretary of Energy and other non-career officials since January 2017. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular No. A-126, *Improving the Management and Use of Government Aircraft*, and Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) Part 301-70, *Internal Policy and Procedure Requirements*, prescribe the requirements for authorizing the use of and travel on Government aircraft. Per OMB guidance, Government aircraft is defined as any aircraft owned, leased, chartered, or rented/operated by an executive agency and is used in this report to describe non-commercial travel. Generally, travel on Government aircraft is permitted for official purposes when commercial airline service is not reasonably available or the cost of using Government aircraft is less than the cost of commercial airline service. The use of Government aircraft is also permitted in limited circumstances to meet mission requirements or when required because of bona fide communications needs, security needs of the agency, or exceptional scheduling requirements.

In response to the Congressional request, we conducted an inspection to assess the effectiveness of the Department’s processes, procedures, and controls related to non-commercial travel by non-career Federal employees. While the Congressional request only asked us to review trips taken since January 2017, our inspection focused on the use of Government aircraft by non-career Federal officials that was sponsored by the Department from October 1, 2015, through December 6, 2017, to assess whether processes had changed with the new administration. Our responses to the questions posed in the Congressional request for trips taken since January 2017 are included in Attachment 3.

RESULTS OF INSPECTION

During our review, nothing came to our attention to indicate that non-career Federal employees within the Department had inappropriately taken trips on Government aircraft. According to

Department records, non-career Federal officials took nine trips on Government aircraft from October 1, 2015, through December 6, 2017, at an estimated total cost of \$178,000 (see Attachment 2). We found that all nine trips were for official Government business and were approved by the Department's Office of the General Counsel, as required by OMB Circular No. A-126. Non-career Federal Department officials also traveled on Government aircraft that was sponsored by other agencies and was not reimbursed by the Department. However, the Department was not required to approve this travel and thus did not track it, as the travel should have been approved and tracked by the sponsoring agency. As a result, while we were aware of some of these trips, we were unable to definitively identify all travel sponsored by other agencies.

Although we did not identify any inappropriate trips on Government aircraft, we identified opportunities to improve the Department's processes, procedures, and controls related to the use of Government aircraft. In particular, we determined that development and implementation of formal policies and procedures for justifying and approving the use of Government aircraft could enhance the internal controls over non-career Federal employee travel. In addition, we noted that improvements were needed related to maintaining supporting documentation pertaining to use of Government aircraft. While we found no indication that the trips reviewed were inappropriate, implementing the suggestions in our report will strengthen the process for approving and using Government aircraft.

## **Policies and Procedures**

The Department had not developed formal policies and procedures to justify and approve the use of Government aircraft. While OMB Circular No. A-126 and the FTR contained general guidelines on the justification requirements for the use of Government aircraft, the Department had not established internal policies and procedures to implement those requirements. For example, the Department had not established written standards for required use travel in accordance with FTR Part 301-70.803, *How must we authorize travel on a Government aircraft?*. OMB Circular No. A-126 allows the use of Government aircraft for required use travel – a situation that exists due to bona fide communications, security needs of the agency, or exceptional scheduling requirements. Contrary to FTR requirements, the Department had not developed written standards for determining the special circumstances under which it will require travelers to use Government aircraft. For all nine trips taken during the period of our review, officials cited required use exceptional scheduling requirements as the primary justification. We verified that all nine trips were approved by the Department's Office of the General Counsel as meeting the requirements for required use travel. However, without written standards to define what constitutes an exceptional scheduling requirement, another reviewing official could interpret the requirements differently in the future. We also noted that the lack of written standards may provide an opportunity for abuse of the use of Government aircraft in the future.

In addition, the Department had not established a policy that required the preparation of cost comparisons. Officials had not prepared cost comparisons for eight of the nine trips, as required by FTR Part 301-70.802, *Must we ensure that travel on Government aircraft is the most cost-effective alternative?*. All nine trips that we reviewed were justified on the basis of exceptional

scheduling requirements, not cost-effectiveness. However, the FTR still requires the designated travel approving official to compare the costs of all travel alternatives including scheduled commercial airline service, Federal aircraft, commercially chartered aircraft, and other available modes of transportation, as applicable. In addition, FTR Part 301-70.806, *What documentation must we retain for travel on Government aircraft?*, requires an agency to retain cost comparisons for 2 years. For seven of the nine trips, the Department could only provide price quotations for Federal aircraft – only one component of a valid cost comparison. The Department only prepared a formal cost comparison to ensure that the most cost-effective alternative was used for one trip. For another trip, the Department did not prepare a formal cost comparison but did obtain quotes for both Federal and charter aircraft. In that case, the Department used the less-expensive charter aircraft, saving approximately \$8,000 by not using a Federal aircraft. While we determined that there was a reasonable basis for the use of Government aircraft because of exceptional scheduling requirements for all nine trips reviewed, we could not verify whether the most cost-effective mode of transportation was used in all cases because of a lack of cost comparisons.

Without implementing internal policies and procedures, personnel involved in the process were unaware of many of the requirements in OMB Circular No. A-126 and the FTR. Specifically, scheduling personnel involved in determining whether commercial airline service could meet a travel requirement were not familiar with regulations and could not explain the requirement for required use travel. In addition, Department personnel that we spoke with were unaware that the Department was required to have written standards for required use travel.

To ensure that travel on Government aircraft is properly justified and that the most cost-effective mode of transportation is used, we suggest that the Director, Office of Management, in conjunction with the Department's Office of the General Counsel:

1. Consider implementing formal policies and procedures on relevant requirements, to include developing written standards for required use travel and requiring the use of cost comparisons.

## **Documentation**

The Department had not maintained supporting documentation to demonstrate that scheduled commercial airline service could not meet the exceptional scheduling requirements of non-career Federal travelers. OMB Circular No. A-126 requires that documentation supporting the use of Government aircraft, including evidence that provisions of the Circular have been satisfied, be retained for 2 years. While the approval memoranda for all nine trips reviewed cited exceptional scheduling requirements, in most cases, there was little context related to the scheduling requirements and circumstances. The approval documentation contained itineraries for the trips but did not always include schedules for before or after the trip or explain why commercial airline service could not meet the travel requirement. The Department also did not maintain records for any of the trips showing that commercial airline service was not available. As a result, we could not verify whether controls over the use of Government aircraft were fully effective. However, through an examination of supplemental documentation, including traveler schedules and itineraries for all nine trips, we were able to determine that it would have been

difficult for commercial airline service to accommodate the schedules. We noted that, in the instances identified during our review, supporting documentation is particularly important because the justification requirements rely on the circumstances that existed at that time and are not easily verified without supporting documentation.

To improve the Department's process for documenting non-commercial travel, we suggest that the Director, Office of Management, in conjunction with the Department's Office of the General Counsel:

2. Ensure that documentation supporting the use of Government aircraft, including evidence that appropriate requirements have been followed, is developed and retained for 2 years, in accordance with OMB Circular No. A-126.

## CONCLUSION

Given the fiscal constraints across the Federal Government, it is important that the Department ensures that all travel is justified and costs the taxpayers no more than necessary. Although we did not find any instances where inappropriate trips were taken on Government aircraft, the suggested improvements should reduce the risk that Government aircraft is authorized in the future without appropriate justification and help ensure transparency in the Department's travel processes. Management commented that it recently prepared a standard operating procedure to improve the processes on the use of non-commercial travel in response to our review. Management comments are included in Attachment 4.

## Attachments

cc: Deputy Secretary  
Chief of Staff  
Acting General Counsel  
Director, Office of Management

## **OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY**

### **OBJECTIVE**

We performed this inspection to assess the effectiveness of the Department of Energy's processes, procedures, and controls related to non-commercial travel by non-career Federal employees.

### **SCOPE**

The inspection was conducted from October 2017 to May 2018 at Department Headquarters in Washington, DC and Germantown, Maryland. The inspection scope included a review of the processes, procedures, and controls related to the approval of non-career Federal official travel on Department-sponsored Government aircraft from October 1, 2015, through December 6, 2017. Consistent with Office of Management and Budget guidance, Government aircraft is defined as any aircraft owned, leased, chartered, or rented/operated by an executive agency and is used in this report to describe non-commercial travel. This inspection was conducted under Office of Inspector General project number S18IS003.

### **METHODOLOGY**

To accomplish our inspection objective, we:

- Reviewed applicable Federal and Department regulations, policies, and procedures related to travel on Government aircraft;
- Interviewed Department personnel involved in the processes;
- Performed a walkthrough of the Office of the General Counsel review process;
- Reviewed approval memoranda, cost estimates, traveler schedules, and travel authorizations for trips taken on Government aircraft; and
- Reviewed travel vouchers and supporting documentation for non-career Federal employee travel from October 1, 2015, through December 6, 2017.

We conducted this performance-based inspection in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation, dated January 2012. Those standards require that we plan and perform the inspection to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our conclusions and observations based on our inspection objective. Because the Department did not develop and maintain adequate supporting documentation, we were unable to fully accomplish our inspection objective. However, we believe the limited evidence obtained provided a reasonable basis for our conclusions and observations based on our inspection objective. Accordingly, the inspection included an assessment of controls and compliance with laws and regulations to the extent necessary to satisfy the inspection objective. We also assessed the

Department's implementation of the *GPRA Modernization Act of 2010* and found that it had not established performance measures specifically related to the use of Government aircraft. Because our review was limited, it may not necessarily have disclosed all internal control deficiencies that may have existed at the time of our inspection. Finally, we conducted an assessment of computer-processed data relevant to our inspection objective by comparing the data to source documents. We determined the data to be reliable for our purposes.

Management waived an exit conference on May 21, 2018.

## TRAVEL ON GOVERNMENT AIRCRAFT

<b>Trip Date (Primary Traveler)</b>	<b>Leg</b>	<b>Origin</b>	<b>Destination</b>	<b>All Travelers</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>Cost per Traveler per Leg<sup>1</sup></b>
February 9, 2016  (Deputy Secretary Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall)	1	Portland, OR	Electric City, WA	9 DOE Federal travelers	\$3,209	\$178
	2	Electric City, WA	Seattle, WA	9 DOE Federal travelers		
March 8, 2016  (Deputy Secretary Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall)	1	Augusta, GA	Meridian, MS	3 DOE Federal travelers, 3 DOE contractors	\$3,093	\$516 per DOE Federal traveler. <sup>2</sup>
	2	Meridian, MS	Atlanta, GA	3 DOE Federal travelers, 4 DOE contractors		
August 16, 2016  (Secretary Moniz)	1	Seattle, WA	Richland, WA	6 DOE Federal travelers, 1 non- Federal traveler	\$3,550	\$507
January 7-9, 2017  (Secretary Moniz)	1	Washington, DC	Mexico City, Mexico	10 DOE Federal travelers	\$75,461	\$3,018
	2	Mexico City, Mexico	Carlsbad, NM (via Midland, TX)	5 DOE Federal travelers		
	3	Carlsbad, NM	Washington, DC	7 DOE Federal travelers, 3 members of Congress		
May 11, 2017  (Secretary Perry)	1	Santa Fe, NM	Carlsbad, NM	5 DOE Federal travelers	\$4,181	\$836
May 17, 2017  (Secretary Perry)	1	Washington, DC	Olathe, KS	6 DOE Federal travelers	\$35,000	\$2,500
	2	Olathe, KS	Washington, DC	8 DOE Federal travelers		
August 14-16, 2017  (Secretary Perry)	1	Seattle, WA	Richland, WA	6 DOE Federal travelers	\$3,861	\$351
	2	Richland, WA	Seattle, WA	5 DOE Federal travelers		
September 28, 2017  (Secretary Perry)	1	Dulles, VA	Hazleton, PA	5 DOE Federal travelers	\$10,070	\$1,007
	2	Hazleton, PA	Wheelersburg, OH	5 DOE Federal travelers		
December 4-6, 2017  (Secretary Perry)	1	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	Abu Dhabi, UAE	8 DOE Federal travelers	\$40,000 <sup>3</sup> (estimated)	\$2,500 (estimated)
	2	Abu Dhabi, UAE	Doha, Qatar	8 DOE Federal travelers		

<sup>1</sup> To calculate the cost per traveler per leg, we divided the total cost by the total number of travelers for all legs of the trip because some trips had a different number of travelers on each leg.

<sup>2</sup> We did not include the Federal contractors for this calculation because this was an aircraft operated by the contracting company. The Department of Energy (Department or DOE) reimbursed the company for the proportionate share of the cost of the flight.

<sup>3</sup> We reported the estimated cost for this trip because the Department had not received the final bill from the Department of Defense as of February 20, 2018.

**RESPONSE TO U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON ENERGY  
AND COMMERCE MEMORANDUM DATED OCTOBER 12, 2017**

- 1. For each occasion where Secretary Perry or any other non-career Department of Energy officials utilized government aircraft or privately chartered aircraft since January 2017, please determine the purpose of the trip and whether the trip was solely dedicated to the official government purpose. If any trip was not solely for official government purposes, please list the other purpose of the trip.**

**RESPONSE:** We identified six trips from January 2017 through December 2017 that were sponsored by the Department of Energy (Department or DOE) where the Secretary or other non-career Department Federal officials utilized Government or privately chartered aircraft. One of these trips was taken by Secretary Moniz in January 2017 under the previous administration to participate in the signing of the United States-Mexico Bilateral Reliability Principles in Mexico City, Mexico and to attend the opening ceremony of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in Carlsbad, New Mexico. The purposes of the remaining five trips taken by Secretary Perry under the current administration included:

- Addressing employees at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in Carlsbad, New Mexico and touring the Idaho and Los Alamos National Laboratories (May 9-11, 2017);
- Speaking at the Department of Energy Small Business Forum & Expo and touring the Kansas City National Security campus in Missouri (May 17, 2017);
- Touring and holding a stakeholders roundtable at McNary Dam, visiting the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, and holding an employee all-hands meeting at the Hanford Site in Washington (August 14-16, 2017);
- Touring the Jeddo coal mine in Hazleton, Pennsylvania and visiting the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant in Ohio (September 28, 2017); and
- Participating in a White House mission to the Middle East for bilateral meetings with the Secretary's counterparts to discuss energy issues (December 4-6, 2017).

Our review of the schedules for the six trips did not indicate any personal or political stops. Non-career Department Federal officials also traveled on Government aircraft that was sponsored by other executive agencies and not reimbursed by the Department. However, the Department was not required to approve this travel and thus did not track it, as the travel should have been approved and tracked by the sponsoring agency. Consequently, while we are aware of some of these trips, we were not able to definitively identify all travel sponsored by other agencies.

- 2. To what extent were all applicable Federal travel regulations, Federal acquisition rules, and Department travel policies and procedures appropriately followed for all of Secretary Perry's travel and all other non-career Department of Energy officials' travel to date?**

**RESPONSE:** Except for administrative and documentation issues noted below, we found that applicable Federal travel regulations were followed for all six trips reviewed. Only one

of the six trips utilized a private chartered aircraft. We found that the Department followed appropriate Federal acquisition rules to acquire that aircraft from the flight operator for the Secretary's trip to Pennsylvania and Ohio. In addition, we found that the Department did not have policies and procedures implementing the justification requirements in Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular No. A-126, *Improving the Management and Use of Government Aircraft*, for the use of Government aircraft. While this was primarily a documentation issue, we did not find any indication that the trips reviewed were inappropriate.

**a. In each of the instances in which a government aircraft or privately chartered flight was used, were the appropriate travel authorizations, cost estimates, justifications, and approvals performed?**

**RESPONSE:** We determined that the quality of travel authorizations, cost estimates, and justifications and approvals could be enhanced. In particular:

- For each of the six trips taken by Secretary Perry and Secretary Moniz since January 2017, we found that travel authorizations were prepared for the Secretary and other non-career Federal officials. In most cases, the use of Government or privately chartered aircraft for travel was not documented on the travel authorizations, as required by OMB Circular No. A-126. However, all six trips were appropriately approved by the Department's Office of the General Counsel (General Counsel), as required. Therefore, we determined that this was an administrative weakness.
- We found that the Department had obtained cost estimates for the use of Government or privately chartered aircraft for all six trips reviewed. However, officials could not provide cost comparisons to determine the most cost-effective alternative for the six trips. While exceptional scheduling requirements, not cost savings, were cited as the justification for the use of Government or privately chartered aircraft, Federal Travel Regulation Part 301-70.802, *Must we ensure that travel on Government aircraft is the most cost-effective alternative?*, requires agencies to ensure that travel on Government aircraft is the most cost-effective alternative that will meet the travel requirement. Specifically, it requires the designated travel approving official to perform a cost comparison of all travel alternatives. Although cost comparisons were not prepared, we noted that the estimated costs for all six trips were approved by General Counsel.
- We found that General Counsel approved all six trips, as required by OMB Circular No. A-126. The Department cited exceptional scheduling requirements under required use travel<sup>1</sup> as the justification for all six trips, in accordance with OMB Circular No. A-126. However, the OMB Circular and Federal Travel Regulation, Part 301-70.803, *How must we authorize travel on a Government*

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<sup>1</sup> The OMB Circular defines "required use" travel as any travel where the use of Government aircraft is required because of bona fide communications, security needs of the agency, or exceptional scheduling requirements.

*aircraft?*, require agency heads to establish written standards for determining when required use travel is permitted. We determined that the Department did not develop written standards and did not maintain supporting documentation to demonstrate that scheduled commercial airline service could not meet the exceptional scheduling requirements. However, our examination of travel schedules and itineraries for all six trips determined that it would have been difficult for commercial airline service to accommodate the schedules. In addition, we verified that General Counsel approved that all six trips met the requirements for required use travel.

- b. In each of the instances in which a government aircraft or privately chartered flight was used, were all justifications approved according to all applicable Department of Energy policies and procedures?**

**RESPONSE:** The Department had not established formal policies and procedures implementing the justification requirements in OMB Circular No. A-126 for the use of Government or privately chartered aircraft. However, we noted that the Department generally followed unwritten procedures. For example, the Department's Office of Aviation Management informally reviewed requests for the use of Government or privately chartered aircraft and provided feedback on the justification requirements. In addition, while not documented, the Department had implemented procedures for coordinating travel requests with General Counsel, as required by OMB Circular No. A-126.

- c. For each of the government aircraft or privately chartered flights taken by Secretary Perry or other non-career Department of Energy officials to date, what was the total cost of travel for Secretary Perry, other non-career Department of Energy officials, and all other individuals onboard? Who were the other passengers on board each flight? What was the cost for each individual onboard for each government aircraft or privately chartered flight?**

**RESPONSE:** The table on the following page summarizes Secretary Perry's and other non-career Department Federal official's travel on Government aircraft or privately chartered flights since January 2017. The total cost of travel on Government aircraft or privately chartered flights by Secretary Moniz and Secretary Perry since January 2017 was approximately \$169,000.

Trip Date (Primary Traveler)	Leg	Origin	Destination	All Travelers	Total Cost	Cost per Traveler per Leg <sup>1</sup>
January 7-9, 2017 (Secretary Moniz)	1	Washington, DC	Mexico City, Mexico	10 DOE Federal travelers	\$75,461	\$3,018
	2	Mexico City, Mexico	Carlsbad, NM (via Midland, TX)	5 DOE Federal travelers		
	3	Carlsbad, NM	Washington, DC	7 DOE Federal travelers, 3 members of Congress		
May 11, 2017 (Secretary Perry)	1	Santa Fe, NM	Carlsbad, NM	5 DOE Federal travelers	\$4,181	\$836
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	2	Olathe, KS	Washington, DC	8 DOE Federal travelers		
August 14-16, 2017 (Secretary Perry)	1	Seattle, WA	Richland, WA	6 DOE Federal travelers	\$3,861	\$351
	2	Richland, WA	Seattle, WA	5 DOE Federal travelers		
September 28, 2017 (Secretary Perry)	1	Dulles, VA	Hazleton, PA	5 DOE Federal travelers	\$10,070	\$1,007
	2	Hazleton, PA	Wheelersburg, OH	5 DOE Federal travelers		
December 4-6, 2017 (Secretary Perry)	1	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	Abu Dhabi, UAE	8 DOE Federal travelers	\$40,000 <sup>2</sup> (estimated)	\$2,500 (estimated)
	2	Abu Dhabi, UAE	Doha, Qatar	8 DOE Federal travelers		

<sup>1</sup> To calculate the cost per traveler per leg, we divided the total cost by the total number of travelers for all legs of the trip because some trips had a different number of travelers on each leg.

<sup>2</sup> We reported the estimated cost for this trip because the Department had not received the final bill from the Department of Defense as of February 20, 2018.

In the letter from the Committee on Energy and Commerce to the Office of Inspector General, the Committee was concerned about Secretary Perry's trip to Kansas on May 17, 2017. Specifically, the Committee questioned whether Secretary Perry could have used commercial aircraft to fly into Kansas City International Airport. We determined that the circumstances of that trip provided a reasonable basis for the exceptional scheduling requirements cited as justification for the trip. Secretary Perry had firmly scheduled events that General Counsel indicated could not have been accommodated by commercial air service. In particular, Secretary Perry had a meeting at the White House that ended at 6:00 pm the night of May 16, 2017. Immediately following the meeting, the Secretary attended a closed event. In addition, Secretary Perry was scheduled to speak early the next morning at the event in Kansas City. We found that the return trip was justified because the Department had to pay the costs to return the aircraft back to its origin regardless of whether it contained passengers. As an additional consideration, Secretary Perry had a Congressional meeting to attend the morning of May 18, 2017, which constrained his ability to return to Washington, DC.

- d. **For each of the government aircraft or privately chartered flights taken by Secretary Perry and other non-career Department of Energy officials to date, who was in charge of booking the flights? Were all relevant policies and procedures followed for each of the passengers onboard and by anyone involved with booking or planning the travel? Were the appropriate policies and procedures followed for any passengers who were not Federal government employees?**

**RESPONSE:** We determined the following related to this question:

- Five trips were booked by the Department's Office of Aviation Management and one trip was booked by Secretary Perry's scheduling office.
  - We found that the Department did not have internal policies and procedures related to booking travel on Government aircraft or privately chartered flights. Rather, officials within the Department's Office of Aviation Management booked travel based on historical practices.
  - According to documentation provided by the Department, the six trips reviewed did not include passengers who were not Federal Government employees.
- e. **In any instances in which regulations, policies, or procedures were not appropriately followed, what was the approximate cost incurred to the government as a result?**

**RESPONSE:** We found that all six trips reviewed were approved by General Counsel, as required by OMB Circular No. A-126. Although we noted some administrative and documentation issues, there was no cost incurred to the Department for noncompliance because the six trips, including the estimated costs, were approved by General Counsel.

- f. **Is there a mechanism for Secretary Perry to reimburse taxpayers for the costs incurred?**

**RESPONSE:** Yes. According to Department officials, reimbursement for costs incurred would follow the same mechanism as when non-allowable costs are discovered in the vouching process by the Department's travel management office.

3. **Did any Department of Energy personnel raise concerns internally about repeated use of government aircraft or privately chartered flights by Secretary Perry or other non-career Department of Energy officials? If so, how were such concerns addressed?**

**RESPONSE:** We did not have any indication that Department personnel had raised concerns about repeated use of Government aircraft or privately chartered flights prior to our inspection.

- 4. To what extent has the Department of Energy conducted oversight of executive travel, including travel by government aircraft or privately chartered flight by Secretary Perry or other non-career Department of Energy officials? Have any violations been identified, and if so, what actions were taken in response?**

**RESPONSE:** The Department's General Counsel conducted oversight of travel on Government or privately chartered aircraft by reviewing and approving travel prior to the trip to ensure that violations did not occur. In addition, according to the Department's *Travel Charge Card Management Plan*, the Department performs pre- and post-payment reviews of travel reimbursements to the most senior-level Department management. However, this does not include a review of Government or privately chartered aircraft.

## MANAGEMENT COMMENTS



Department of Energy  
Washington, DC 20585

May 16, 2018

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRINCIPAL DEPUTY INSPECTOR GENERAL

FROM: INGRID KOLB  
DIRECTOR  
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT

SUBJECT: Inspection Report on "Non-Commercial Travel by Non-Career  
Department of Energy Employees – Coordination Draft"

The Office of Management (MA) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the Inspector General's (IG) draft Inspection Report on Non-Commercial Travel. We are pleased the Inspection found nothing to indicate non-career employees within the Department had inappropriately taken trips on Government aircraft. Further, the report affirmed that each of the trips the IG reviewed was for official government business and approved by the Department's Office of the General Counsel as required by OMB Circular A-126.

While the IG does not provide formal recommendations, MA would like to share our plans to strengthen internal controls based on the IG's observations contained in the report. The IG suggested: 1) implementing formal policies and procedures on relevant requirements, to include developing written standards for required-use travel and requiring the use of cost comparisons; and 2) that documentation supporting the use of government aircraft, including evidence that appropriate requirements have been followed, is developed and retained for two years, in accordance with OMB Circular A-126.

To improve our processes on the use of non-commercial travel, MA prepared a Standard Operating Procedure documenting the procedures as well as the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the approval process. In addition, MA will partner with the Program Elements to develop relevant policies, procedures and standards for required-use travel, including the preparation of cost comparisons. Finally, all non-commercial travel will be documented through a Travel Authorization and supporting records will be retained within the Executive Secretariat in accordance with OMB Circular A-126.

I appreciate your review of this matter and am available to discuss any additional observations or concerns you may have related to non-commercial travel. I may be reached on 6-2550.

cc: Marilyn Dillon, MA-1.1  
Stan Gerdes, MA-10  
Glen Wattman, MA-30  
Peter O'Konski, MA-40  
John Bashista, MA-60  
Wayne Smith, MA-70  
Susan Beard, GC-56



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Washington, DC 20585

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