

Summary: FWS Employee Did Not Violate Duty of Candor But FWS Overpaid Relocation Benefits

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Report Number: 24-0021

The OIG investigated allegations that a former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) employee violated his duty of candor regarding his family's relocation from the United States to another country and received an overpayment in relocation benefits. The employee received a directed reassignment to another country and allegedly misrepresented his family's plans to relocate with him. Before the employee relocated, FWS paid his relocation expenses, including funds for the relocation of his family, pursuant to FWS' lump sum pilot program, a program administered by the General Services Administration (GSA). Several weeks after the employee relocated without his family, the employee received and accepted a final job offer from another Federal agency. The employee's family never relocated, allegedly resulting in the employee receiving and retaining an overpayment in relocation benefits. We substantiated some of the allegations.

We found that the employee did not violate his duty of candor because the preponderance of the evidence did not show that he knowingly gave incorrect or incomplete information to FWS regarding his family's relocation.

We also found that GSA did not intend for Federal agencies, including FWS, to use the lump sum pilot program for international relocations, and FWS has ceased using this program for international relocations. We also concluded that, because the employee received an overpayment of approximately \$53,000 for the relocation of his family, which did not ultimately happen, FWS may choose to seek recovery of these funds from the employee under the procedures set forth in 5 U.S.C. § 5514. We express no opinion on the likelihood of succeeding in such an effort.

This is a summary of an investigative report we issued to the Acting Director of FWS.

