



“Holding the Line...on GMV use to/from the airport”

Actual case studies for navigating the sometimes not-so-bright line defining senior official misconduct

Government motor vehicles (GMVs), formerly called GOVs, are closely controlled because of their easy accessibility, high visibility, and potential for misuse. After a series of public misuses of GMVs by government officials, including military GOs, Congress passed a law limiting GMV use to “official government purposes” and defining that term with great specificity—“in support of authorized DoD functions, activities, and operations.” Despite this standard, we continue to see improper interpretations of “official government purposes” and a rise in substantiated IG complaints for GMV misuse.

The Complaint: This issue of “Holding the Line” addresses misuse of GMVs for transportation to/from commercial airports. The three cases below illustrate a “not substantiated” finding (“holding the line”), a “substantiated” finding (“crossing the line”), and one somewhere in the middle (“walking a fine line”). **The applicable standards:** 10 USC 1344, *Passenger Carrier Use*; 40 USC subsections 601-611, *Motor Vehicle Pools and Transportation Systems*; and AFI 24-301, *Ground Operations*. **As always, we urge you to consult with your SJA and the A4 community for further guidance.**

The Cases:

1 - HOLDING THE LINE: A general officer used his aide-de-camp to pick him up at his office and drive him to the airport in a GMV for a TDY. The aide then returned to the airport to pick him up 10 days later. Were any standards violated?

IG Finding: The TDY was an official purpose and the length of the TDY, the distance to the airport, and the timing of scheduled public transportation triggered a “cost-benefit analysis” to determine the most cost effective and efficient method of transportation to/from the airport. The analysis found the aide-de-camp driving to and from the airport to support the general officer incurred the lowest cost. GMV misuse--**NOT SUBSTANTIATED**.

However—and importantly—unique allowances are made for aide-de-camp duties. If the general’s executive officer, rather than his aide, had driven him, it might have been misuse of a subordinate’s time.

2 - CROSSING THE LINE: A general officer routinely requested LRS provide a GMV and driver to transport her from her home to the airport for frequent TDYs. Were any standards violated?

IG Finding: Although the transportation was for an official purpose, 1) the law requires SecAF approval for domicile-to-duty transportation to allow for home pick-up, and that had not been authorized; 2) no cost-benefit analysis had been done to establish whether GMV use was the most cost-effective means; and 3) because the wing policy allowed LRS resources to be used only for seven or more passengers, the GO’s individual use was deemed to be based solely on reasons of rank, position, prestige, or personal convenience. GMV use was therefore not authorized. GMV misuse--**SUBSTANTIATED**.

3 - WALKING A FINE LINE: A general officer’s position was assigned a command-and-control vehicle (CACV).^{*} To avoid any domicile-to-duty issues, he kept the CACV at his office. After arriving at the office in his POV, he used the CACV during the duty day. His activities would include hitting the gym, grabbing lunch at the food court, and going to a medical appointment downtown. On occasion, when going TDY, he was driven to the airport in the CACV. Were any standards violated?

IG Finding: GMV guidance generally applies, but there are additional CACV-specific rules. Here, the senior official prudently kept the CACV at the office. He was authorized to use it for official use, activities related to personal health and sustenance, and Air Force-scheduled appointments. CACV use for transport to/from commercial airports for TDY travel is also allowed, *but ONLY* if the use of the specialized communications equipment installed in the CACV is critical to ongoing missions while he is *en route* to/from the airport. In this instance, there was no critical need for the CACV’s specialized comms during the drive time, and it should have been passed to whomever picked-up responsibility for ongoing operations for the duration of the TDYs. GMV misuse--**SUBSTANTIATED**.

Because the law requires any questions arising about the official use of a GMV to be resolved in favor of strict compliance with statutory provisions:

- Limit GMV use to support authorized DoD functions, activities, and operations
- Do not use GMVs solely or principally to enhance comfort or convenience of members
- Do not use GMVs when the justification is based solely on reasons of rank or position

^{*}CACVs are GMVs for commanders with responsibility for operations or installation security that require 24-hour mobility and communications capability.

"In looking for people to hire, you look for three qualities: integrity, intelligence, and energy. And if they don't have the first, the other two will kill you." – Warren Buffet. If you have any ethics-related questions, contact your servicing SJA or local ethics officer!

“Holding the Line” is a product of SAF/IGS. Please contact Ms. Allison Weber at allison.c.weber.civ@mail.mil or 703-692-6345 if you have questions or a suggestion for a future edition of this newsletter.

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