

Summary: Misconduct Found in NPS Hiring Action

Report Date: July 27, 2017

OIG opened an investigation after we received allegations regarding the hiring of an analyst at the NPS Pacific West Regional Office (PWRO), in San Francisco, CA. The complaint alleged that, after hiring the analyst the hiring official altered the position requirements to allow the analyst to telework from home, an accommodation not offered to other applicants, and approved by the hiring official because of a personal friendship with the analyst. The complaint also alleged that the analyst claimed permanent change of station (PCS) expenses even though the analyst never intended to relocate to the PWRO in California, and that the analyst collected the higher locality pay in San Francisco, but did not report to the PWRO as required.

Our investigation substantiated that the hiring official altered the position requirements at the analyst's request and after the analyst was hired to allow residence in a different state and commute to the PWRO a few days per month. The vacancy announcement indicated that the position was located in San Francisco and made no mention of extended telework. An employee who assisted the hiring official stated the hiring official told the analyst the physical residence in the PWRO could be as few as two days per week, but told the other interviewees for the position they would be required to be in the PWRO 3 or 4 days per week. We interviewed one of the other interviewees who confirmed the hiring manager had said the selectee would need to be in the office 3 to 4 days per week, which caused the applicant to withdraw from consideration.

We did not find evidence that a friendship with the hiring official was the cause; the hiring official retired abruptly before we could interview him about these allegations. Interviews of other applicants confirmed they were not afforded the same opportunity.

We also substantiated that the analyst submitted a voucher for a lump sum PCS reimbursement with no intent to relocate. In November 2015, the analyst received 30 days of temporary quarters subsistence expense (TQSE) allowance amounting to \$8,217.90 even though the analyst was only in San Francisco for 4 days, stayed in NPS housing, and incurred only \$30.60 in lodging expenses. The hiring official was aware the analyst did not intend to relocate, but still approved the TQSE payment.

Finally, we substantiated that the analyst wrongfully claimed pay at the San Francisco locality rate of 35.75 percent instead of the rest of the United States rate of 14.35 percent. We determined that the analyst may have qualified for San Francisco Bay Area locality pay during 18 of the 26 bi-weekly pay-periods in 2016. The analyst admitted, however, that a significant portion of 2016 travel time between her home and San Francisco was wrongfully counted towards the analysts' required hours at PWRO.

This is a summary of a report that was issued to NPS for any action deemed appropriate.

