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

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The Honorable John J. McFall, Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives

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Dear Mr. Chairman:

Your letter of March 14, 1973, requested that we furnish your Subcommittee with information concerning the use made of funds appropriated for fiscal year 1973 to the Federal Railroad Administration for 43 additional positions in the Bureau of Railroad Safety. On March 27, 1973, we provided your office with information as summarized below.

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How many of the 43 additional positions funded by the Congress have been filled?

Information obtained from the Federal Railroad Administration indicated that none of the 43 additional inspector positions for which funds were appropriated for fiscal year 1973 had been or would be filled in fiscal year 1973. Although the fiscal year 1973 appropriation would support a level of 336 authorized positions for the Bureau, the level was administratively held at the 272 positions authorized for fiscal year 1972. This action, in effect, prevented expansion of the inspector force by the additional 43 positions authorized by the Congress.

The Bureau did hire eight field inspectors and engineers during the first 9 months of fiscal year 1973; however, the new employees filled positions which were authorized, but unfilled, prior to fiscal year 1973.

If these positions have not been filled, what use was made of the funds which were appropriated for these positions? Were funds obligated for any programs or activities of the Bureau for which no funds were requested by the Federal Railroad Administration or appropriated by the Congress?

As of March 31, 1973, the funds authorized for the 43 additional inspector positions had not been spent or obligated, but \$547,000 originally budgeted for personnel compensation and benefits was reprogrammed. The budget for other services was increased by \$538,000, and the budget for printing and reproduction was increased by \$9,000.

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A Federal Railroad Administration official told us that the increase in the amount budgeted for other services would be used to cover part of (1) the Department of Transportation's estimated assessment of \$145,000 to cover the cost of moving the Bureau to a new office building at Buzzard Point, D.C., and (2) an estimated \$400,000 for expanding training activities for Federal inspectors. At the end of March 1973, funds had not been spent or obligated for these purposes. Our review of the Federal Railroad Administration's budget justifications and related appropriation hearings for fiscal year 1973 disclosed no evidence that funds for these purposes had been specifically requested or appropriated. As agreed with your office, we did not research the Federal Railroad Administration's legislative authority for reprogramming the funds.

We do not plan to distribute this report further unless you agree or publicly announce its contents.

Sincerely yours,


Comptroller General
of the United States