



Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GENERAL MANAGER RELEASES STATEMENT DECLARING AIRPORT A GUN-FREE ZONE

ATLANTA, GA - - In response to a new state law regarding concealed weapons that takes effect today, Ben DeCosta, general manager of Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport held a news conference to make it “crystal clear” to the public that concealed weapons are not allowed at the world’s busiest airport. Flanked by Mayor Shirley Franklin, City Attorney Beth Chandler, Police Chief Richard Pennington, MARTA CEO Dr. Beverly Scott and Alice Johnson, Executive Director for Georgians for Gun Safety, DeCosta released the following statement:

As most of you already know, under House Bill 89, Georgia citizens who have firearm licenses are now permitted to bring concealed weapons aboard public transportation, into restaurants that serve alcohol, and in state parks, historic sites and recreational areas.

Our legal team has reviewed House Bill 89 and has determined that despite the passage of this legislation, the airport continues to fall under the public gathering exception found in the Georgia Code, Section 16-11-127. The airport is a publicly-owned and operated building, and it is owned by the city of Atlanta. Therefore, firearms are prohibited on airport property.

So, today, I am announcing that Hartsfield-Jackson is a gun-free zone.

We have the legal grounds to take this stand, and we also are driven by my unwavering belief that guns have no place in airports, especially the world’s busiest -- where on any given day, thousands of travelers and visitors pass through our doors.

Our position is also endorsed by two premier Aviation industry organizations. In a letter of support, American Association of Airport Executives President Charles Barclay writes:

“In this post- 9/11 environment, where plots against aviation and passengers are still strong possibilities, any and all attempts to prohibit weapons from our nation’s airports are necessary and must be supported.”

We also have the support of the Airports Council International – North America, whose board chairman Randall Walker says:

“The members of the ACI – NA agree with Hartsfield-Jackson that the continued security threat to airports and passengers justifies the need to ban weapons from public airports. I endorse your efforts and your position in making Hartsfield-Jackson a firearm free zone.”

What these letters of support show, without exaggeration, is the backing of the entire airport community across the United States. I am proud to have this support for safe and secure airports.

My message is simple: leave your firearms at home. For those arriving on MARTA, you should be aware that once you exit the MARTA lobby and enter the North and South terminals, you are on airport property and firearms are prohibited. Additionally, firearms are prohibited in the restaurant located in the public area of the airport.

Those who violate this prohibition against firearms will be charged with a misdemeanor under state law. In addition, airport employees who violate this prohibition will be subject to disciplinary action -- up to, and including, termination.

Unless you are traveling with your weapon properly secured in your checked luggage in accordance with FAA and TSA regulations, you’re a sworn federal, state, or local law enforcement officer or armored security personnel, you are not allowed to carry weapons on airport property.

I must add here that Airport security, the Atlanta Police Department, the FBI and federal air marshals provide appropriate protection for passengers, airport visitors and airport employees. No one should feel any need to bring a firearm to this airport for protection.

Mayor Franklin and I, along with many others, have worked extremely hard over the years to make this Airport a safe, and inviting world-class airport. So, to ensure the safety of the millions of people who come through our doors, Hartsfield-Jackson has always been and will remain a gun-free zone.