NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

NEWSDAY, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2001

Security Tight At Airports

Unlike Thursday, there were no bomb scares and no aircraft stormed by police at area airports Friday. But for the second day in a row, flights were few as airports and passengers struggled to adjust to new security requirements.

The three New York City airports were not cleared to operate until shortly before noon, and only a fraction of the usual number flights got off the ground. Flights at those airports were halted Thursday when police detained 10 passengers, in some cases hauling them off aircraft that had left their gates.

Long Island MacArthur Airport in Islip operated Friday for the first time since Tuesday's attacks on the World Trade Center.

Security was aggressive everywhere, and most passengers were grateful for it. "They checked everything very thoroughly," said Nuor Shina, 39, of Israel, where air security is always tight. He arrived at LaGuardia Airport from Cleveland with some Israeli co-workers. They planned to go from LaGuardia to Newark International Airport to get a flight home.

In Cleveland, Shina said security officers frisked passengers, checked for explosives and did hand searches of almost everyone's luggage. "We're used to that, but I don't think Americans will get used to it," he said. "Israel is a danger zone, but now the whole world is a danger zone for terror. There are no borders. There are no limits. There are no rules."

Nationwide, about 50 percent of the usual number of flights got off the ground. For the first time, private aircraft were allowed to fly Friday — as long as they stayed at least 25 nautical miles from New York and Washington.

Many took comfort in the increased security.

Scott Dunn, 37, a pianist from TriBeCa, got on a United flight from Kennedy Airport to Los Angeles. He was eager to leave. "I figure it's probably the safest day ever to fly," he said.

Opposite the Delta terminal at LaGuardia, police searched the trunks of every car entering the parking lot. People had to produce photo identification and plane tickets just to enter the terminal.

Security announcements played constantly over the speakers at the US Airways terminal.

"Attention. For your own security and safety we are absolutely required to remove unattended vehicles," said one such announcement. "If your vehicle is left unattended for even a moment, it will be towed at the owner's expense."

Martin Paris, 68, a retired New York firefighter from Ronkonkoma, returned to MacArthur Friday from Las Vegas. Security at Las Vegas was "extremely intense," he said. All luggage was searched by hand, but he said he didn't feel it was intrusive. "Not in this situation," he said. "They can do whatever they wish."

Some objected, however. Sonia and Asgher Mirza, were moving from Queens Village to Los Angeles. All of their belongings are in transit, and they have been in limbo all week with their infant son. "We have a 5-month-old baby," Sonia Mirza said. "We've been stranded in the streets. Airlines won't help us. They won't accommodate us."

On Thursday, before their flight was canceled, she said their luggage was pulled apart at the airport by security officers, who even sprayed a bottle to make sure it contained perfume. "We really felt it was racism," she said. She is Indian and her husband is of Pakistani descent.

Along with other stranded travelers, they spent a few nights at the Flushing YMCA. Tina Loschky of Beach Grove, Ind., had been there since Tuesday.

"These people have been great here, but I just need to get home to feel safe," she said. "Even there I don't think I'll feel safe. You just hear the people crying at night [while lying in their cots]. They just pull the covers over their heads because no one wants to cry in public."

This story was reported by **Michael Rothfeld, J. Jioni Palmer, Alfonso A. Castillo, Arthur V. Claps** and freelancer **Francis Walker,** and written by **Andrew Smith.**

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