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Bloomberg and Pataki talked about the trip Tuesday.

Bloomberg Will Pay For Jet Trip to Israel

Pataki, maybe Giuliani to join him in luxury

By Jessica Kowal
STAFF WRITER

Mayor-elect Michael Bloomberg plans to fly Gov. George Pataki and possibly Mayor Rudolph Giuliani to Israel this weekend on his company's Falcon 900 jet, a luxe flying office that would rent for $6,000 an hour.

Bloomberg, a billionaire, will pay for the Israel trip, just as he did when the same plane ferried a half-dozen officials to the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico about 10 days ago.

Giuliani is not yet a confirmed passenger. "It is very, very important to show solidarity" with Israel, Giuliani said. "We're trying to work it all out."

Bloomberg's firm, Bloomberg LP, leases the Falcon 900, which is made by Dassault-Breguet, a French firm. The jet has three engines, seats 10 people and has a range of 4,834 miles, according to Joe Tasler of Air Charter Team in Oklahoma City.

The cost of the journey to Israel is not known, but Bloomberg will pay for two to four pilots and the costs of fuel, food and flight attendants, if there are any.

A new Falcon 900 costs about $30 million. This plane would cost $6,000 an hour to rent, said Tasler, whose firm chartered planes for the Bush presidential campaign last year. At that price, a 10-hour flight to and from Israel would cost $120,000.

By contrast, El Al, the Israeli airline, would sell three first-class round-trip tickets on a Boeing 747-400 for a total of about $25,000.

A corporate jet salesman offered a possible disadvantage if Bloomberg, Pataki and Giuliani fly together.

"Most companies say executives can't travel together in case the plane goes down," said a corporate jet broker who asked not to be named.

But the airplane has "a tremendous safety record," said Orville Winover of Tyler Jet, a Texas airplane reseller.

Chris Taylor, a spokeswoman for Bloomberg LP, said the firm's liability insurance covers anyone that flies on the airplane.

The Rev. Ruben Diaz, a councilman-elect and a passenger on Bloomberg's trip to the Caribbean, said it was "the experience of a lifetime."

He recalled that the jet's comfortable swiveling seats eased discussion about the city schools and about the recent crash of American Airlines Flight 587.

On the trip south, Bloomberg personally served the other officials a lunch of sandwiches. They had beans and rice on the trip home, Diaz said.

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