

National Guard Helps Tighten Airport Security for Holidays

By WES MISSON
Staff Writer

President Bush announced Friday that airports across the nation must increase security before next week's Thanksgiving holiday.

Bush, whose order aims to ensure safety during the upcoming holiday season, said the U.S. National Guard will increase its presence at commercial airports across the country. White House officials called for more guards in terminals and an overall increase in security activities.

National Guard personnel now stand guard at security checkpoints and patrol the terminals.

According to the American Automobile Association's annual travel survey, 4.6 million people will travel by air this Thanksgiving, down 27 percent from last year's 6.3 million passengers.

Fred Hartman, spokesman for N.C. Gov. Mike Easley, said he expects an increase in National Guard presence to occur before this weekend at North Carolina's 12 commercial airports.

Hartman said Bush's mandate for addi-

tional troops will expand the role of the National Guard to include curbside activity, baggage checks and car searches.

"There will be a 25 percent increase in the number of National Guardsmen, from 112 to 140," Hartman said. "They will be there for at least 60 days throughout the end of the holiday season."

Mirinda Kossoff, communications manager for Raleigh-Durham International Airport, said travel volumes have returned to normal levels after a decrease immediately following the Sept. 11 attacks.

Kossoff also said RDU has recovered faster than most airports in the country because it serves the Research Triangle and a number of major universities. "We are seeing lots of passengers in the terminals," she said. "The load factor is up to 80 to 90 percent capacity, near full."

Kossoff said RDU has a full flight schedule for Thanksgiving week but added that she expects to see some cancellations since American Airlines Flight 587 crashed Monday in New York.

The AAA survey also stated that 87 percent of the 34.6 million people expect-

ed to travel 50 miles or more will travel by car, up from last season's 83 percent.

"It's logically far more dangerous to get in a car and drive, as shown by statistics with automobile fatalities, but people fear," Kossoff said.

White House officials hope to diminish the fears of travelers by increasing the role of the National Guard, a role criticized by the Air Transport Association as a mere show of force.

Kossoff said she thinks the National Guard presence continues to act as a deterrent and generally helps passengers feel safer.

"Most people like them," she said. "If we can use them the way we feel they will be most useful, then it will be a big help for us."

But the added forces will not come without a price tag, putting further strain on both the state and national budgets.

Hartman said, "It's our understanding that the federal government will continue to reimburse the state."

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New Area Mayors May Jump-Start Efforts for Triangle Rail System

Recently elected mayors of Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill all have shown interest in creating a regional track.

By METOKA WELCH
Staff Writer

Raleigh Mayor-elect Charles Meeker's environmentally-based platform could facilitate the creation of a regional rail system in the Triangle.

Meeker, newly elected Durham Mayor Bill Bell and Chapel Hill Mayor-elect Kevin Foy all support smart-growth initiatives, including a regional rail system.

Planning for the regional rail system is being handled by the Triangle Transit Authority. To receive funding the project must first be approved by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Funding for the project would come from all levels of government.

Meeker said his platform reflects his desire to hone in on environmental issues, particularly the reduction of strip development, traffic congestion and urban sprawl through the regional railway.

"I am all about better growth and practices, including the restriction of clear cutting of trees," he said.

Meeker added that in the future he will continue to stress the importance of environmental issues. "I want to coordinate the development of various cultural facilities and coordinate water and sewer facilities."

Meeker was elected mayor of Raleigh in a Nov. 6 run-off election against incumbent Paul Coble. He earned 51 percent of the vote and will be inaugurated Dec. 3.

Chapel Hill Mayor Rosemary Waldorf said urban sprawl is a vital issue and expressed support for Meeker's plan.

"In the past, Mayor Coble was an outspoken opponent of the regional rail system, (but) anybody who tries to get from Chapel Hill to (Research Triangle Park) knows that we have (an) absolutely bruising transit problem," she said.

Waldorf added that she thinks the railway will bring economic benefits to the area, as well as help to reduce urban sprawl.

"If money from the development community is going toward (building business offices, medical buildings, etc.) rather than slapping a subdivision out in

the suburbs, then we will decrease Raleigh's sprawl," she said.

David Godschalk, UNC city and regional planning professor, said Meeker's on-the-record approval of the regional rail will be environmentally advantageous for the area.

"I think Mr. Meeker's election will be a real catalyst to move forward the Triangle Transit Authority's rail plan," he said. "I think the regional rail will make a big difference."

Godschalk said that in addition to connecting Triangle cities, the rail would decrease the rapidly growing urban sprawl in the Raleigh-Durham area.

"Putting in a mass transit rail line will encourage field development in stations in different areas where there will be train stops," he said. "The future growth will be concentrated in the areas around the rail line, and the popularity of that kind of living is bound to increase."

Godschalk added that other cities across the country have successfully joined metro areas by rail lines. "The greatest success story is Portland, Oregon, which faced a lot of sprawl. Hopefully the same will happen here."

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UNION

From Page 3

Union now will not necessarily receive space when construction is completed — instead it will depend on which groups apply to Student Body President Justin Young for space, Luse said.

Steve Russell, editor of the Carolina Review, was excited about the possibilities the project could offer when it is

completed. "It will be a cleaner, nicer environment," Russell said.

He said the Carolina Review staff hopes to have a new computer and better Internet and phone connections when the project is finished.

Luse addressed the construction in terms of how it affects student organizations. "I think it continues to have people scratching their heads wondering when they're going to be moving from one place to another."

He said there still are tasks yet to be completed before the rooms are ready for occupancy but that construction will be finished by mid-March at the latest, barring any future difficulties.

But Luse said there still are tasks workers need to address during the construction. "There are issues with things we've looked at and had to be redone."

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RSVVP

From Page 3

Moran also said the public's shift in focus to national issues has resulted in a neglect of local needs.

"Our attention is changing, and now we're not paying enough attention to local issues that need to be addressed," he said.

Last year, the RSVVP raised more than \$36,000 for local service organizations in Raleigh, Durham and Chapel

Hill-Carrboro. The Chapel Hill-Carrboro program raised \$22,023.

Longiotti said she hopes to meet or exceed the total that the fund-raiser generated last year.

"If people respond well to the needy in our community, we will do well," she said.

Local RSVVP restaurant participants say they might see a slight increase in business today, but none have planned efforts to generate additional clients.

"(Business) might be a little more, but it's pretty much going to be a regular

day," said Michael Waudby, general manager of Franklin Street Pizza & Pasta, one of the local restaurants participating in RSVVP.

Longiotti said she hopes patrons will not only support local restaurant business but also remember the continuous fight against hunger.

"We can all look forward to a nice breakfast, lunch and dinner, but not everybody has that option."

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HONORARY DEGREE

From Page 3

Development. Office director Speed Hallman said the total is not surprising because most degree recipients have a connection to the University. "When you're talking about a group that includes so many alumni that have been very successful in their careers, you'd expect that many of them would want to give back to their school," Hallman said.

The Commencement speaker can be selected for an honorary degree in addition to the five people chosen each year. Ludington said the committee typically nominates the Commencement speaker but did not consider ESPN SportsCenter anchor Stuart Scott — last year's Commencement speaker — for the honor.

Senior Class President Ben Singer said many faculty members feel strongly about selecting a speaker this year who will be honored with a degree. "There has kind of been a knee-jerk reaction to what happened last year," Singer said.

Last year, some UNC officials expressed concern about how much Scott's speech could add to the

University's intellectual climate.

"A lot of the faculty members want someone with the qualifications to be honored as a degree recipient," Singer said.

But Singer said that while honorary degrees are often used as incentives to get Commencement speaker candidates to speak at graduation, he is not basing the choice on potential to receive an honorary degree. "If there's an overlap between student speaker choices and honorary degree nominees, that would be nice," Singer said. "But we're just looking for the most dynamic speaker."

Ludington said such overlap is unlikely because the committee's criteria for degree recipients are usually different than the students' criteria for Commencement speaker.

He also said the committee's decisions to nominate degree recipients have always been approved by the BOT and received the full backing of University administrators. "An honorary degree is held very highly at this University," Ludington said. "It's the highest honor we can bestow on someone."

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OPEN SPACE

From Page 3

convince the council that their plan is feasible.

At a council meeting Oct. 10, several student representatives from SEAC shared their ideas for the parking lot with town officials.

At that meeting, the council opted to wait on the measure and passed two resolutions — one stating members' goals for the downtown area and the other approving the process of putting together the workshop.

To encourage student input, Grueff said SEAC will set up a mock town plaza from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday in Polk Place.

"We will have bands playing and maybe some free coffee," he said.

By doing so, Grueff said SEAC hopes to show the community how valuable a town plaza would be.

"(It would) provide a very nice setting for collective gathering."

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