

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RDU to serve as Gateway to the 99 Games

RDU Airport, NC — For the first time in Special Olympics World Games' history, an airport is serving as much more than just a place to land. RDU will serve as the "Gateway to the 99 Games" this summer when more than 7,000 athletes, 2,000 coaches and support personnel, and 15,000 family members begin arriving June 18 for the Special Olympics World Summer Games.

Once participants arrive at RDU, they will be bused to the Piedmont West hangar, near the airport's North Cargo area, which will serve as the official Delegate Welcoming and Processing Center. Several large, air-conditioned tents will be installed near the hangar to serve as the athlete credentialing center and refreshment areas. In addition, a special media office trailer is being installed along with a shooting platform for still and video photographer use to catch all the action. Portable restroom facilities, spectator areas, First Aid trailers, VIP seating and other amenities will be included. Delegate welcoming, processing and credentialing has never before taken place at the airport. RDU has invested more than \$160,000 in improvements for the World Games, many of which will benefit airport users long after the games are over.

RDU officials have been planning around three key dates for this summer's World Games. On Monday, June 21, several thousand international Special Olympics delegations are expected to arrive on commercial airline flights in both Terminals A and C.

This is the same day the airport expects heavy outbound traffic from fans of the U.S. Open Golf Championship which concludes the day before (unless there is a playoff) in Pinehurst, NC. International World Games delegations will continue arriving at RDU throughout the week of June 20.

On Friday, June 25, more than 2,000 athletes from Team USA will arrive on nearly 300 Cessna Citation jet aircraft at the Piedmont West hangar near the airport's North Cargo area.

With a Citation landing every two to three minutes for nearly 12 hours on June 25, an air traffic record will be set at RDU with more than double the normal number of operations.

During a normal day, RDU handles more than 500 daily commercial airline arrivals and departures. Add to that 600 Citation arrivals and departures and air traffic will more than double in a single day. The Federal Aviation Administration has planned to bring additional air traffic controllers to RDU to handle the increased flight activity during the Citation Special Olympics Airlift.

"We expect it to be a record air traffic day for Raleigh-Durham International and we have been working very closely with the FAA to insure that everyone involved is well prepared," said RDU Airport Director John Brantley.

Raleigh-Durham International Airport is currently served by 14 major airlines and 10 commuter airlines offering more than 500 arrivals and departures daily. Last year, more than 7.2 million passengers flew in and out of RDU.

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