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Press Release – Airports to Remain Closed, Mineta Says

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For Immediate Release

September 12, 2001
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Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta has announced the Federal Aviation Administration will allow a limited reopening of the nation’s commercial airspace system in order to allow flights that were diverted yesterday to continue to their original destinations.

The Secretary also announced that the FAA is temporarily extending the ground stop order imposed yesterday while additional security measures are being completed.

Safety is always of paramount importance, and in these extraordinary times we intend to be vigilant, Mineta said. We remain committed to resuming commercial flights as soon as possible.

As the President said last night, these despicable terrorist attacks have shaken the foundation of our greatest buildings, but have not shaken the foundation of this great nation, the Secretary said.

As America watches the efforts of our heroic emergency responders and rescue personnel, we keep the victims and their families in our prayers, he also said.

Mineta said the FAA would permit flights today only in special limited circumstances. Flights diverted as a result of yesterday’s order will be allowed to continue to their original destination under vastly tightened security guidelines. Only passengers on the original flights will be allowed to re-board, and only after airports and airlines have implemented strict screening measures. Airlines will also be allowed to reposition empty aircraft, he said.

Mineta said a variety of stepped-up security measures will be instituted at the airports once they re-open. These measures include:

- A thorough search and security check of all airplanes and airports before passengers are allowed to enter and board aircraft.
- We will discontinue curbside check-in at the airport. We would ask that all passengers go to the ticket counters to check in.
- We will also discontinue off-airport check in. We can no longer allow passengers to check in for their flights at hotels or other venues. Passengers must check in at the airports.
- We must reserve boarding areas for passengers only. Only ticketed passengers will be allowed to proceed past airport screeners to catch their flights.
- Vehicles near airport terminals will be monitored more closely.

I know all Americans want us to move as quickly and prudently as possible to return our transportation system to normal, Mineta said, and we will as soon as we can do so safely.

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