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Salt Lake City Airport Workers Charged With Fraudulently Obtaining Security Badges

U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta today announced the indictment of 69 workers at Salt Lake City International Airport on charges of falsifying their applications for airport security badges. Many of those indicted were arrested Tuesday by federal, state, and local law enforcement officers, including agents of the Department of Transportation's Inspector General's office.

An investigation by a joint federal and state task force found that employees at the airport, including security checkpoint screeners, used false Social Security numbers on their applications for the badges, which allow access to secure areas of the airport. DOT OIG (Office of Inspector General) was involved because of its experience in investigating violations of federal regulations governing airport security.

"As the Department of Transportation continues its transition toward federal oversight of our nation's aviation security system, today's action, led by the Salt Lake City U.S. Attorney's office, exemplifies our commitment to working with other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to ensure the safety and security of air travelers throughout our nation," Secretary Mineta said.

"We are pleased to contribute our resources in support of Secretary Mineta's 'zero-tolerance' policy toward airport security," Inspector General Kenneth M. Mead said. "At the request of the President and the Secretary, OIG is working with the Federal Aviation Administration to monitor airport security checkpoints and is separately conducting undercover audits at airports nationwide to ensure strict compliance with FAA security requirements."

The Salt Lake City indictments and arrests are the latest in DOT OIG's ongoing investigative and reviews of aviation security violations. These include:

- The September 14 indictment of 12 non-U.S. citizens on charges of using false Social Security cards and alien registration cards to obtain passes allowing them access to secure areas at the Miami International Airport. Eight workers have pleaded guilty and are awaiting deportation.
- The October 13 arrest of a Sterling, VA man on charges of attempting to board an aircraft at Dulles International Airport with a concealed knife. He pleaded guilty on November 14; and

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- The mid-September detention of five security checkpoint screeners at Dulles on charges of being illegal aliens. Four of the aliens have been ordered deported; deportation proceedings are underway on the remaining individual.

Secretary Mineta thanked and congratulated the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Utah, which is leading the prosecution of the cases, and other participants in the task force, including the Social Security Administration's Office of Inspector General; the FAA; the Immigration and Naturalization Service; U.S. Customs Service; the U.S. Marshals Service; the FBI; State of Utah Homeland Security Task Force, and the Salt Lake City Airport Police Department.

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