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Renovated USO Center Opens at Hartsfield-Jackson

Mayor Reed, Airport officials honor U.S. Armed Forces and USO with new facility

ATLANTA – Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed helped cut the ribbon for the reopening of the newly refurbished 3,200 square-foot USO Center at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport Tuesday. The center moves back into its permanent location on the third floor of the domestic terminal atrium after a year of planning, design and construction.

“We are proud of all the work that our military servicewomen and men do on behalf of our country,” said Mayor Reed. “These individuals risk their lives for the ideals of liberty, justice and freedom that make America a beacon of hope for the world. And when they arrive or depart in the City of Atlanta, we want them to know that there is a special place designated for them right here at Hartsfield-Jackson.”

Mayor Reed was joined at the ceremony by Aviation General Manager Miguel Southwell; Mary Lou Austin, CEO of USO Georgia; and Glenn Welling, Vice President of Operations for USO, Inc. The event drew a standing-room-only crowd of USO staffers, volunteers, supporters and members of the military, as an Armed Forces band played patriotic music. The ceremony was followed by a tour of the facility, complete with a red, white and blue cake and other refreshments.

“Hartsfield-Jackson wants to show the members of the U.S. Armed Forces that we appreciate their service and believe they deserve a first-class facility,” Southwell said. “Using the model of an airline club as an inspiration, our team focused its design on amenities and comfort. We believe our troops and their families will truly enjoy the new space.”

Where the old center had the feel of a rec room, the renovated facility is more like an airline hospitality lounge, Austin said, with dozens of outlets for charging phones, banks of computer workstations and even a room reserved for private Skype calls. The center also has new furniture and appliances, several wide-screen TVs, a gaming station and a play area for children with a small library of children’s books. Visitors can get free snacks and drinks in the updated kitchen.

The center also has been redecorated with framed historical flags, military unit patches and hundreds of “challenge coins” – medallions typically given out by unit commanders in recognition of achievement.

The renovation came about after Mayor Reed and Aviation General Manager Southwell vowed last year to create a facility that would rival airline clubs located throughout the Airport and honor military members’ service.

Now in its 35th year at the Airport, Hartsfield-Jackson’s USO Center has played host to more than 2 million troops and their families.

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Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport

Hartsfield-Jackson (ATL) is the world's busiest and most efficient airport, serving more than 96.1 million passengers annually with nonstop service to more than 150 U.S. destinations and nearly 70 international destinations in more than 45 countries. ATL boasts a direct economic impact of \$34.8 billion in metro Atlanta and a total direct economic impact of \$70.9 billion in Georgia. The Airport is the largest employer in Georgia, with more than 63,000 employees. The Airport is a frequent recipient of awards of excellence for concessions, operations, architectural engineering and construction – including the 2013 Global Efficiency Excellence Award from the Air Transport Research Society, 2013 Project of the Year, Architectural Category for the Maynard H. Jackson Jr. International Terminal from the American Association of Airport Executives Southeast chapter and the 2012 Best Airport in North America, Business Travel Award from the Business Traveler Magazine. ATL has completed more than \$6 billion worth of capital improvements, including a new, energy-efficient rental car center, a gold LEED-certified international terminal and aesthetic and functional upgrades to its concourses, people movers and parking services. For more information, go to www.atlanta-airport.com. Check out the Airport's YouTube channel by visiting www.youtube.com/AtlantaHartsfield, follow us on Twitter (@Atlanta_Airport) and become a fan on Facebook (Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport).

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