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## Muslims seek prayer room at airport

AP Associated Press



AP Photo: Area Muslims pray near the ticketing area of the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, Friday, Dec....

By PATRICK CONDON, Associated Press Writer  
Fri Dec 1, 8:58 PM ET

MINNEAPOLIS - Airport officials said Friday they will consider setting aside a private area for prayer and meditation at the request of imams concerned about the removal of six Muslim clerics from a US Airways flight last week.

Steve Wareham, director of ADVERTISEMENT  
Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, said other airports have "meditation rooms" used for prayers or by passengers who simply need quiet time.

A group of Somali clerics met with airport officials Friday and said they would attract less attention if they had a private area for prayer. Devout Muslims pray five times daily, facing the holy city of Mecca.

"When we pray, we don't want a problem. We don't want what happened last week," said Abdulrehman Hersi, an imam at Darul-Quba mosque in Minneapolis, referring to six clerics who were barred from a US Airways flight in Minneapolis after drawing the concern of some passengers.

Airports in Nashville, Tenn.; Columbus, Ohio; and Fort Lauderdale, Fla., all advertise meditation rooms. Fort Lauderdale's is billed as "For travelers seeking a quiet time." All note they are nonsectarian.

The imams at the airport Friday drew a few stares as they laid down their prayer rugs and knelt on the hard rubber floor at the airport.

The clerics requested a meeting after both the US Airways incident and a recent flap over Muslim cabdrivers who didn't want to pick up passengers carrying alcohol.

"We are users of the airport, too, and we don't want to get into a situation where Muslims feel we are being marginalized at the airport," said Omar Jamal, executive director of the Somali Justice Advocacy Center in St. Paul and the meeting's organizer.

Airport officials will accept the group's invitation to visit a mosque, airport spokesman Pat Hogan said.

"I think there's a mutual recognition that it would be helpful for there to be a solid understanding," Hogan said.

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