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November 20, 2003

ADC Update

ADC Applauds DOT's Settlement with United Airlines:
United Airlines to Spend \$1.5 Million on Civil Rights Training

Washington, DC, November 20--The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) applauds the United States Department of Transportation (DOT) for reaching a constructive settlement with United Airlines. According to the DOT, United Airlines acted in a manner inconsistent with federal laws that prohibit discrimination. The DOT order further requires United Airlines to provide annual civil rights training to its employees for three years at a cost of at least \$1.5 million.

Shortly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, ADC filed and assisted others in filing numerous complaints with the DOT against airlines for allegedly removing passengers based on their perceived ethnicity and/or religion. Then in June 2002, ADC joined the American-Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in filing lawsuits against American Airlines, United Airlines, and Continental Airlines alleging that the airlines engaged in the unlawful removals of Arab, Arab-American, Muslim, or South Asian passengers based on their perceived religion, ethnicity, or national origin.

As a result of these complaints an investigation of United Airlines was initiated by the DOT. It was then revealed that United Airlines unlawfully removed passengers from flights or denied boarding to passengers based on their race, color, national origin, religion or ancestry.

ADC expresses its gratitude to Transportation Secretary Norm Mineta and the DOT "for taking this important step, which sends the clear message that the government will not tolerate illegal discrimination against airline passengers." When this pattern of abuse emerged in the weeks following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the DOT issued stern warnings to all US airlines that this form of discrimination was "not only immoral but illegal." The settlement and pursuant order against United Airlines further underline the commitment of Secretary Mineta and the DOT to ensure that travelers are not discriminated against on the basis of their perceived race, ethnicity or religious affiliation.

It should also be noted that in April, 2003, the DOT's Office of Aviation Enforcement and Proceedings filed a complaint against American Airlines alleging that the carrier unlawfully removed passengers from flights or prevented them from boarding in violation of federal anti-discrimination laws. A hearing in that case is pending before an administrative law judge.

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