

## SPECIAL OLYMPICS ATHLETES BEGIN JOURNEY HOME AS SPECIAL OLYMPICS AIRLIFT RETURN FLIGHTS LAUNCH; DOVE 1 DEPARTS ST. PAUL



### Volunteer pilots and donated aircraft help conclude one of the world's largest peacetime airlifts following 2026 Special Olympics USA Games

ST. PAUL, Minn. (June 27, 2026) — The [2026 Special Olympics Airlift](#), led by Cessna and Beechcraft, and organized by [Textron Aviation](#), a [Textron Inc.](#) (NYSE: TXT) company, entered its return phase today as athletes began their journeys home following the [Special Olympics USA Games](#), with Dove 1 departing St. Paul Downtown Airport (STP) as the first aircraft to carry delegations back to their communities.

### Dove 1 leads coordinated departures

Dove 1 on departure day, generously donated by [Omani and Jeanie Carson](#), initiated the day's outbound departures, marking a significant milestone as athletes concluded a week of competition, celebration and connection at the Games.



The departures represent the return phase of one of the world's largest peacetime airlifts, a coordinated aviation effort that transports hundreds of Special Olympics athletes and coaches to and from the Games.



Volunteer pilots, crew members and ground teams coordinated departure operations throughout the day as delegations traveled from St. Paul to destinations across the country. Each Dove flight is operated by crews who donate their time, aircraft and resources in support of the Airlift.

“Departure day is always meaningful,” said Ron Draper, president and CEO, Textron Aviation. “It reflects the achievements of the athletes and the collective effort of an aviation community committed to supporting them from takeoff to homecoming.”

### Aviation community closes out ninth Special Olympics Airlift



Throughout the day, additional Doves will depart STP, returning athletes to their friends, families and communities and bringing the 2026 Special Olympics Airlift to a close. Now in its ninth year, the Special Olympics Airlift continues to demonstrate how aviation can unite communities and expand access to participation for athletes with intellectual disabilities through a dignified and celebratory travel experience.

Everybody needs a lift every now and then. For updates and behind-the-scenes coverage of return flights, visit [airlift.txtav.com/releases/](https://airlift.txtav.com/releases/) or follow along on social media by following Textron Aviation, Cessna and Beechcraft.



## About Textron Aviation

### About Textron Aviation Inc.

We have been inspiring the journey of flight for nearly 100 years. Textron Aviation Inc., a Textron Inc. company, has empowered our collective talent across the Beechcraft, Cessna, Hawker and Pipistrel brands to design and deliver the best aviation experience for our customers. With a range that includes everything from business jets, turboprops, light and high-performance pistons, to special mission, military trainer and defense aircraft, Textron Aviation has the most versatile and comprehensive aviation product portfolio in the world and a workforce that has produced more than half of all general aviation aircraft worldwide. Customers in more than 170 countries rely on our legendary performance, reliability and versatility, along with our trusted global customer service network, for affordable, productive and flexible flight. For more information, visit [www.txtav.com](http://www.txtav.com).

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