



**SPECIAL
OLYMPICS
AIRLIFT**
BY CESSNA | BEECHCRAFT

FAQ | Special Olympics Airlift Doves

Q: What is the Special Olympics Airlift?

A: The Special Olympics Airlift, organized by Textron Aviation in collaboration with its customers and the Special Olympics USA Games, is a unique event that mobilizes hundreds of volunteer pilots and aircraft to transport athletes and coaches to the USA Games. It is the world's largest peacetime airlift, showcasing the power of aviation collaboration and community spirit.

Q: When and where are the 2026 USA Games hosted?

A: The 2026 USA Games will be hosted at the University of Minnesota from June 20 to June 26, 2026. The Airlift will transport athletes to St. Paul Downtown Airport Holman Field (KSTP) on Friday, June 19, 2026, and return them home on Saturday, June 27, 2026.

Q: Why are transport aircraft called 'Doves'?

A: Doves are a symbol of peace, and this is the world's largest peacetime airlift, showcasing the power of aviation collaboration and community spirit. The prestigious "Dove" designation is given to owners and operators who donate the use of their aircraft to transport athletes to and from the Special Olympics USA Games. Doves are given National Airspace System priority by the Federal Aviation Administration while flying in the Airlift.

Q: How many athletes and coaches will be transported?

A: The Airlift aims to transport hundreds of athletes and coaches to the USA Games.

Q: Will the athletes be traveling alone or will they be supervised?

A: The athletes will travel with their coach or a non-athlete member of their delegation.

Q: Who can volunteer for the Airlift?

A: Owners and operators of Cessna, Beechcraft and Hawker aircraft are invited to volunteer the use of their aircraft, fuel and operating expenses, and time.

Q: What are the requirements for participating aircraft and pilots?

A: Participating aircraft are preferred to have two qualified pilots and required to provide a valid Certificate of Insurance reflecting a minimum of \$2M liability insurance and Textron Aviation as an additional insured party. There will be no exceptions to the required liability limits.

Q: What is the deadline to commit as a Dove?

A: The deadline to commit as a Dove for the 2026 SOA is Saturday, Jan. 31, 2026. This allows sufficient time to coordinate flight planning and logistics prior to the Airlift.

Q: Will event logistics be thoroughly briefed prior to arrival/departure days?

A: Virtual training sessions will be provided prior to the event to detail all arrival day and departure day procedures.

Q: Do Doves complete their own flight planning?

A: Textron Aviation will coordinate routing to and from the airlift with the FAA and provide routing and arrival times well in advance of the event. Doves are responsible for filing their designated route at the time corresponding to their arrival time.

Q: Where will Doves pick up athletes?

A: The Airlift will coordinate with each Special Olympics state delegation on one departure airport and FBO. Not all states opt to participate in the Airlift for a variety of reasons, therefore, Doves may be asked to pick up athletes outside of their home state.

Q: What time will departures begin?

A: Arrivals begin early on Friday, June 19, especially for states closest to Minnesota. Doves may need to reposition on the evening of Thursday, June 18, 2026, for an early departure the following day. On departure day, Saturday, June 27, 2026, departures could begin from KSTP as early as 7:00 a.m. Some aircraft will be asked to arrive on Friday, June 26, to be fueled and positioned for departure first thing on the morning of June 27.

Q: How are flight times scheduled for the arrival and departure days?

A: With an aircraft landing every 2-4 minutes throughout the 10+ hour day, the Airlift is highly choreographed. Location and fleet size for each state delegation is considered in the planning process.

Q: Can volunteers transport athletes for only one leg of the flight?

A: Athletes need your help to get them both to and from the USA Games. The preference is that participants agree to both inbound and outbound trips, but we appreciate all Doves.

Q: What should Doves expect while we wait for athletes to arrive/depart? A: A Textron Aviation employee will host a departure party/sendoff at each departure state on Friday, June 19, 2026. At KSTP, Doves can expect a pilot chalet with food, drinks and seating while your aircraft is being fueled and/or you are waiting for athletes to arrive.

Q: What services will be available upon arrival?

A: A variety of services will be available at KSTP for Doves including:

- Fuel
- Ice
- Lav service if needed
- Textron Aviation Mobile Service Unit
- Refreshments, restrooms, box lunches and flight planning in our Welcome Center

Q: What are the tax benefits for Doves?

A: Donating the use of your aircraft to Special Olympics of North America for the Special Olympics Airlift can have a profound impact on the lives of the athletes participating in the games. By providing access to your aircraft, pilot time, fees, and fuel, you are enabling the organization to transport athletes, coaches and volunteers to Special Olympics Games, promoting empowerment and acceptance. This type of in-kind donation not only supports the Special Olympics mission but also offers you potential tax benefits, as the value of the donation may be deductible. Your contribution can make a tangible difference in the lives of thousands of athletes, while also showcasing your commitment to giving back to the community. The Special Olympics Airlift is a unique and valuable program that relies on the generosity of donors like you to continue providing opportunities for athletes to participate in life-changing events. Doves should contact the Textron Aviation community relations team for specific information at communityrelations@txtav.com.

Q: What if we would like to stay in Minnesota for the week?

A: That would be great! There are volunteer opportunities at the Special Olympic Games. You will be responsible for finding space to accommodate your aircraft for the week.