



Texarkana Gazette

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Airport sees downturn in Thanksgiving travel

STEVON GAMBLE
TEXARKANA GAZETTE

TEXARKANA, Ark. — Texarkana Regional Airport experienced a downturn in passengers during the traditionally busy Thanksgiving holiday.

For the few days before and after Nov. 27, the Federal Aviation Administration noted 1,416 passengers at the airport, Airport Executive Director Paul Mehrlich reported Thursday at a regular meeting of the airport's Board of Directors. The number represents a 7.5% decrease over Thanksgiving 2024, when the airport had

1,531 passengers.

Mehrlich said various factors could be behind the decrease, but longtime Board Member Mike Mayo offered an explanation.

"They were scared to travel because of the shutdown," Mayo said. "They didn't want to get hung up in some airport on Thanksgiving."

Mehrlich was hopeful the falloff was just a blip on the radar and that it does not portend a slowdown at Christmas.

In her report, Finance Director Shannon Elliott stated the airport was in the red for October.

Texarkana Regional had \$195,357

in revenue, which includes fuel and parking fees, but \$210,233 in expenditures for a net loss of \$14,876.

A factor was a significant decrease in the subsidy from the city of Texarkana, Texas. Starting in October, which is the beginning of the city's fiscal year, the monthly payment from Texarkana, Texas, to the airport dropped by \$32,000 — from \$50,901 to \$18,613.

The city of Texarkana, Arkansas, which co-owns the airport with the Texas side, will continue to pay \$41,327 through the end of the year. Starting Jan. 1, the begin-

ning of its fiscal year, the Arkansas side's monthly subsidy will be \$15,112.

Mehrlich said the reductions are due to the airport's ending 2024 with a budget surplus.

The airport had projected to end 2025 with a surplus of \$600,000.

"We're currently tracking more like a \$300,000," said Mehrlich, noting the reduced payments from Texarkana, Texas.

The airport ended October with \$920,484.19 on hand.

In other business, Mehrlich reported that Texarkana Arkansas Police Department will take over

airport security in January.

The airport will reimburse TAPD \$24.11 per hour for each part-time officer assigned to the 12-hour shift. The fee covers the base salary of \$18.45, plus taxes and payroll contributions.

"This will result in approximately \$25,000 of savings," Paul Mehrlich.

Additionally, the airport will pay TAPD \$1,200 a month for a police vehicle. The expenditure covers the cost of an airport-dedicated police SUV the Police Department purchased when it acquired new vehicles for its fleet.

Seen and HEARD

Resource center fills stockings in senior homes for the holidays

SHARDA JAMES
TEXARKANA GAZETTE

TEXARKANA, Ark. — A community resource center plans to spread holiday cheer to senior citizens this Christmas season.

Helping Every Addict Recover Daily, or HEARD Inc., intends to deliver gifts to residents at two senior citizen homes. The initiative aims to ensure that every senior, especially those who don't have family and friends who visit, feels remembered and celebrated during the holiday season.

"We'll be visiting one senior home on the Texas side and one on the Arkansas side," said Samantha McCalman, HEARD Inc. peer support specialist.

The centers are The Cottages on the Arkansas side and The Retreat at Kenwood in Texas.

HEARD Inc. is collecting large-print puzzle books, hygiene items, blankets, socks and other items. Staff members also will spend the coming weeks working with Scout Troop 16 and Pack 16 of Twelfth Point to make homemade Christmas cards.

HEARD Inc. has listed the needed items on its Amazon wish list titled Senior Citizens Christmas Day.

McCalman said the gift drive is inspired by a friend whose mother lives in a senior citizen home.

"My friend was telling me how some of the residents are put there and seem like they are left behind," McCalman said. "I thought how awful, especially during the holidays, when some don't receive a gift or even a card."

McCalman said the goal is to bring comfort and love to those who need it most.

"We want the seniors to know that there are people who care about them and you are not forgotten about," McCalman said. "They are still part of the community."

Donations to the gift drive can be dropped off at HEARD Inc., 923 Hickory St., through Dec. 20. The gifts will be delivered Dec. 23.



Dec. 8
17 shopping
days to Christmas

Slammin' good time



Juan Quinones, of St. Raymond Boys High School in New York City, dunks the ball during halftime in the Texas High-Arkansas High game Saturday at the Red River Hoopfest at Texas High School. See related photos online at texarkanagazette.com. (Staff photo by Stevon Gamble)



World War II veterans and government officials salute during the 84th Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day Ceremony on Sunday in Honolulu. (AP photo/Mengshin Lin)

A nation remembers

Soon no Pearl Harbor survivors will be alive; people turn to other ways to learn about the attack

AUDREY McAVOY
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HONOLULU — Survivors of the 1941 Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor have long been the center of a remembrance ceremony held each year on the military base's waterfront.

But today only 12 are still alive — all centenarians — and this year none were able to make the pilgrimage to Hawaii to mark the event Sunday.

That means no one who attended had firsthand memories of serving during the attack, which killed more than 2,300 troops and catapulted the U.S. into World War 2. The development is not a surprise and is an evolution of an ongoing trend. As survivors fade, their descendants and the public are increasingly turning to other ways of learning about the bombing.

"The idea of not having a survivor there for the first time — I just, I don't know — it hurt my heart in a way I can't describe," said

Kimberlee Heinrichs, whose 105-year-old father Ira "Ike" Schab had to cancel plans to fly in from Oregon after falling ill.

Survivors have been present every year in recent memory except for 2020, when the Navy and the National Park Service closed the observance to the general public because of coronavirus pandemic health risks.

"I CAN STILL SEE WHAT WAS HAPPENING."

The ceremony began with a moment of silence at 7:55 a.m. local, the same time the attack began on Dec. 7, 1941. Solemn rituals followed.

Fighter jets flew overhead in "missing man formation," in which one jet peels off to symbolize those lost. Survivors typically present wreaths to honor the dead, though active duty troops have assumed this job in recent years. Survivors also would rise to salute active

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Cotton says he has no objection to releasing video of strike that killed two survivors

BILL BARROW
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A video of a U.S. military strike on an alleged drug boat in the Caribbean that killed two survivors of the initial attack shows "nothing remarkable," the Republican who leads the Senate Intelligence Committee said Sunday, and he would not oppose its public release if the Pentagon were to declassify it.

Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton, who backs President Donald Trump's campaign against suspected drug smugglers, is partially aligning himself with Trump and top Democrats in favor of releasing the video of the Sept. 2 attack. It was the first in what has become a monthslong series of American strikes on vessels near Venezuela that the administration says were ferrying drugs. At least 87 people have been killed in 22 known strikes.

See **VIDEO**, Page 2A

Jingle and Mingle Market



Guests walk through Front Street Plaza during the Jingle and Mingle Market on Saturday in downtown Texarkana, Ark. The market hosted booths selling Christmas and non-Christmas items, as well as food. See related photos online at texarkanagazette.com. (Staff photo by Andrea Loreda)



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Sunny and cool
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