



February, 10, 2003

Security bolstered across the USA

By Chris Woodyard

USA TODAY

The workweek begins amid a heightened state of alert that can mean anything from a memo reminding employees to report suspicious behavior to tougher parking restrictions at airports.

When the government raised the terrorism-alert code Friday to orange from yellow, Attorney General John Ashcroft identified "lightly secured targets" as the most vulnerable. That includes hotels, apartment buildings and shopping centers. Security was tight Sunday at the NBA All-Star Game in Atlanta. In New York City, police vans were parked at the southwest entrance to Central Park.

The warning that there is an "increased likelihood" that terrorists would attack Americans prompted action on many fronts:

* Airports. Security guards are enforcing public parking bans within 300 feet of any terminal building. Travelers can expect random car searches and additional passenger screening.

* Small planes. Starting at 6 a.m. today, planes flying below 18,000 feet within 30 miles of Washington, D.C., must file a flight plan, stay in radio contact with air traffic controllers and use equipment that allows controllers to identify them.

* River crossings. At the New Jersey entrance to the Lincoln Tunnel, trucks headed into Manhattan are stopped and inspected. More state troopers are patrolling.

* Law enforcement. Chicago and many cities and states opened their emergency operations centers. Some increased staffing.

* **Hotels.** Guests at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York and the Crowne Plaza in Washington who use the parking garage have their car trunks searched. Guests who bring an unusually large amount of baggage are scrutinized.

Guards are monitoring the walkway that connects the Boston Hilton and Logan International Airport. There are extra guards scanning security camera videos in a back room.

In a memo, the New York Marriott Marquis hotel asked staff members to "heighten your sense of awareness" and report anything suspicious.

Hotels "are among the highest density (places) in terms of number of people in one place and the least-protected places," says hotel security expert John Fannin, chief executive of SafePlace. "They should be taking (the warning) extremely seriously."