

Cheetah Gets Loose in Cargo Hold

A big cat traveling by airplane escapes from crate during transport.

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A female cheetah got out of its crate Oct. 31 while traveling in the cargo hold of a Delta Air Lines flight from Winston, Ore., to the Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta. Zoo Atlanta officials were called in to trap the animal without harming her or airline employees, the Atlanta Journal Constitution reports.

A ground-crew worker discovered the cheetah in the cargo hold when he went to unload baggage. Delta employees closed the cargo hold, then moved the Boeing 757 into an enclosed hangar, according to Delta spokesperson Kent Landers. Sam Rivera, a Zoo Atlanta veterinarian, was called in to shoot the 90-pound cheetah with a tranquilizer gun.

The cheetah was traveling with another female cheetah from Wild Safari in Winston. The animals' final destination will be the Memphis Zoo. Both cheetahs are reported to be resting comfortably at Zoo Atlanta. "They are very relaxed and are eating," Rivera said, adding that Memphis Zoo officials will pick up the pair of cheetahs early this week.

No baggage or cargo on the plane was damaged by the cheetahs, and no passengers were in danger, Landers said.