

# MONTHS OF PLANNING CULMINATES IN OVERNIGHT CHANGEOVER AT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

## PRECISE MOVE SEQUENCE RESULTS IN ON-TIME DEPARTURES IN SAN ANTONIO

CASE STUDY

Situated on 2,600 acres, the San Antonio International Airport (SAT) is a gateway for more than 7 million passengers and 220 million pounds of cargo freight each year.



To better serve its growing customer base, the airport completed a major expansion project, which included the construction of a new terminal, bi-level roadway, consolidated baggage handling system, central utility plant and long-term parking structure. In addition, renovations were completed on multiple offsite buildings. When it was time to initiate the physical relocation of personnel and equipment, Graebel implemented a multi-phase plan to minimize the impact on daily airport operations.

### THE CHALLENGE

As the airport prepared to open its new terminal, a well-coordinated plan was essential. Internal operations and passenger travel would need to flow smoothly without interruption.



On-going communication would be critical between Graebel, city officials, construction crews, airport personnel and two major airlines. What occurred behind the scenes, leading to the first flight from Terminal B, was a precisely-executed move sequence with many variables.

(continued on reverse)

### THE CUSTOMER

San Antonio International Airport (SAT)  
[www.sanantonio.gov/aviation](http://www.sanantonio.gov/aviation)

### PROJECT SCOPE

Move aviation and non-aviation staff to refurbished areas of the old terminal or three remote facilities, vacate the original terminal, and transition support departments and two airlines to a newly-constructed 251,000 sq. ft. terminal.

### PROJECT GOALS

Work cohesively with airport personnel; abide by all security regulations; balance deadlines with a flexible approach to accommodate construction crews; allow air carriers to continue operating as scheduled.

### WHY GRAEBEL

Graebel has a multi-year contract with the city of San Antonio, which owns and operates the airport through its aviation department. City officials were familiar with the precise planning and reliability of Graebel and confident that a successful outcome would be achieved.



Graebel's exclusive national certification from the International Office Moving Institute ensures high-quality, uniform commercial services from coast-to-coast.

“I was impressed with the close working relationships within the Graebel team. They continually interacted as a cohesive unit. My direct involvement with them was enjoyable, and I appreciated the proactive ideas brought forward throughout the project.”

- Curt Klaerner, special projects manager San Antonio Airport System

### THE SOLUTION

As expected, security requirements were incredibly stringent. Months in advance, Graebel submitted a personnel list to the airport badge division. As mandated in the FAA/TSA guidelines, each person would need a valid SAT ID badge to gain access to restricted areas. Extensive screening activity included FBI background checks and fingerprint analysis for the overnight move.

Fifteen Graebel supervisors and crew members were granted escort privileges beyond TSA security, and four drivers received a special permit to operate vehicles directly on the airfield.

To assess the project requirements, Jon Miller, commercial relocation manager at Graebel, worked closely with the contractor. A ten-phase move schedule was developed. Logistical details included moving the police, badge and security divisions, originally housed within the old terminal, to offsite facilities. Within the main building, aviation members, airline staff and concession groups would vacate the original terminal and transition to the newly-constructed area.

The week before each segment, Miller met with his key contacts to review planned activities, and the Graebel crew confirmed individual assignments on a daily basis.

The largest segment directly affected American Airlines and Continental Airlines. Two Graebel crews worked simultaneously, one assigned to each carrier. Two primary aspects were taken into account. An open house was scheduled within the new terminal weeks prior to the



*Experienced Graebel crews worked through the night to relocate carriers.*

actual move. A portion of the ticket counters, seat configurations and artwork were needed in advance for the event. Non-duplicate items required for normal operations remained in place until the final day.

The thrust of activity took place within hours of the official changeover. After the last flight arrived at 11:00 p.m., Graebel worked overnight to move the remaining check-in counters, computer systems and airline maintenance equipment. Full cooperation with the airline staff, IT personnel and electrical teams was required.

Adding to the already challenging, time-sensitive deadline, the TSA, aviation police, and airport security performed a thorough sweep of the new terminal; each carrier required an hour to reinstall computers and test the connections; and travelers would begin arriving two hours before the first flights of the day.

### THE RESULT

As dawn approached the following morning, and passengers arrived for check-in, the new terminal was officially open. Both airlines had on-time departures at 6:00 a.m., and no issues were encountered.

Throughout the move, 120 aviation staff and 100 airline employees were relocated to their respective work areas. Innovative techniques were applied multiple times. At one offsite facility, with no elevator available, an 800-pound safe was carried to the second floor. Canine kennels, too large to fit through the door, were safely hoisted through a large plate glass window.

According to Curt Klaerner, special projects manager with the San Antonio Airport System, and primary contact for Graebel, “With a move of this size, of course we had initial concerns. But Graebel earned its stripes right out of the gate.”