

Jerseyan accuses Delta Air of racial profiling

BY JOHN P. MARTIN
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A Long Valley man yesterday filed a racial profiling suit against Delta Air Lines, alleging that a flight attendant unfairly humiliated him and told other passengers he might cause "trouble" and needed to be "subdued."

Racial profiling suits have increased in the wake of the Sept. 11 terror attacks, but lawyers for Hansdip Bindra, a 34-year-old soft-

ware executive, say theirs is the first such claim against an airline by a Sikh American.

The suit, filed in federal district court in Newark, seeks damages from Delta; its affiliate carrier, Atlantic Coast Airlines Inc.; and the attendant, Janet Thomas. Bindra also demands that the airline implement training in cultural competency and racial profiling.

Anthony Black, a spokesman at Delta's Atlanta headquarters, said the airline would not com-

ment on pending litigation. Thomas could not be located for comment. Bindra's attorneys said they did not know where she lived.

In a news conference outside the courthouse, Bindra said he did nothing to provoke Thomas during the flight from Cincinnati to Dayton, Ohio, last November.

"Just because I wear a turban and a beard doesn't make me any different, a worse human being than anyone else," he said.

The flight, on Delta-affiliate At-

lantic Coast Airlines, was the second leg of a trip that Bindra began in Newark. The 40-minute flight was staffed by a single flight attendant and carried about 20 passengers, he said.

According to the lawsuit, Thomas began to harass Bindra after he stood to retrieve a magazine. He contends that the attendant, who is white, told him that "here in America we have rules" and that "because of the situation

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in the Middle East, you have to keep a low profile."

Bindra, a native of India, said other passengers on the flight later told him that Thomas had warned them that "the man up front with the turban" might be "trouble" and that with no justification, she told them: "When I give you a signal, come help subdue him."

Such a signal never occurred and Bindra arrived at his destination unharmed, but said it was a "horrible, horrible experience" that left him shaking. He said he switched to another airline for his

return flight.

Bindra said he and about a half-dozen other passengers on the flight filed written complaints about Thomas with the airline, but that none received a reply.

His attorney, Ravinder Bhalla, said the airline has refused to discuss whether the attendant was disciplined or if it took any measures to prevent similar incidents.

"For all we know," Bhalla said, "Ms. Thomas and any number of employees might be in the skies as we speak, racially profiling."

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