

# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
 HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
 WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

February 19, 2024

## VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Sean Duffy  
 Secretary of Transportation  
 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
 Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

The Trump Administration's recent firing of more than 300 safety-critical employees of the Federal Aviation Administration ("FAA") raises serious concern that you are recklessly cutting aviation safety personnel at a time when many Americans are increasingly concerned about the safety of our national airspace and whether the FAA is up to the job of keeping the flying public safe following a series of deadly accidents.<sup>1</sup> I urge you to immediately reverse these politically motivated terminations and provide the FAA with more and better safety resources instead of slashing the agency's dedicated workforce. Further, to assist the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations' ("the Subcommittee") inquiry into the FAA's terminations and their troubling implications, please promptly provide the following information and records.

A string of recent aviation incidents has shaken the public's confidence in the safety of air travel and the trust placed in the agencies responsible for keeping our skies safe, the FAA and Department of Transportation ("DOT").<sup>2</sup> On January 29, 67 people were killed when American Airlines Flight 5342 collided in midair with an Army Black Hawk helicopter over the Potomac River in Washington, DC.<sup>3</sup> This tragic collision was the deadliest aviation accident in the United States since 2009.<sup>4</sup> Two days later, seven people were killed when a small jet crashed immediately after takeoff in Philadelphia.<sup>5</sup> On February 6, a plane carrying ten passengers and crew crashed southeast of Nome, Alaska.<sup>6</sup> And, although thankfully no fatalities or life-threatening injuries were reported, a Delta Air Lines regional jet carrying 80 passengers and crew overturned upon landing at Toronto's international airport on February 17.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Qasim Nauman, *String of Air Crashes in 2025 Has Rattled Travelers*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 18, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/17/world/canada/plane-crash-travel.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Walker, *For the F.A.A., Three Deadly Crashes and a Reckoning*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 12, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/12/us/politics/faa-plane-crashes-safety.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Julie Bosman, Jack Healy & Juliet Macur, *The Lives Cut Short by the D.C. Plane Crash*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 7, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/02/03/us/dc-plane-crash-victims.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Walker, *supra* note 2.

<sup>5</sup> Qasim Nauman, *supra* note 1.

<sup>6</sup> John Yoon, *Small Plane With 10 Dead Found Crashed in Alaska*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 7, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/07/us/alaska-plane-missing.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Vjosa Isai, Ian Austen, Niraj Chokshi, & Yan Zhuang, *A Passenger Jet Flips and Burns, but This Time Tragedy Is Averted*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 18, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/18/world/canada/delta-plane-toronto-crash.html>.

The contributing factors that precipitated each of these incidents remain under investigation, but one obvious reality is abundantly clear—now is not the time to frantically discard FAA employees that work tirelessly to ensure the safety of every aircraft that takes to the skies. On January 21, one day after President Trump took office, he disbanded the Aviation Safety Advisory Committee.<sup>8</sup> And even as investigators continue to comb through wreckage in search for clues that might explain these disasters, the Trump Administration began firing hundreds of FAA employees on February 14.<sup>9</sup> Despite your assurances to the contrary, the FAA employees fired to date include safety-critical positions such as “personnel hired for FAA radar, landing and navigational aid maintenance”<sup>10</sup> and “maintenance mechanics, aeronautical information specialists, aviation safety assistants and management and program assistants.”<sup>11</sup> Other employees terminated included several working on an “urgent and classified early warning radar system the Air Force had announced in 2023 for Hawaii to detect incoming cruise missiles.”<sup>12</sup>

There is widespread, bipartisan agreement that our National Airspace System must be improved, but the Trump Administration’s indiscriminate termination of FAA personnel raises safety risks instead of advancing needed reform. To the contrary, the Trump Administration’s FAA purge “will increase the workload and place new responsibilities on [the FAA] workforce that is already stretched thin” and potentially undermine national security.<sup>13</sup> The FAA and DOT simply cannot take safety for granted, and I hope you will work to renew your agency’s focus on safety, beginning by immediately reinstating the recently-fired FAA employees.

Please provide the following information and records to the Subcommittee by February 28, 2025.

1. A list of the name and respective title(s) of each FAA employee<sup>14</sup> terminated on or after February 14, 2025.
2. For each employee listed pursuant to request 1:
  - a. The date the employee started working for the FAA;
  - b. The date the employee was terminated;
  - c. The reason(s) the employee was terminated;
  - d. The duty station of each employee;
  - e. Whether the employee was a veteran of the United States armed services or is currently serving in the National Guard; and
  - f. How the employee was notified of their termination.

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<sup>8</sup> Josh Funk, *Trump fires heads of TSA, Coast Guard and guts key aviation safety advisory committee*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Jan. 21, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/coast-guard-homeland-security-priorities-committees-trump-tsa-d3e4398c8871ada8d0590859442e092c>.

<sup>9</sup> Tara Copp, *Trump begins firings of FAA staff just weeks after fatal DC plane crash*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Feb. 17, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/doge-faa-air-traffic-firings-safety-67981aec33b6ee72cbad8dcee31f3437>.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> Valerie Volcovici & David Shepardson, *FAA fires fewer than 400 workers, transportation chief says*, REUTERS (Feb. 18, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/faa-fires-fewer-than-400-workers-transportation-chief-says-2025-02-18/>.

<sup>12</sup> Tara Copp, *supra* note 9.

<sup>13</sup> Press Release, PASS on Firing of Probationary Employees at FAA, Professional Aviation Safety Specialists (Feb. 15, 2025), <https://www.passnational.org/index.php/news/873-pass-statement-on-firing-of-probationary-employees-at-faa>.

<sup>14</sup> For purposes of this request, “employee” includes any consultant, volunteer, agent, or any other type of associate.

3. If the reason(s) for terminating any employee listed pursuant to request 2c. was related to the employee's performance, please provide all performance evaluation(s) or other records<sup>15</sup> relied upon to justify the employee's termination.
4. All communications<sup>16</sup> referring or related to the termination of any FAA personnel between the Office of Personnel Management or the Department of Government Efficiency and the following individuals transmitted between January 20, 2025, and February 14, 2025:
  - a. The Secretary of Transportation;
  - b. The DOT Acting Chief Human Capital Officer;
  - c. The Acting Administrator of the FAA; and
  - d. The FAA Assistant Administrator for Human Resource Management.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal  
Ranking Member  
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

cc: The Honorable Ron Johnson  
Chairman  
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

Mr. Chris Rocheleau  
Acting Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration

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<sup>15</sup> For purposes of this request, "records" include any written, recorded, or graphic material of any kind, including letters, memoranda, reports, notes, electronic data (emails, email attachments, and any other electronically-created or stored information), direct messages, chats, calendar entries, inter-office communications, meeting minutes, phone/voice mail or recordings/records of verbal communications, and drafts (whether or not they resulted in final documents).

<sup>16</sup> For purposes of this request, "communications" include any records, as defined above, transmitted in any way between two or more individuals or entities.