

From: Pinkerton, Sharon
Sent: Mon, 21 Apr 2025 17:58:23 +0000
To: Bradbury, Steven (OST); Meachum, Pete (OST); Siegrist, Ben (OST); Cote, Greg (OST); Sizemore, Nathaniel (OST); Rocheleau, Chris <FAA>; McKenna, Liam <FAA>; Perez, Simone <FAA>
Subject: The Daily Caller : We Must Make The FAA Great Again

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Department of Transportation (DOT). Do not click on links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Will share w/ OMB as well 😊

DEAN KARAYANIS: We Must Make The FAA Great Again

The Daily Caller

<https://dailycaller.com/2025/04/21/dean-karayanis-we-must-make-the-faa-great-again/>

Dean Karayanis is a former producer for The Rush Limbaugh Show and host of History Author Show on IHeartRadio.

Recently, two planes collided on the runway at Reagan National Airport, startling passengers including six members of Congress. It's the latest warning light flashing at Air Traffic Control but — if President Trump gets congressional buy-in — help will soon be flying to the rescue.

"Every day," according to the FAA, Air Traffic Control serves "more than 45,000 flights and 2.9 million airline passengers." About 13,000 planes, give or take a thousand, are zooming over our heads right now. Flying has become as safe and routine as it is for birds — and that's dangerous.

"With routine," Secret Service Agent Jack Parr wrote in his autobiography, "comes boredom. With boredom comes distraction and letting down your guard. When that happens, people die." He was explaining how John Hinckley got close enough to shoot President Ronald Reagan in 1981.

It's natural to take something that runs as smoothly for granted, but Mr. Trump and Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy are sending up a flare. For generations, they warn, Washington has neglected the people who keep America's 20,031 airports humming.

The antiquated system is showing its age. In addition to last week's clipped wings, there have been other close calls. While none involved fatalities, the 67 people who died in the midair collision over the Potomac River in January were not so fortunate.

Another warning light flickered when the FAA's Notice to Air Missions system went dark on January 11, 2023, disrupting and delaying flights. A damaged database file and failure to follow procedures were the culprits.

Rep. Josh Gottheimer, Democrat of New Jersey, was aboard the plane at Reagan when, he posted on X, "another plane struck our wing." As often happens when flights go wrong, he sought to cast blame, writing "recent cuts to the FAA weaken our skies and public safety."

The White House's @RapidResponse47 X account corrected him. "Wrong," it said. "There have been no cuts to air traffic controllers, safety personnel, or safety-critical positions at the FAA." Rather than wait for the next crash and politicizing it, Congress has a chance to join the Trump team's push to prevent them.

As the administration is asking where it can “find cost savings in this government,” Mr. Duffy told Fox News Channel on March 8, “there’s also places you have to invest.” He’s taking the lead in implementing urgent safety recommendations made by the National Transportation Safety Board last month, and that costs money.

It’s as easy to blame controllers on the ground as it is to cite pilot error in the skies. Few realize that even as technology has advanced, air traffic computers have remained frozen in the past: Floppy-disks from the Days of Disco and paper flight strips invented just after the Jazz Age.

Mr. Duffy is seeking congressional support to make air traffic control systems great again, advancing radar and other technology into the 21st Century while adding terminals. He also envisions using AI to pinpoint areas at risk of suffering collisions before steel smashes into steel.

Airlines for America, the trade association representing the nation’s top carriers, introduced other proposals last month. These included “enough skilled people (controllers and technicians) and more training capacity.”

Personnel is another overlooked area of atrophy. Over nine in 10 of America’s control towers are understaffed and only one training center is up and running to supply reinforcements. Airlines for America also wants to ensure that those on the job “can procure and field modern technology.”

Mr. Duffy told Fox that he’s seeking to “streamline the process” and raise salaries for applicants to Air Traffic Control school. It will still be “a two, three-year process, but if we don’t start now, it’s never going to happen.”

Mr. Duffy’s overhaul of this system, left to rust for so long, would require until the end of Mr. Trump’s term. Airlines for America suggests that Congress assist with “a long-term fix to the budgeting process” to “allow the FAA to plan long-term capital projects.”

Congress has a blueprint for thinking beyond the next election cycle in the way it funded the Airport Improvement Program. Lawmakers can apply the same mindset to modernizing the Air Traffic Control system, rather than making the FAA come to Capitol Hill, hat in hand, each year.

American planes transport 44.5 million pounds of freight a year, but people are their most precious cargo. Millions of lives are in the hands of air traffic controllers. They’ve made flying routine; they’ll need Congress to get on board with Mr. Trump and Mr. Duffy to keep it that way.

Dean Karayanis is a former producer for The Rush Limbaugh Show and host of History Author Show on IHeartRadio.