

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

June 12, 2025

The Honorable Mitch Behm
Inspector General
Office of Inspector General at the United States Department of Transportation

Dear Acting Inspector General Mitch Behm,

We respectfully request your office audit the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) oversight of airspace operations at and around Washington National Airport (DCA), and the FAA's procedures for managing military aircraft operating within civilian-controlled airspace. This request follows the January 29, 2025 collision at DCA that tragically led to the deaths of 67 people. Each of these individuals were more than a passenger or soldier, they were loved ones friends, parents, children, teammates and colleagues.

The FAA plays a critical role in regulating and managing the U.S. National Airspace System. We have one of the busiest and most complex aviation networks with over 45,000 flights operating in our country daily. That is why this crash raises serious questions about the effectiveness of FAA airspace management, communication processes, and deconfliction procedures in one of our nation's most sensitive and congested aviation corridors.

The FAA's core mission is to uphold the safety and efficiency of the nation's air transportation system.¹ The Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently urged the FAA to take immediate action to modernize its Air Traffic Control systems. Key GAO recommendations include addressing more than 50 unsustainable air traffic control systems, enhancing oversight and adherence to program management best practices, accelerating NextGen modernization, improving risk mitigation to reduce flight disruptions, and bolstering workforce and technical expertise. We urge the FAA to urgently implement these recommendations to effectively meet the evolving demands of air transportation.²

Given the complexity of operations within the Washington, D.C. highly restricted airspace, it is vital that the FAA's oversight mechanisms be thoroughly reviewed. Accordingly, we request your audit examine the following areas:³

1. An evaluation of current FAA procedures for managing air traffic to and from DCA, including airspace design, such as arrival and departure routes and flight restrictions;

¹ https://files.gao.gov/reports/GAO-25-108502/index.html?_gl=1*1wcrk80*_ga*MTEzOTAyMjc5LjE3NDc0Mjc3NTQ.*_ga_V393SNS3SR*cZE3NDc0Mjc3NTMkbzEkZzAkDE3NDc0Mjc3NTMkajAkBDakaDA

² [Air Traffic Control: FAA Actions Urgently Needed to Modernize Systems | U.S. GAO](#)

³ [Restricted Airspace | Federal Aviation Administration](#)

coordination between air traffic control facilities; and adherence to separation standards essential for safety in congested airspace.

2. An examination of the effectiveness of FAA's incident reporting and safety data systems in identifying and addressing recurring risks or systemic issues. We urge this audit to assess whether existing data systems from sources such as pilot and controller reports, radar tracking, and automated safety tools effectively identify "near misses", informing corrective actions, and improving safety in and around DCA airspace.
3. An assessment of how the FAA collaborates with the Department of Defense and military air traffic controllers to ensure the safe and efficient operation of military aircraft within the civilian-managed airspace of the National Capital Region.

Given the high stakes in managing the airspace surrounding our nation's capital, a comprehensive audit is necessary to ensure that FAA procedures effectively safeguard both civilian and military aviation operations.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. FAA oversight is crucial to airspace safety and requires a thorough review to mitigate risks and enhance air traffic management. We look forward to a timely update on the status of this audit request by July 12, 2025.

Sincerely,



Gabe Amo
Member of Congress



Ron Estes
Member of Congress