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Sent: Tue, 18 Feb 2025 22:18:03 +0000
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Subject: SUBMISSION: Sec Duffy - America's Air Traffic Systems Need an Urgent Upgrade

Hi Lynne!

I hope you are doing well! It has been a long time since we last worked together, so I am happy our paths are crossing again 😊 I am officially with the Department of Transportation under Secretary Duffy as the Traveling Press Secretary.

I wanted to submit the below op-ed to Fox for consideration.

Please let me know if you all are interested in running exclusively.

Thank you!
Halee Dobbins

America's Air Traffic Systems Need an Urgent Upgrade

By: Secretary Sean P. Duffy

On my first day as Secretary of Transportation, we witnessed the midair collision in Washington, DC that took 67 lives.

While the investigation is ongoing, the tragedy highlighted the urgent need to modernize our air traffic systems—and to move past the broken promises and political inertia of the past.

The Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) unsustainable software systems that we've inherited are symptomatic of the endemic problems that plagued the Biden administration: a bloated bureaucracy that pushed overregulation instead of innovation, and radical DEI instead of merit. As a result, innovation stagnated, and safety was sacrificed.

Unlike my predecessors, I won't run from difficult problems; I will fix them.

This week, I've invited software engineers from SpaceX to visit the FAA as part of a fact-finding mission to better understand the issues afflicting our air traffic systems. SpaceX is America's leading space launch company tracking thousands of satellites, and we thank these patriotic engineers for volunteering their time and expertise.

This is just the start. Over the coming weeks and months, I will arrange similar meetings with America's leading high-tech companies to identify our most urgent needs in air safety. Put simply, if you can help, my door is open.

These candid conversations with the private sector are crucial because the old methods have failed. In 2012, President Obama signed the FAA Modernization and Reform Act into law, which provided \$63.4 billion in FAA funding over four years, \$11 billion of which was directed toward air traffic management.

Flash forward to December 2024, when an alarming report from the Government Accountability Office stated that among the FAA's 138 systems, 51 are unsustainable and the agency doesn't plan to complete modernization projects for some of these systems for at least 10 years. Additionally, the FAA doesn't yet have plans to modernize other systems in need—3 of which are at least 30 years old.

This status quo is unacceptable. It's dangerous. And it must change immediately.

The Biden administration was asleep at the switch and handed us a mess. An investigation by the *New York Times* in August 2023 revealed a pattern of near-collisions between commercial airlines— with near-misses happening multiple times a week, and occurring at all major airports in the U.S. This included 503 air traffic control lapses that the F.A.A. preliminarily categorized as “significant”—65 percent more than in the prior year.

The FAA is also facing critical disruptions with its Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) system, which is vital for sharing safety-critical flight information between air traffic controllers and pilots. In 2023, a complete failure of the NOTAM system caused a nationwide ground stop, causing significant flight delays.

The systemic problems are not limited to software. Aging networks at thousands of FAA sites must be upgraded in order to avoid severe service disruptions. In the meantime, the FAA is spending millions of taxpayer dollars per month just to maintain the legacy copper wire and connections.

That level of dysfunction might be expected in a developing nation, but in the United States, it's intolerable. President Trump has already started implementing his bold vision to rebuild our nation, and modernizing our air traffic systems will be a crucial part of that legacy.

Despite the obvious need for reform, partisans are certain to criticize this upcoming SpaceX visit, manufacturing illusory controversy rather than welcoming progress. That cynical approach exemplifies why the situation has deteriorated year after year; assigning blame is easy, but solutions take hard work. Americans will understand the facts: upgrading our nation's air traffic systems will mean safer skies, fewer delays, and less wasted time sitting in airports or stuck on tarmacs.

We also won't be derailed by misleading media coverage. Last week, as part of a larger government-wide restructuring that affected every federal agency, 0.8% of the FAA's 45,000 employees were laid off—and we worked to ensure that *all* air traffic controllers and those in the most safety-critical positions were retained.

Nevertheless, CNN blared its clickbait headline: “Hundreds of FAA probationary workers fired by Trump administration, union says.” Only in paragraph 8 did CNN admit the truth: “The firings did not include air traffic controllers.”

In fact, we've begun boosting our recruitment of air traffic controllers. And thanks to President Trump's strong leadership, we are hiring on the basis of competence instead of ideology. As a result, we will see an immediate increase in talent, morale, and retention, which will enable the most important result: safety.

When I took the oath of office, I swore a commitment to defend our nation, and that means ensuring that our country's skies are the safest in the world. Since the tragic events of January 30, I've met with grieving families and sincerely believe the best way to honor their loved ones is to urgently overhaul and upgrade our air traffic systems immediately.

We can no longer rely on outdated code that hasn't changed since the Clinton Administration. We must move past the bureaucratic delays and stale excuses that defined the last administration. Thankfully, Americans elected the world's greatest problem solver, President Trump.

This visit with SpaceX marks the beginning of a new era. Our nation needs an urgent upgrade to first-class. And it's coming.