

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4303

The Honorable Sean Duffy
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

June 3rd, 2025

Dear Secretary Duffy,

I am writing to express urgent concerns regarding the escalating safety risks at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA). Recent incidents, including a fatal midair collision and subsequent near-misses, underscore systemic failures in aviation safety protocols that demand immediate congressional oversight and action.

On January 29, 2025, a catastrophic midair collision occurred between an American Airlines regional jet and a U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopter over the Potomac River, resulting in the tragic loss of all 67 individuals aboard both aircraft. This incident was not an isolated event but a manifestation of longstanding issues. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) reported over 15,000 near-miss incidents at DCA between October 2021 and December 2024, many involving helicopters operating above their altitude restrictions, particularly during nighttime operations.

Further compounding these concerns, on May 1, 2025, two commercial airliners were forced to abort landings due to a loss of communication with an Army Black Hawk helicopter near the Pentagon. This communication failure was attributed to a misplaced temporary antenna, which had been improperly installed during the construction of a new control tower. Additionally, it was revealed that a critical hotline between Reagan National Airport's air traffic control and the Pentagon had been inactive since March 2022, only discovered after the May 1st incident.

These events highlight a troubling pattern of inadequate coordination between civilian and military aviation authorities, insufficient infrastructure, and a lack of proactive measures to ensure airspace safety. The FAA's consideration of restricting the Pentagon from conducting routine VIP helicopter flights around DCA further emphasizes the severity of the situation.

Given the proximity of DCA to the nation's capital and its significance in both commercial and governmental operations, we must address these safety concerns with the urgency they warrant. I urge you to:

1. Initiate a comprehensive review of current air traffic control protocols and interagency communication systems between civilian and military aviation authorities.
2. Mandate the immediate restoration and regular testing of critical communication lines, such as the Reagan National Airport and Pentagon hotline.

3. Encourage the FAA and Department of Defense to establish joint training programs to improve coordination during mixed-use airspace operations.

The safety of our airspace is non-negotiable. It is our responsibility to ensure that systemic failures are addressed promptly to prevent further tragedies. I am committed to working collaboratively to implement necessary reforms and safeguard the lives of those who rely on our nation's aviation infrastructure.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keith Self". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Keith" and last name "Self" clearly distinguishable.

Congressman Keith Self