

**FAA'S PLAN FOR ATC MODERNIZATION:
EVALUATING PROGRESS, ENSURING
ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESULTS**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION, SPACE, AND
INNOVATION

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE,
SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

DECEMBER 17, 2025

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SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

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FAA'S PLAN FOR ATC MODERNIZATION: EVALUATING PROGRESS, ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESULTS

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2025

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION, SPACE, AND INNOVATION,
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:52 p.m., in room SR-253, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Ted Cruz, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Moran [presiding], Cruz, Budd, Capito, Duckworth, Cantwell, Markey, Rosen, Hickenlooper, and Kim.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JERRY MORAN, U.S. SENATOR FROM KANSAS

Senator MORAN. The Subcommittee on Aviation and Space will come to order. I'm quite certain I'll be joined by my colleagues. We have a vote going on, and we just finished work on the Senate floor in regard to the ROTOR Act. But we're anxious together, and thank you, Administrator Bedford, for your patience in our arrival. And thank you to all in the audience for waiting for us to be able to convene this hearing.

Administrator, thank you for joining us today to discuss the Federal Aviation Administration's plan to modernize America's Air Traffic Control System. I've said this so many times, on January the 29th Flight 5342, traveling from my home state of Kansas to Washington, DC, collided with a U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopter seconds before a scheduled landing at Reagan National Airport.

And as we know, it killed 67 people. And this tragic accident has forced Congress to quit just talking about safety, and it has forced the FAA to reckon with no longer just sustaining our air traffic control system, but to take actual steps toward modernizing it.

I want to acknowledge the families of the victims who are of this tragedy who have joined us again today. We've said thank you, and I just—there are not words that are sufficient to make you whole, but I recognize the tireless advocacy that has occurred day after day, week after week, month after month, on behalf of those you love. And we want to demonstrate that your efforts to memorialize their lives by making it safer for others to fly occurs.

And we have a success. I sometimes smile when someone thanks me for my efforts and think, "Well, that's nice." But could I ever

be thanked for my results? And maybe this is a circumstance in which not about thank you to me, but we can have results.

While Congress and the public await the findings of the National Transportation Safety Board's investigation into the mid-air collision, we're here today to continue that long overdue work of modernizing American airspace.

Last year, Congress passed the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. It includes requirements to increase controller hiring, modernized ground-based infrastructure, and provides for improved air safety data and cybersecurity standards.

In July, this Congress provided \$12.5 billion as a down payment toward ATC modernization. These funds were authorized for technology upgrades, new ATC facilities, runway and surface safety systems, advanced training and workforce capabilities, and other resources that build upon last year's reauthorization.

Weeks after that reconciliation bill was signed into law, the Transportation Appropriation Subcommittee, of which I sit, unanimously approved providing the FAA \$5 billion, a record amount, to continue its efforts to modernize air traffic control. I was with Secretary Duffy in Kansas on Monday, where he, again, lobbied me and me to lobby my colleagues, that \$12.5 billion and \$5 billion is not sufficient. And we take his efforts to heart.

Earlier this summer, Secretary of Transportation, Duffy, announced an ambitious overhaul of America's ATC system. The scale and scope of this comprehensive modernization is enormous. It has and will continue to require an industry-wide mobilization and public-private partnerships to manage and modernize on expedited timelines.

To that end, Secretary Duffy and FAA Administrator recently announced a prime integrator to manage the brand new air traffic control system project, Peraton, a technology and national security firm. Today, and the timing of this hearing, is designed to coordinate with the announcement of that hiring, that contract.

And today, we'll hear from Mr. Bedford about the progress the FAA has made toward modernization, including how initial funds authorized by this Congress in July have been used, additional resources the FAA needs to execute its modernization goals, and how Peraton will fit into enhancing the safety of national airspace.

The FAA has made meaningful steps toward modernization. As we always say, there's much to do. Mr. Bedford, this committee has and will continue to rely upon your agency to be a proactive and responsive partner in these efforts. And again, thank you for your willingness to appear before us today.

Modernization is more than just the replacement of physical or digital infrastructure. It also requires modernizing the statutes, rules, regulations that govern airspace, and to enable greater innovation and success. Following the deadly mid-air collision on January 29th, I introduced legislation to require military aircraft operating in congested airspace to install ADS-B IN and OUT position, broadcast technologies that are critical to keeping our skies safe.

And as I intimated when we started this hearing, just right before we convened this subcommittee, the ROTOR Act passed to close the gap in air safety. And I thank Senator Cruz and Ranking Member Cantwell, I thank Senator Duckworth on the Senate floor

for the work together, and all the members of this committee to make certain that we are making the right steps to make air traffic safety the highest of priorities.

That legislation, as I said earlier, will amend the National Defense Authorization Act. And I'm certain with the people in this room and others, that we and they are committed toward making sure that legislation passes the House of Representatives.

So, let us let us soon begin our hearing. Mr. Bedford, I look forward to hearing what you have to say. Before we do that, let me recognize Senator Duckworth for her opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF HON. TAMMY DUCKWORTH,
U.S. SENATOR FROM ILLINOIS**

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Chairman Moran, for convening what I imagine will be the first in a series of oversight hearings to examine the progress of the massive brand new air traffic control system project.

I also want to acknowledge the family members of the American Airlines Flight 5342 crash. We will continue to carry the work that you are doing in terms of advocating forward as well. There's no debate that our aging air traffic control system is in desperate need of urgent repairs, and ultimately, a comprehensive upgrade.

And Administrator Bedford, I want to be crystal clear from the outset, I strongly support Congress providing FAA with at least \$20 billion in additional funding for ATC modernization.

Now, I understand that the valid criticism of FAA requesting \$20 billion in additional funding despite the agency failing over the past seven months to produce a comprehensive plan with measurable outcomes and concrete milestones that would precisely map out the next three years.

However, ATC modernization is the Mount Everest of a program management challenge. And in my view, if we want any chance of success, we don't have the luxury. We simply cannot afford to deny FAA long-term funding certainty.

Make no mistake, \$12.5 billion taxpayer dollars is a meaningful down payment. But as you know, and I know, it's not nearly enough. So, Administrator Bedford, I urge you to be relentless and loud in continuing to request critical ATC modernization funds. Of course, even with food funding, certainty, success would be far from guaranteed.

A great American once declared in this world, "Nothing can be certain except for death and taxes." But as FAA undertakes yet another massive ATC modernization effort, we must never forget that one could justifiably add a third item to Mr. Franklin's list, FAA. And that would be that FAA wastes billions of taxpayer dollars trying and failing to modernize our air traffic control system.

From the failed advanced automated automation system project born under President Reagan and eventually killed under President Clinton, who couldn't make it happen either to the incredibly disappointing next gen effort that's outlived four Presidential terms. There's a bipartisan legacy of failure in this space.

Of course, any ATC modernization effort under any administration will experience schedule slippages, cost overruns, and suffer from any number of known unknowns lurking in the future. It

would be foolish to demand perfection from the latest ATC modernization effort. And my ask is simply that FAA plans and prepares to mitigate the problems that will stem from the inevitable turbulence that awaits us.

One critical mitigation measure will be making sure—would be to make sure that the \$12.5 billion down payment funds on infrastructure is guaranteed to deliver significant short-term and long-term value. Even if Congress fails to follow through in delivering additional funds, use that \$12.5 billion wisely.

Here's where controllers and FAA technicians could be the most valuable resource in sharing frontline knowledge that enables management and contract employees to separate nice-to-have upgrades from lives-depend-on-fixing this now crisis level problems.

FAA should also avoid reinventing the wheel. GAO previously testified before this subcommittee that FAA conducted an operational risk assessment of ATC Systems in 2023 with the intention of using it to prioritize ATC investment decisions. Unfortunately, GAO also reported, and I quote, "FAA did not prioritize or establish near-term plans to modernize unsustainable and critical systems based on its operational assessment."

If FAA applies lessons it has already learned, this project holds immense potential to deliver lasting value to the flying public, to air carriers, and perhaps most vital for aviation safety, our dedicated, yet, drastically overworked and understaffed controller and technician workforce. And on that last point, I strongly, strongly urge FAA to add a sixth main category to its current ATC modernization project, personnel.

We must remember that the recent aviation safety crisis was driven by decades of FAA pouring billions into unproven technologies and costly service contracts as it pursued, in vain, modernization projects with overly ambitious goals and constantly changing requirements. These shiny objects lured FAA into neglecting the health, capabilities and capacity of our systems' most important assets; its people.

Under Presidents of both parties and across multiple Congresses, ATC shed critical expertise and experience. And between 2013 and 2023, FAA only hired two-thirds of the controllers that FAA's own staffing model called for. So, today, we find ourselves short 3,500 air traffic controllers, while air travel rises to record highs, and controllers are forced to regularly work 60-hour weeks because well over 90 percent of airports are understaffed.

Placing the lives of our constituents in the hands of civil servants who are overworked at utterly exhausted was and remains unfair, unacceptable, and ultimately dangerous. As I warned over the past few years, as near misses piled up and our safety margins got shredded, our luck would eventually run out. The bottom line is that successfully building a brand new ATC system will require rebuilding a depleted and demoralized workforce.

I look forward to discussing with Administrator Bedford, how the initial down payments will first fund critical repairs, procure desperately needed equipment, and enhanced capabilities and capacity of our incoming pipeline training and throughput system to strengthen our entire controller and technician workforce.

And with that, I yield back, Mr. Chairman,

Senator MORAN. Senator Duckworth, thank you very much. Thank you for your cooperation and long-engaging involvement in this topic.

Senator DUCKWORTH. I enjoy working with you.

Senator MORAN. Thank you. I want to also recognize the Senator from North Carolina and see if Senator Budd has any comments he'd like to make. North Carolina has a particular circumstance that this tragedy means a lot to him, and to his constituents, and folks in the state.

So, Senator Budd.

**STATEMENT OF HON. TED BUDD,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NORTH CAROLINA**

Senator BUDD. Thank you. It's notable a Senator from North Carolina sitting next to a Senator for Kansas working on air safety, passenger safety. So, we thank you, thank the families for being here. We note the season, and we note what may be going through your minds and your hearts. And we're grateful for each and every one of you.

And we realize this is the tragedy's not in vain for what we're working on today. We look at the ROTOR Act, which the Chairman was instrumental in passing, the Chairman of the full committee, and chairman of this subcommittee. And we're grateful for your involvement and your advocacy.

And we remember you, 5342, from Wichita with a Charlotte-based flight crew was notable. But Administrator, we're grateful for your role and what you're doing. We think you're making great strides. We know you're going to give us an update today. Look forward to learning more about that and reading the remarks afterwards. And we appreciate you spending time with us today.

Chairman, I yield back.

Senator MORAN. Senator Budd, thank you for your continued interest, engagement, and support for all these efforts.

I want to introduce our witness today. We're joined by the Honorable Bryan Bedford, Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration. He was nominated by President Trump and confirmed by the Senate this past July. In his role as Administrator, Mr. Bedford oversees 40,000 Federal employees.

Since his confirmation, he's directed an implementation of President Trump's brand new air traffic control system. In addition to continuing to ensure the safe operation of the National Airspace System after the DCA mid-air collision in January, he joins this subcommittee for his first appearance as Administrator.

Congratulations on your confirmation. Thank you for showing up for work and doing your job.

Mr. BEDFORD. Thank you.

Senator MORAN. I now recognize Mr. Bedford to deliver his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF HON. BRYAN BEDFORD, ADMINISTRATOR,
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION,**

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, good afternoon to the Committee. Thank you, Chairman Moran, and Ranking Member Duckworth. It really is a privilege to be here and an honor to appear before this sub-

committee today as the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration. And I sincerely welcome the opportunity to provide an update for you on FAA's work to strengthen aviation safety, modernize air traffic control, and to prepare for the future.

I too want to begin by acknowledging the tragic accident involving PSA Flight 5342 at Reagan National. A sobering reminder of why the FAA exists, and why I answered President Trump's and Secretary Duffy's call to accept this position.

Our mission is simple, but critical; protect pilots, flight attendants, and the traveling public by objectively analyzing data to identify risks and urgently acting on the data to mitigate those risks.

Immediately after the accident, the FAA did take decisive action, permanently restricting non-essential helicopter operations in the Capitol region, permanently closing certain helicopter routes, eliminating visual separation approaches, and requiring aircraft to broadcast ADS-B OUT with limited exceptions.

We also reviewed hotspots nationwide, where we saw mixed traffic environments create elevated risk, identified those concerns, and took corrective action. We continued to support the National Transportation Safety Board's investigations, including the recent UPS MD-11 accident. These investigations reinforce the importance of constant vigilance and a willingness to reexamine our processes, our assumptions, and our oversight.

The FAA remains closely engaged in overseeing how Boeing manages the design, manufacturing, and quality across its programs, including the production system itself. I have confidence in our FAA workforce performing this critical oversight, many of whom continued to carry out their work during the recent government shutdown.

The shutdown, of course, placed extraordinary strain on the FAA and its people, air traffic controllers, safety inspectors, engineers, technicians, and many others who continued to report to work without pay during the 43-day lapse in appropriations. I sincerely appreciate their professionalism and dedication to our safety mission.

But let me be clear. Well, before the shutdown, the FAA was struggling with a shortage of qualified controllers. The shutdown exacerbated those challenges. Staffing triggers reached unprecedented levels rising from mere single digits prior to the lapse to more than 80 in a single day.

Applying the hard lessons we've learned from the DCA accident, the FAA safety team identified controller workload and system demand as emerging risk factors. And as the response to this increased risk, we temporarily reduced operations at 40 high traffic airports.

The connection between controller workload, system demand, and operational risk was unmistakable, and it reinforced the need for the FAA to act decisively when the data demanded it and underscored the importance of stable controller funding.

Hiring and retaining a strong workforce remains essential to aviation safety. Under Secretary Duffy's leadership, the FAA met its Fiscal Year 2025 hiring goal, adding more than 2,000 new controller trainees. We remain on track to hire 89 controllers through 2028. We expanded the enhanced air traffic collegiate training ini-

tiative to nine institutions, and we continually hiring inspectors and engineers on the spot offering relocation incentives to place personnel in critical locations.

As we grow the workforce, the FAA must also evolve. The aviation ecosystem is changing rapidly, and the agency must keep pace with innovation while maintaining the highest levels of safety. President Trump's executive orders reinforced the need for modernization, efficiency, and innovation across the FAA.

Congress provided a strong foundation through the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. The Act directs the FAA to become more agile, more efficient, and I'm pleased to share implementation is well underway. The FAA is also moving toward an agency-wide safety management system to ensure lessons learned from accidents, incidents, near misses, and other factors are identified and acted upon consistently across the agency landscape.

The National Airspace System must be renewed. President Trump has articulated a bold vision for a brand new air traffic control system within the next three years, and I'm pleased to report that that critical work is well underway. We recently selected an integrator, and have compressed a radar and telecom modernization program from 20 years into three years.

We've already transitioned more than one-third of the old copper infrastructure to fiber, and we're deploying our first digital radios and voice switches. The One Big Beautiful Bill provided a historic \$12.5 billion down payment to support this critical effort.

The DCA tragedy and the government shutdown were defining moments for the FAA this year. They exposed vulnerabilities, but they also drove action, and they sharpened our focus. Today, the FAA is a more proactive and more determined agency focused on fulfilling and upholding its critical safety mission.

We owe the American people a system that is safe, modern, resilient, and prepared for the future. We are on the course, and we will continue to support this committee, and we appreciate your support in achieving these objectives.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bedford follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. BRYAN BEDFORD, ADMINISTRATOR,
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

Chairman Moran, Ranking Member Duckworth, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. This is my first appearance before you as Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration, and I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss the FAA's work to strengthen aviation safety, modernize our air traffic control system, and prepare the FAA for the challenges and opportunities ahead. It is a tremendous honor to serve in this role, and I remain committed to fulfilling its responsibilities to the best of my ability.

I want to start by acknowledging the tragic accident involving Flight 5342 at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA) earlier this year. It remains at the forefront of my mind in the work that I do. It is a sobering reminder of why the FAA exists and was ultimately the reason why I accepted the call from President Trump and Secretary Duffy to take this job. Our mission is to ensure safety for pilots, flight attendants, crew and the traveling public, and we must always confront risks with urgency, transparency, and action. But to do that, we need to vigilantly and diligently identify potential risks in our National Airspace System.

As you know, immediately after the accident, the FAA changed operations in the National Capital Region—permanently restricting non-essential helicopter operations, closing certain helicopter routes, eliminating visual separation approaches,

and requiring aircraft to broadcast ADS-B Out signals, with very limited exceptions. We also initiated our review of airport “hot spots” across the country where mixed traffic environments may create elevated risk. These assessments revealed operational patterns in several locations that needed attention, and we are diligently working to address them.

We continue to work closely with the National Transportation Safety Board on its ongoing investigations, including its investigation of the recent accident involving UPS Flight 2976. These tragedies underscore that safety requires constant vigilance and a willingness to examine our processes, assumptions, and historic certification structures. I appreciate this Committee’s work to support us in addressing these matters.

At the same time, we continue to maintain our oversight of aerospace manufacturers, including Boeing, and how the company manages design, manufacturing, and quality across its programs. We also continue to keep a close watch on the production system itself. As a process-driven leader, I know that disciplined, well-designed processes consistently result in strong and predictable outcomes. I have confidence in our oversight of Boeing processes and in the FAA team leading this important work.

The recent shutdown demonstrated clearly how essential the FAA’s safety mission is to the country. Aviation drives over five percent of our national economy, supports millions of jobs, and moves people and goods that keep communities and industries connected and functioning. The safe and efficient operation of the National Airspace System relies on a well-staffed, well-trained FAA workforce.

Our employees—air traffic controllers, safety inspectors, engineers, technicians, and many others—showed extraordinary dedication during the 43-day lapse in appropriations. Many worked without pay. Yet even under these circumstances, many continued to uphold the highest standards of professionalism and showed up to work.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that we entered the funding lapse already below the staffing levels needed for the reliable operation of our air traffic control facilities, intensifying the government shutdown’s impact. And as the shutdown progressed, our operational monitoring tools signaled growing strain.

The FAA observes staffing triggers on a near daily basis throughout the year, responding with established procedures, such as reducing traffic when necessary, increasing miles-in-trail separation standards, implementing ground delay programs, or executing ground stops, as appropriate. During the shutdown, however, staffing triggers at key facilities spiked to unprecedented levels—jumping from single digits to a peak of over 80 in a single day on November 8. Those metrics are indicators of controller workload and system stress. Reflecting on lessons learned from the DCA accident we were proactive—closely monitoring trends, anticipating stress points, and preparing mitigation measures before conditions became acute. Accordingly, we temporarily reduced flight operations at 40 major airports.

As the situation unfolded, we were able to actively investigate emerging constraints, assess risks in near real time, and implement measures in an orderly manner to relieve some of the pressure on our controllers and maintain safe operations. The direct correlation between controller strain, system capacity, and risk reinforced that the FAA must act urgently and decisively when the data calls for it. It also underscored the importance of maintaining consistent, long-term funding for the agency.

Strengthening the workforce remains central to our path forward. Under Secretary Duffy’s leadership, the FAA supercharged air traffic controller hiring. We met our FY25 hiring goal with 2,026 new controllers, and we are on track to hire at least 8,900 controllers through 2028. We have increased training throughput by expanding the Enhanced Air Traffic -Collegiate Training Initiative program to 9 additional institutions. And on the safety oversight side, we have expanded hiring for inspectors and engineers using on-the-spot hiring authority, relocation incentives, and strategic placement in critical locations. Across all of these efforts, our focus remains on attracting, developing, and retaining the best and brightest talent.

As we look ahead, it is clear that the FAA must continue to innovate and evolve. The aviation ecosystem is changing rapidly—unmanned aircraft, advanced air mobility, more commercial space launches, and renewed interest in supersonic flight all demand a regulatory framework that can keep pace with innovation while maintaining the highest safety standards. President Trump’s recent executive orders reinforce the need for continued modernization and innovation across the agency.

Congress provided a strong foundation for this work through the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, and we remain committed to its implementation. The Act directs us to improve regulatory agility, integrate new entrants more efficiently, and strengthen internal coordination. Our implementation of these reforms is informed,

in part, by lessons learned from the DCA accident and the need for clearer accountability and streamlined processes.

In that same spirit, the FAA is implementing a single, agency-wide Safety Management System (SMS). This unified approach will help the FAA detect, analyze, and mitigate risk more consistently and ensure that lessons from accidents, incidents, and near misses are acted upon quickly and across the agency.

The National Airspace System itself must also be renewed. The existing systems—radar, communications networks, software systems—are decades old. President Trump presented a bold vision for a brand-new air traffic control system within the next three years and our work to do that is already underway. Our controllers deserve a system they can rely on and that matches the complexity of today's airspace and the future of the National Airspace System.

We have selected an Integrator who will oversee this transformational work. At the same time, we are making advancements in our modernization efforts. We have taken the FAA's 15-year radar modernization roadmap and compressed it into a three-year timeline, establishing an accelerated implementation cadence that is already in motion. We have transitioned over one-third of our copper wire to fiber, and have begun modernizing radios, upgrading voice switches, and improving digital communications, among other critical improvements. These improvements will enable the Integrator to hit the ground running to create a more reliable, resilient infrastructure and serve as the foundation for the future National Airspace System.

The One Big Beautiful Bill provides a historic \$12.5 billion down payment to support this modernization effort. That funding will help us move faster and smarter, while also strengthening core infrastructure, and deliver on President Trump's bold vision for the future of American aviation. But the work ahead remains significant. Success will require continued collaboration—across the FAA, with our aviation partners, and with Congress. With this accelerated modernization work already underway, that collaboration becomes even more essential.

The DCA accident was a defining moment for the FAA and for the country. It exposed gaps, but it also galvanized action. The recent shutdown further reminded us of the importance of our aviation ecosystem. And together, these events have shaped an agency now more focused, more proactive, and more determined than ever to fulfill its mission.

We owe the American people a system that is safe, modern, resilient, and built for the future. That is the course we are on, and with the support of this Committee, we will deliver it.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions.

Senator MORAN. Mr. Bedford, thank you, again. I'm anxious, so I want to hear if you could in some level of detail, tell me how the \$12.5 billion that was authorized by Congress to modernize air traffic control system, how has it been spent to date, and what's the prospect for the remaining funds?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, thank you for the question, Chairman Moran. If I can just indulge for a second. You know, when I onboarded on July 10, I was presented with the procurement document to go buy this brand new air traffic control system. We put it in the trash can the same day.

We started on a process of thinking slow and then acting fast. And that think slow process actually gave us opportunity to define the end state of the National Airspace System for the future that we wanted, and then work our way back for the critical workflows that we would need to accomplish.

Having done that, I can tell you we have increased the cadence on our conversion of fiber, or copper to fiber. The FAA had a detailed plan in 2018 to a 20-year plan in 2018 to modernize telco. Through the first part of this year, we had made 900 of those telco transitions.

In the last seven months, we've moved more than 950 conversions. Over a third of the copper has been removed and converted to fiber, and we are well underway completing this program by third quarter of 2027. We are down to our final three down selects

for radar acquisition, and I believe we will appropriate that money or commit that money by the end of the year.

By the end of the year, I expect we'll have \$6 billion to \$6.5 billion of the \$12.5 Billion actually earmarked and contractually under obligation for telco modernization, surveillance modernization, and digitizing voice communications.

Senator MORAN. Would you say that last sentence one more time, by a certain date? I want to make sure I heard it correctly.

Mr. BEDFORD. By the end of the year, we will have \$6 billion to \$6.5 billion of the One Big Beautiful Bill committed to modernization.

Senator MORAN. Thank you. Forgive my skepticism, not about what you said, or about you, or the FAA in particular, but we all know government projects don't seem to go as planned, and it's difficult to keep a schedule that advances the cause in a time-frame as is necessary. What are you doing things differently at the FAA with this project than just what we might call some normal government situation?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, thank you. Yes, sir. And I would like to pick up on our Ranking Member Duckworth's opening comments. You're absolutely right. We need to have a plan. We need to have a strategy. We need to have articulated work streams, measurable deliverables.

The good news is we can brief you on that. We have all of that. We have an articulate strategy. We have our mission objectives identified. We have 14 critical needs work packages ready to go, ready to deploy now that we have the integrator identified.

So, I can tell you I've read the GAO studies, the OIG studies, the OMB studies. I'm right there with you. We cannot do business as usual and hope to have a different result. So, we are taking a very different track with modernization.

Senator MORAN. Thank you. Let me follow up with the appropriations dollars, that \$5 billion that I indicated in my opening statement. The Congress passed in our appropriation process last year in the THUD bill, in Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations providing FAA \$5 billion for modernizing facilities and equipment.

How will those funds be used in connection with the deployment of the reconciliation dollars? How do these two things go together?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, thank you for the question. And again, I believe as you read many of these audit reports, you would learn the same thing that I have; which is 80 percent of our infrastructure is considered obsolete and/or unsustainable.

Of course, the vast majority of that \$5 billion doesn't actually go to build new brick and mortar. 85 to 90 percent of those funds actually go to sustaining, repairing, repainting, replacing elevators and HVAC systems and plumbing and roofs. I mean frankly, we're putting lipstick on a pig.

So, you may think you're buying brand new infrastructure with the \$5 billion, but what you're buying is sustainment of the old system.

Senator MORAN. And let me say that, well, I understand that it's a problem. We need more money than the reconciliation dollars. We also have to patch what we have to keep us going until we get that accomplishment.

Mr. BEDFORD. Absolutely.

Senator MORAN. And I would indicate that I hope today is another important day in this process of—because the appropriations, it's expected for us to be able to take up the THUD appropriation bill today or tomorrow and move it forward. So, you would miss out on that \$5 billion if we only do a Continuing Resolution and fail to do our appropriation bills.

So, I don't need to tell my colleagues this, but if there's just another important opportunity for people to make certain that Congress does its job and appropriates the money, and not walk away from the process, or that \$5 billion is absent.

Mr. BEDFORD. Sir, I appreciate the opportunity to provide that clarity because I think it also helps explain why there's such a disconnect between believing that the FAA doesn't do a very good job of these programs.

I don't think we've been very transparent in telling you where the money is going. So, you may be thinking you're investing in new brick and mortar, and unfortunately, you're investing in sustainment. But the sustainment dollars are critical to keeping the system flying today.

Senator MORAN. That's why I asked the question. Senator Duckworth.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Chairman. So, picking up on the time question. I have concerns, Mr. Administrator, on a focus on meeting a three-year timeline.

I am all for getting this done as quickly as possible. We need it. But this 3-year timeline strikes me as somewhat arbitrary and unrealistic. And I'm worried that it's setting up any prime integrator to fail. I just want to make sure that we're addressing issues of redundancy, resiliency, that we're not creating gaps.

So, even if the project technically meets the on-time delivery under the threat of non-payment without stringent oversight, such an environment is at high risk for less stringent quality control malfunctioning systems and inadequate time to train controllers on those new systems.

So, I just want to make sure, yes, it's great that you're putting this timeline in place, but you're going to have to do the significant oversight to make sure that we're not cutting corners.

And Mr. Bedford with an accelerated timeline, coupled with the firings and vacancies across numerous critical offices in the FAA, how will you ensure the current ATC modernization project preserves redundancy, resiliency, and careful transitions to avoid disruptive gaps in capabilities that will emerge when functional systems are sunset and replacement is not yet operational?

How are you going to make that transition go as smoothly as possible under this very ambitious timeline that you've put forward?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, thank you for your question Ranking Member Duckworth. I'll tell you it's something that we've spent an enormous amount of time as we selected between two potential integrator partners.

I mean, this process went through months of evaluation, months of study game theorizing out the entire deployment scenario. So, none of the needs package that have been identified, the critical

work streams, and the timeline, all of that has been vetted through our competitive process. So, I believe everyone involved right now believes the target, while it may seem aspirational, it's absolutely achievable.

You correctly point out that we need to do that at the same time without sacrificing the current operational reliability of the National Airspace System. I think it would be fair for me to categorize that we will not increase the elevation of risk in terms of reliability, but we're still relying on an inefficient National Airspace System design.

And by that, I mean where we house the compute power, the data power, the operating system capacity is resident in each of our 350 facilities. So, phase 1 of the \$12.5 billion fixes a lot of those resiliency and redundancy issues, but it doesn't actually get us to the point where we can complete modernization.

So, just to be clear, this next set of funding that we're looking for, that will give us the dollars to actually go completely from analog to digital infrastructure and elevate that compute power out of the facility into the cloud.

And that's another reason why we selected Peraton. They've done this for the Department of War. They've accomplished this for NASA. They've got a great roadmap for us to follow for FAA.

Senator DUCKWORTH. So, FAA has described the latest ATC modernization project as organized around five main categories: communications, civilians, automation facilities, and Alaska. As I stated earlier, I believe FAA should add additional category; personnel.

Would you agree that when it comes to restoring effective layers and margins of safety, one of the most urgent challenges we face is fixing the sheer shortage of controllers, technicians, and other important safety personnel?

Mr. BEDFORD. Boy, I would love to spend a full hour talking about that with you. I can tell you, and you've seen, we announced on Monday our Flight Plan 2026. The Flight Plan 2026 goes into the field that has three primary pillars.

The first pillar is people: focus on hiring the best people, giving them the best training and the best tools to achieve the best results. And we have now identified the critical steps with which we will hold ourselves accountable to delivering on our people. And I would say also starting to restore culture of trust at the FAA.

The second pillar, of course, is safety. And I would love to spend a lot of time today talking to you about how we're going to think rethink about safety, and redesigning SMS and risk management at the FAA. And then the final piece is modernization. But they build on each other. We have to start, people is the foundation of the NAS. People are the foundation of the National Airspace System, and then we're buttressed by the two pillars of safety and our modernization efforts.

Senator DUCKWORTH. I think we also need to supercharge the training of new air traffic controllers, and would the FAA consider using a small portion of the ATC modernization funds to purchase and deploy equipment so that we can strengthen the existing nine enhanced collegiate training initiative schools, and more importantly, to supercharge efforts to persuade far more academic institutions to sign up to become E-CTI schools?

I think that that is something that needs to happen because I sort of think of it like the ROTC program where you don't have to go to West Point to become an Army officer. You can go to any ROTC program across the country. You still have to go to your officer's basic course. You still have to go to Oklahoma and finish your 16-week course. But at least we're pumping more people into the system.

And I do think that it would be worth it for FAA to consider increasing the number of schools and using some of those funds to purchase the equipment so that more schools, whether it's Kansas, or Texas, or New Jersey, or Washington State, can graduate more folks who can then become air traffic controllers.

Mr. BEDFORD. So, I applaud the suggestion. I think we have an opportunity to really lean much more heavily into our community college infrastructure across the country. Our FAA jobs are all across the nation, and if we can get training closer to where the students who are the future of the FAA, I think that'll be helpful to us.

Of course, Oklahoma City, that'll be the graduate school, if you will.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Yes.

Mr. BEDFORD. We're always going to have it. We're blessed to have Oklahoma City, but we can absolutely do more on workforce development. And honestly, to have any hope of overcoming our controller shortages, we need an all-of-the-above strategy.

Senator DUCKWORTH. I do think you should seriously consider taking some of the initial down payment to establish additional FAA academies. And we should have more than just the one, and you know, you should look at—I'm confident the Chairman would love to host a second academy in Kansas, and also the Chairman of the main committee in Texas, of course we'd love one in Illinois as well.

But I think that in places where you actually have established air traffic controller training and aviation schools, additional academies are desperately needed at this time. So, please consider that.

Mr. BEDFORD. I will. Thank you.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you.

Senator MORAN. We've been joined not only by the Ranking Member Senator Cantwell, but now by the Full Committee Chairman, Senator Cruz, both instrumental in the efforts on the Senate floor today. I'd recognized the Senator from Texas for his opening comments and questioning. And Senator Cruz, if you know how to conduct a hearing, I'll go vote while you do so.

**STATEMENT OF HON. TED CRUZ,
U.S. SENATOR FROM TEXAS**

The CHAIRMAN [presiding]. Very good.

Senator MORAN. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Administrator, welcome. In the days following the January mid-air collision at DCA, Secretary Duffy took bold steps to ensure safety of the airspace. He closed helicopter Route 4, and revised existing memorandums of agreement with DOD, DOJ, and Coast Guard to require ADS-B OUT usage.

I commend the administration for immediately taking aviation safety seriously, and taking these key steps to ensure that the DC airspace is safe. Just moments ago, the Senate passed the ROTOR Act, bipartisan legislation unanimously supported by this committee, and now unanimously passed by the full Senate.

The ROTOR Act will require all aircraft, military and civilian, to receive ADS-B IN signals something the NTSB has recommended for decades. And the FAA, as recently as 2023 under President Biden, has declined to recommend.

In your judgment, how would universal ADS-B IN adoption enhance safety?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, I hesitate to comment on pending legislation in my current role, but I will tell you as an airline pilot, as a general aviation pilot, as a former CEO of a commercial airline, any additional awareness, situational awareness on the cockpit is a welcome initiative.

And as we've discussed many times with you when you introduced the ROTOR Act on the dais along with many family members and the Secretary, and we were supportive then, we continue to be supportive now with the modifications that you've introduced into the legislation, at least as I understand it.

So, I hope we have an outcome where the general aviation community, which will continue to support in our efforts for confidentiality and for portability of systems. I hope we can find broad support for this.

The CHAIRMAN. Terrific. I very much appreciate that. There are effectively two options with ADS-B IN onboard avionics; so that alerts and information is directly available to the pilot and workarounds like iPad apps so you can see in here that probably works well for a GA pilot, general aviation pilot, but not so well for most commercial, or military aircraft.

Can you talk about how you might view approval of these workarounds for certain kinds of aircraft?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, thank you for the question, Mr. Chairman. I think there's a third element that we need to also consider, and that is the rapid adoption of high broadband satellite-based communications between aircraft and the ground.

And so, what we have now is an opportunity to integrate the three elements; the plane with an iPad solution with high-speed broadband connectivity, the plane in real time, that will allow us to find ADS-B IN like solutions that will give us exactly the same type of safety results that you're trying to achieve here today.

The CHAIRMAN. So, let's shift to air traffic control. So, much of air traffic control system is predicated on the limitations of technology from a particular era. Two good examples. The FAA has struggled to close an understaffed TRACON on Long Island that covers the approach for New York City airports.

It didn't have to be on Long Island. In fact, the FAA wanted to move it to Philadelphia, but ran into political opposition for years. There are more than 20 air route traffic control centers, ARTCC. They cover traffic at really high altitudes. ARTCC locations, and coverage is based on radar from the 1960s. It strikes me that this entire operation is more than a little outdated.

How can the FAA best go about facility modernization or consolidation given constant political interference with your decisions?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, again, thank you for the question. It's delicate, right? The One Big Beautiful Bill gave us \$3 billion to examine and look at consolidation of facilities, both TRACON and en route centers. And I'm confident we'll be able to begin to deploy that investment next year, and start to articulate a more refined strategy.

But of course, these aren't just facilities. They're people involved here. And we want to be considerate of the people factor as well. We want to retain our critical safety professional workforce with our controllers, our technicians, and our inspectors.

But I would agree that we should not carry the old architecture into the future. We do not need to think about the world between TRACONs and en route centers. We need to think of what it is. It's surveillance centers and whether they're doing high, low, or all the above. It represents an opportunity to drive greater efficiency, frankly, and greater safety in terms of how we move aircraft in space more efficiently, more strategically.

The CHAIRMAN. And how would you characterize the progress that FAA has made this year with air traffic control modernization, and where do you expect to go next year?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, again, thank you for the question, and I think this hopefully won't frustrate you too much. We started with a highly prescriptive 680-page document that was placed in front of me on July 10 when I onboarded.

So, they were ready to actually get going in consultation with the Secretary. We both agreed that we should scrap that plan because it represented more of the same. We were going to run the exact same FAA playbook that we'd ran for the last 20 years.

So, we decided to actually invoke a think slow, act fast mentality. We hired outside legal counsel. We got help to actually create a strategy of what the end state of the NAS should look like, bring back the work packages to the here and now as part of our onboard even integrator.

So, I think we have an excellent articulable strategy defined work packages in a timeline now where we'll deliver on the promise of modernization. And we'll do it by the end of 2028.

In terms of where we're at today, we didn't stop, we didn't slow down. We took what was an existing 20-year FAA telecom modernization strategy that would complete in 2038, and we compressed that into three—two and a half years, to be honest.

And to tell you whether that's successful or not, I'll tell you, prior to onboarding, we had converted a little over 900 facilities from copper to fiber. And in the last six months, we've converted 950 facilities from copper to fiber. So, we absolutely can move quicker, much quicker, and we can get the telecom piece done in two and a half years.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. I now recognize Ranking Member Cantwell, and actually would ask, would you mind presiding while I run and make the second vote?

**STATEMENT OF HON. MARIA CANTWELL,
U.S. SENATOR FROM WASHINGTON**

Senator CANTWELL [presiding]. Thank you. Yes, sir. Mr. Bedford, the Chairman asked or the Full Committee asked you about the legislation we just passed on the Senate floor, and you said you didn't want to comment on it. Aren't you in support of the road rack that the Senate just passed?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, I'm new to the political realm Ranking Member Cantwell, and I was advised that as legislation is pending, I shouldn't opine for the administration on whether the administration is in favor of or not.

What I can tell you is both as a pilot and former airline executive, I do support, and I applaud the measures of the ROTOR Act. I was with you or with Chairman Cruz on the dais when he announced the ROTOR Act. I think the Secretary both have pledged our support with modifications that represent our ability to enhance our general aviation compliance, making sure that we're giving them the right tools and processes that we can get ADS-B IN like solutions.

Senator CANTWELL. I'm just trying to—if you stood next to Chairman Cruz and said you supported the bill, I just am a little confused about what you're saying now because we did something great today, took a big step. But at the same time, the same people who tried to stick this language into the NDAA, I'm sure will try to thwart these efforts in the House of Representatives.

So, what I want to know is if the FAA Administrator fully behind the efforts to get this over the goal line and onto the President's desk?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, again, I was with the chairman when he announced the ROTOR Act and talked about my—

Senator CANTWELL. There, as I just said, do you support requiring general aviation to be equipped with the ADS-B IN to improve situational awareness?

Mr. BEDFORD. So, again, I believe as a pilot, greater situational—the cockpit is a good thing for all of us. Many pilots do it voluntarily. There are concerns, however, on confidentiality, how we treat the information, and on the affordability of it. There are solutions today I'm sure are aware where we can provide ADS-B IN like solutions.

And as a clarification, just so we're clear, when we talk about FAA ADS-B IN, that has a very clear definition in the regulation, requiring it to be integrated into the flight deck. That's a very difficult concept for adoption.

Senator CANTWELL. I'm pretty sure you showed me something different in our office about how general aviation could use a different application.

Mr. BEDFORD. Absolutely. Absolutely.

Senator CANTWELL. So, the point is that we do not want general aviation gutting the ROTOR Act or stopping the ROTOR Act. And we have lots of different problems to solve, and we definitely want the FAA and the administration's help on solving them.

So, I want to get to this ethics question because I'm really bothered by the fact that you've missed the ethics deadline to divest from the company that we were also concerned about. Why were

we concerned about it? Because Republic had been a key player in trying to get different rules before the FAA. And so, you still have not divested from that. So, did you divest any of your shares in Republic before December 1?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, I appreciate the opportunity to clarify the record. So, under my ethics agreement, I had anticipated being able to complete the merger of Republic and Mesa Airlines, and dispose of the shares on the open market.

Senator CANTWELL. Certainly, this isn't about. You didn't take the job to make more money and decide when you had to divest. We set these rules up for everybody in the government. You're a very unique individual who hasn't complied. We didn't dig this up. The ethics people came to us and said he didn't comply. So, if you're saying you're not complying because you want to make more money, it's like—

Mr. BEDFORD. No, actually, I think I have complied. I followed the rules. I told the career ethics officers what was going on. They told me I could apply for an extension. I applied for an extension. I heard nothing back from the career ethics officers to the contrary. I acted upon that in good faith. So, yes, my intention was to continue to comply based on the advice I was getting from the career ethics officers.

Senator CANTWELL. I think they said that OGE denied this exemption because being busy at work was not a valid reason.

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, I think there was more to it than that. But the reality is, I relied on the career ethics advice that I was saying.

Senator CANTWELL. They're saying they denied the request.

Mr. BEDFORD. I applied for an extension. I was told that the agreement was tolled until we heard back from the—

Senator CANTWELL. Tolled? What was the word you said?

Mr. BEDFORD. Tolled, T-O-L-L-E-D, stayed, extended that I was in compliance. My understanding, I was in compliance throughout. But where we're at today, just to make sure we follow to its conclusion, the merger has been completed, the shares have been terminated. We're waiting for the new shares to be reissued, at which point they will be divested as soon as reasonably practical.

Senator CANTWELL. I definitely don't think this is what OGE recommended. So, it's actually kind of amazing.

I do want to ask you about the Air Traffic Controller System and the fact that in the case of the DCA accident, we've been hearing from air traffic controllers who were ringing the alarm bell. They seem to be saying that we are hearing alarms and this needs to be fixed. But that didn't seem to be resonating with people who recognized this before the DCA crash.

So, what are you going to do to fix this kind of input from the air traffic controllers into the system?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, thank you for the question. I can tell you, even though I've only been on board with the FAA a little over 5 months, the agency took the accident extremely hard. That was a very difficult situation for the FAA to digest the loss of a commercial aircraft, loss of 67 lives.

Having been on board now, I spent my first 10 days going out across the agency, from literally coast to coast up to Quinhagak, Alaska, visiting all of our facilities, from en route centers, to

TRACON, to towers. I can tell you that in the agency itself, it needs to reform. We need to change how we think about managing safety at the FAA.

We've proposed a creation of an integrated safety office that will take all of this disparate data systems and safety folks from across the mosaic of the aviation ecosystem, and consolidate them into one office that will have full responsibility for analyzing the data and making safety recommendations.

Senator CANTWELL. So, you're going to say now somebody is going to listen to air traffic controllers on a regular basis, they'll have an input into a specific office, that information will be digested and presented both up and down the chain?

Mr. BEDFORD. I'm suggesting that the way the FAA has been designed is very siloed, and each one of those silos contains some small perspective on aviation safety that doesn't talk well across the different lines of business.

So, by deconstructing safety out of the silos and putting it into a consolidated office tasks specifically with looking at the entire aviation ecosystem, from certification to flight standards, to enforcement, to rulemaking to obviously the ATO, all of those things will now be integrated into one office.

Senator CANTWELL. OK. But I'm asking something specific, because we learned this very well from the MAX situation; that you have to have line employees being able to communicate up and that information being digested by lots of managers above them, as opposed to having that shut down.

And what we wanted to make sure happened in the Boeing case is that that information wasn't precluded from being shared with the FAA. And the reason is because the FAA's job was oversight implementation of rules and understanding problems before they became bigger problems.

And I just want to mention, I mean, you said it was hard on the FAA. It's very hard on these families. They're here, the Lilley family's here, Amy Hunter's here, Laura Obert is here. It's hard on them. And what we have to do is get this right.

So, this is just a really basic question. Do you believe that the employees should be able to report into a system without intimidation by their manager, and that that information be digested, like we heard 1,500 alarm bells go off for a long period of time about the route?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, every week when I address the team, I make sure that they know that they can reach me. They've got my e-mails. They know how to get a hold of me. So, yes, to answer your question, of course, frontline employees should absolutely be able to.

Senator CANTWELL. OK. Well, usually, you name that program, and then they're inputted, and then that is digested somewhere. And so, that's the question I'm asking.

Mr. BEDFORD. So, if somebody sees something, they should say something.

Senator CANTWELL. In a formalized system. We have all these reports that we get that basically is an IG who comes in later that says that information didn't get read or shared. And then what happens, believe it or not, the public should know this before the

IG even gets to publish their report of their findings of bad problems, then they send it to you, the agency, who then cleans it up before then it gets published so that the day the report gets published from the IG about all the problems.

Basically, the agency says, "Oh, we already fixed all that," and then it leaves us, the policymakers here, trying to figure out whether it really did get fixed or didn't get fixed. So, anyway, I do appreciate that you are at least willing to say that SMS needs to be systemwide for the whole agency. I do appreciate that. Thank you.

I think Senator Capito, I don't know if you're chairing or I'm yielding to you. I don't know what I'm doing.

**STATEMENT OF HON. SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO,
U.S. SENATOR FROM WEST VIRGINIA**

Senator CAPITO. I do know what I'm doing.

Senator CANTWELL. Thank you. Senator Capito, I'm sure you're taking the gavel.

Senator CAPITO [presiding]. I am. Thank you, Mr. Administrator, for being here and for your service, too. You know, we're only as strong as our weakest link, as we know. And there's a lot of emphasis as there should be on the larger airports. And it won't surprise you to know that I'm going to focus on the smaller airports of which, of course, my state is all small airports.

And to modernize the Air Traffic Control System, we've recognized that there's need for the critical system updates. So, in the smaller regional airports in a state like ours, how are you ensuring that regional airports are getting the necessary attention in the modernization efforts?

And because you talked about antiquated systems, and in here you said some of the radar systems are decades old. I mean, in certain terrains, like where I live, that can be very dangerous. So, what can you tell rural America in terms of your airport's going to be as safe and as modernized as Dulles, or LaGuardia, or something?

Mr. BEDFORD. Yes, absolutely. Thank you for the question. Of course, we need to elevate modernization across the board, not just big airports versus small airports. In fact, when we take out our technology for testing, which we're doing as we speak; brand new digital radios, brand new digital voice switches, we actually go to our smaller airports where we have better controls, and frankly, less stress.

So, we actually start modernization from the small and work our way to the top. So, I can assure you that our regional airports are going to be well maintained as we go through the modernization.

Senator CAPITO. Well, I mean, I'll just give you an example. You know, at some of our airports, for instance, on the lighting systems, you need incandescent bulbs. You can't get them anymore that are sufficient for our runways, or you have to go get a part because it's so old, you have to go to eBay to get it rather than on the market.

I mean, are you finding this systemwide, and is the money that we gave you in the One Big Beautiful Bill going toward these kinds of things, or is that step two?

Mr. BEDFORD. Yes, so the money was allocated in many different buckets. One of them is, in fact, surface runway surveillance. I think Ranking Member Duckworth would know this, that when I was visiting the Chicago Tower, we normally have two of our SDX surface radars operational. We were down to one, and that one was down to its final channel, all due to a lack of supply chain, no parts.

And we actually manufacture many of these parts now, and when we can't, we cannibalize them off of other systems. So, with One Big Beautiful Bill, we are purchasing those new radar systems, and they will be deployed starting in the second quarter of next year.

Senator CAPITO. I want to ask you about the network outages and connections. Our colleagues here have already, I think, been on this talked about this, the telecommunication connection redundancy. We've seen stoppages in certain airports, and it's critical for safety.

So, can you explain how the FAA will oversee—I think it's Peraton—did I get that correct?

Mr. BEDFORD. You did.

Senator CAPITO. Their effort to replace our legacy teleco communications networks, and what are the timelines for these replacements?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, thank you for the question. If I can just digress for a second—

Senator CAPITO. Certainly.

Mr. BEDFORD.—because I think the rest of the Committee needs to understand this as well. When we talk about modernizing telco, most people think about moving from copper to fiber, going from analog to digital. And that's all true.

But there's another element of modernization that we aren't doing today. The second round of funding that we're asking for will be critical to get that done. And that is essentially to re-architect how the fiber is laid. So, for example, Dallas Fort Worth, we had a significant outage in our TRACON there. That system theoretically was modernized, but the architecture of that system had not been modernized.

So, there's really a two-step process here. So, even in places where we're replacing copper with fiber, I just want to be transparent that there is still another step that has to happen to get from analog to digital, which will drive the resilience and our capabilities to increase bandwidth in our facility. So, it's an important distinction.

As far as the timeline on the telco, copper to fiber, it will be completed by third quarter of 2027. We're 35 percent of the way through now.

Senator CAPITO. OK. Thank you. Let me ask you something that always comes up, and that's the number of air traffic controllers, difficulties with keeping the numbers up enough to be sufficient to be able to keep people off double shifts and all that.

How are you doing on that? And have you made any significant changes that you see on the recruitment aspect? Because we know also, you can't just all of a sudden jump in the seat. It takes 18 months, two years, before you can actually grasp the system

enough to be entrusted with the care of the system. So, where are you on the numbers and on the employment at air traffic control?

Mr. BEDFORD. Thank you for the question. Yes, so Secretary Duffy supercharged controller hiring back in spring. We, in fact, met his goal of hiring 2,000 trainees. Those trainees went into production. The trainees have a high failure rate or high washout rate.

And in fact, during the shutdown, we lost, I don't know, 400 or 500 of our trainees that just sort of gave up during the lapse even though we kept the school open. I think the thought of not being paid was enough to frighten them away.

I can tell you, we've increased the number of certified trained controllers, not by a lot. We went from 10,600 to 10,700. We've got 1,000 more trainees in the pipeline than we had a year ago. So, but as you point out, it's a two- to three-year full training cycle to get them through the academies, through our enhanced collegiate training programs and actually deployed.

Furthermore, I can tell you, we have identified numerous opportunities to improve the curriculum structure, and the training, and how we move controllers through that to, I think, significantly shorten the time to get to proficiency. And I think that we've identified things that we are self-inflicting in terms of how we schedule our controllers that are leading to a lack of productivity.

Senator CAPITO. Yes, and burnout too, probably. Well, thank you for your service. Thank you for answering my questions. Appreciate it.

Mr. BEDFORD. You're welcome.

Senator MORAN. Senator Capito, thank you. The Senator from New Jersey, Senator Rosen.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JACKY ROSEN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEVADA**

Senator ROSEN. Well, thank you Chairman Moran, Ranking Member Duckworth. And thank you, Senator Kim. I appreciate it. And this is a perfect segue because I want to build on what Senator Capito was talking about in our workforce pipeline, because we have a military to commercial aviation workforce pipeline that I think we should be potentiating.

So, I'm going to talk about how can we make it easier for people with military aviation backgrounds, including those with training comparable to air traffic controllers to enter the commercial aviation workforce. You know, Nevada plays a major role in national security and aerospace sector.

We're home to Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada Test and Training Range, Creech Air Force Base, and Fallon Naval Air Station. Numerous other equities engage in aviation. Nellis is seven miles northeast of Las Vegas, which covers more than 14,000 acres, and its ranges provide 15,000 square miles of uninterrupted airspace for flying operations. And an estimated 12,000 military and civilian personnel work at Nellis, making it one of the largest employers in southern Nevada.

So, Administrator Bedford, while individuals working as military air traffic controllers may be able to bypass some portions of FAA's ATC certification process to become civilian controllers, they would still need to undergo additional training.

So, can we talk about how we might leverage this pipeline? You have people who've really been in the mix of some very heavy training and lots of good experience. How can we break the barriers down to bring them into the commercial workforce?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, thank you for the question, Senator Rosen. As you may be aware, many of our controllers do come from a military background. In fact, our Chief Operating Officer is a former Navy guy. So, we welcome that experience. We welcome that discipline to join our team. If there are barriers of entry, I'll confess, I'm not sure what they are, but I'd be happy to work with you.

Senator ROSEN. Well, perhaps you can report back to this committee because our veterans really want to be able to do this. And so, maybe you can take a look at it, come work with our team to talk about the barriers.

We can talk with some of our folks at Nellis and see what they're thinking as well, because I think we're missing out in a really great opportunity for our veterans to come into really important jobs in airline safety and aviation safety.

They've been doing it for our men and women in uniform, and there's no reason that they can't take that pride of ownership and continue to do that for the rest of the country. So, we can work on that offline.

Mr. BEDFORD. Thank you.

Senator ROSEN. I also want to talk about non-traditional air vehicles, because as you're aware, the national airspace, it's becoming increasingly complex and crowded. More aircrafts take to the skies, drones, electric vehicle takeoff, vertical takeoff and landing, other advanced vehicles.

We're going to really need that nimble, efficient, and responsive FAA that's prepared and trained to deal with the ongoing technological advances that are occurring daily in the aviation industry.

So, we talked about workforce as far as air traffic controllers, but how are you going to ensure that the FAA has a robust workforce overall, the technical capacity, the institutional focus needed to help the aviation industry stand the cutting edge of innovation, being a global leader, and ensuring that safety?

Mr. BEDFORD. Wow. Thank you for that. That's a lot in there. So—

Senator ROSEN. It's a lot, but I mean, but there's a lot going on every day. There's a new kind of drone, a new kind of thing happening in the commercial space. And so, how do you respond to that? How are you going to bring people up to deal with that and even look forward to keep our air spaces safe? That's really the end game here. Right?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, you're probably aware that President Trump has issued numerous EOs to unlock drone dominance, to create EIPP—

Senator ROSEN. So, where are we going to get the workforce to be sure everything's safe?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, it's a great question. So, the workforce tools do need to modernize, and that's part of what you're going to get both in the \$12.5 billion, One Big Beautiful Bill, and what we would hope for is additional funding to complete modernization where we can operate in a strategic versus a tactical manner.

Senator ROSEN. So, who do you think to that regard? If we get the money, but who's going to set forth, even if we have commercial companies doing some of the training, public-private partnerships, who's going to set the template or the requirements per se, the standards, if you will, that these schools or training facilities need to work on, need to be thinking about? And this is what I'm actually asking you. You need to set those frameworks.

I know I'm running out of time, but it's important to think about that because the last thing we need is somebody delivering your package for Christmas, and it is going to interfere with something else in the aviation space.

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, I want to make sure most Americans understand through our BV loss rules. We are absolutely anticipating how we're deconflicting all of that airspace.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. Senator Kim.

**STATEMENT OF HON. ANDY KIM,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY**

Senator KIM. Thank you. It's great to see you again.

Mr. BEDFORD. Likewise.

Senator KIM. Actually, I just want to build a little bit off of what Senator Rosen was just talking about. You know, a year ago we had a lot of confusion in New Jersey about drones, about whether it was—what was true, what was not. We didn't really have an ability to deconflict this, especially not in real time. It caused a lot of panic. And I guess I'm just trying to think through a year later, like, are we any better off? And I'm not really sure.

I mean, when you and I, we went out to the FAA tech center down in Atlantic City, we saw some really interesting tech that was very nascent, but growing about the ability to track unmanned vehicles, aerial vehicles, and aircraft. I guess I just kind of want to get a sense from you just what else do we need in terms of technology? How do we get that out there deployed and proliferated to meet the scale?

Because I agree with you, you know, this technology is strong. We want to make sure we're dominant in this, but it's also going to create a lot of confusion and complexity. What else do we need to do from not just a workforce side, but a tech and innovation side? Do you feel like we're getting there?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, thank you for the question, Senator Kim. I do think we're getting there. I think there's more work to be done. Our BV loss rules will be very constructive working with industry. We're not telling industry how to do it. We're partnering with industry on how to figure out how to do it, and make sure we as regulators and compliance personnel understand that and can actually manage this process safely.

But I want to tell you that it's also a concern for Department of Defense, Homeland Security, Department of Justice. So, detection, threat assessment, and mitigation are three additional principles that we're very focused on.

Senator KIM. You know, the joint military base and other installations in my state, they had no idea what was going on, let alone

have equipment to be able to mitigate some of those. So, you know, I'd love to continue working with you on this.

You know, I think that the tech center and elsewhere around the world are doing great innovation. I want to just kind of build off of what others were saying and just get an update from you just on the Newark side of things. You know, we've had a number of conversations about some of the challenges that we've faced there.

I've been impressed and grateful for the attention and efforts to try to strengthen that up, both in terms of upgrades as well as staffing at the Philly TRACON in particular. But I guess I just wanted an update for you so I can bring back to my bosses in New Jersey. How are we doing? What else needs to be done, and what's the timetable?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, thank you for the question. Honestly, I don't think our work will ever be done there. I mean, staffing is going to be something that we're going to be focused on. I think for the remainder of my term of office, I don't think we can rest. Right? We'll have to keep our foot on the accelerator.

Senator KIM. Especially as you're saying, it takes, you know, two to three years to be able to get up to speed. And then, each region, each area, they need to be proficient in that space too.

Mr. BEDFORD. There is good news. We've seen a lot of the telecom stability has been overcome, so I feel like we're on better footing there. But I want to go back to the previous caveat I made that what we're doing is we're replacing copper with fiber.

Yes, it's more reliable, but we have not yet re-architected how that fiber sits in the ground and its connectivity. So, we still have some single points of failure that we're having to work our way through as we identify and mitigate those.

So, I do think we've made a lot of progress. We're not stopping, we still have a big upgrade cycle to do both at Philly and in the tower in Newark.

Senator KIM. Am I able to go back to my bosses in New Jersey and tell them that the blackouts on the radar and other comms issues that we had earlier, that that's not something we should expect anymore?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, again, the NAS is still analog. You know, even though we were putting in digital equipage, it's still being converted to an analog signal. So, the surveillance system, so as much as I want to tell you the system is stable compared to where it was this summer, it's still at risk of the fact that we're dealing with 50-year-old radars.

Senator KIM. One other thing I wanted to just get on your radar is, you know, I've been hearing from my constituents, especially those up by New York City up in North Jersey, they're telling me like they're getting upwards of 170 helicopters going over their head over the course of a given day. Much of that non-essential.

You know, there's a boom in tourism and whatnot. You know, they have no problems with the law enforcement, with medical needs and emergencies, but they were just asking me like, is there anything we can do on this front? And I know it's not an issue that every corner of the country faces, but it's seriously disrupting their lives, their ability to be able to just, you know, live the lives that they want.

And I guess I want to get a sense from you, what, if anything, are we able to work on, and is there ability for you to commit to working with me to try to figure out an appropriate way forward?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, I wish I could offer you a lot of hope on noise. I think there are two ways we can help with noise. First is modernize the system where we can keep aircraft at a higher altitude and allow them to do power off descents into the airspace, into landing. That will significantly increase capacity and reduce noise impacts in our community.

I think the hope for helicopters, frankly, is in the future of advanced air mobility. Those airframes are remarkably quiet. And if we can replace helicopters with—forget, even if they're vertical takeoff and lift vehicles, even conventional electric vehicles, will be significantly quieter in the airspace than what we have with conventional helicopter lift.

Senator KIM. Well, look, I'd like to continue this not just that on the tech side, but what flight paths, I mean, especially after the crash that we had in Hudson. You know, there's a safety concern that many are facing. So, if you don't mind, I'd love to be able to follow up with you.

Mr. BEDFORD. I would love to work with you on bringing out our MARS technology as we think about New York airspace as an airspace system, not four separate systems where we can drive greater efficiency that I think would also benefit noise in the market.

Senator KIM. OK. Thank you. And I yield back.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Yes, I was with you too until you wanted to get rid of helicopters, so.

[Laughter.]

Senator DUCKWORTH. Senator Hickenlooper.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN HICKENLOOPER,
U.S. SENATOR FROM COLORADO**

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Thank you, Madam Chair. Welcome back, Mr. Bedford. You know, you were talking about the trainees, you know, the shutdown being enough to scare 400 or 500 of them out of their job. They probably wouldn't have been very good air traffic controllers if that relatively small amount of stress was going to disconcert them such.

Anyway, during that shutdown, Denver Airport actually wanted to use its own funds to pay air traffic controllers who were dutifully working through the shutdown. And I strongly, I think, a lot of us, a lot of Senators strongly supported that. And we've seen other proposals from this committee as well, which would allow for the ATCs to be paid during a shutdown.

During this shutdown, controllers were not only working long hours, but they were also sometimes taking on additional jobs just to make their rent or get through their monthly budget. Do you think it's important to reduce these kinds of outside stressors for those dedicated workers who are coming in even though they're not getting paid, they'll get the back pay, but they're not getting paid, and they're in charge of not just public safety, but the safety of our national airspace system? You think it's useful to reduce those outside stressors?

Mr. BEDFORD. Yes.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. And so, what's your sense on whether airports should be able to take on, hopefully be repaid later when we get out of a shutdown, but they're willing to go forward and out of their own pocket, pay the ATCs? Shouldn't they be allowed to?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, so the air traffic control system is just that. It's a system having one control tower staffed, and the rest of them, unstaffed, doesn't get us very far because planes don't generally fly in circles.

So, what we need to do is think about a solution that could solve the problem writ large. So, we look if the shoe were on the other foot, if I were back in private industry and you got word of the fact that I was actually requiring employees to come to work and not paying them, I'm pretty sure you would haul me in front of this committee and dress me down.

So, I would strongly encourage us to figure out a way to not shut government down, but that's me as a private citizen and a taxpayer, not as the FAA.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. I think all of us should probably agree with you. Northern Colorado Regional Airport, which is up in Fort Collins, kind of between Fort Collins and Greeley, was piloting a remote tower through the end of 2024.

The bipartisan FAA reauthorization last year directed the FAA to create a program and publish milestones for a remote tower system. And these included establishing requirements, safety protocols, approval of processes for the designs that goes along testing operation of remote airport towers, including talking to stakeholders, making sure everyone gets a part of it. What progress has the FAA made on this mandate? So, when and where can we expect to see more remote towers in operation?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, thank you for the question. We have the digital remote tower sitting in our tech center. It's been undergoing safety assessment and evaluation for the better part of a year. I saw it right after I onboarded in August, and I was just at the tech center again two weeks ago, frankly pushing to get this work done.

They're on a pathway to certify the device now, I believe by the end of the second quarter. I'd love to see us accelerate that. We have a deployment in Bartow, Florida, right now where they've purchased the system on their own, and we're allowing them to operate in parallel. So, they keep their tower manned, but they're also manning their remote tower to see if we see any latency or other issues that would give us concern.

We have a second deployment, I believe, Florida has bought a second one for Winter Haven. We've identified where we think we would be able to roll out digital towers, both as a supplement to our current tower as well, you know, as a digital safety supplement, if you will.

We have poor lines of sight rather than building taller towers, we might be able to use this technology more cost efficiently to enhance our airport surveillance. So, I'm excited about it, and I want to see us get this deployed just as soon as possible.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. I assume that you're saying sometime in this coming year, we should look at some move forward?

Mr. BEDFORD. Yes. You have my commitment on that.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Good. Now, I want to talk a little bit about ASCENT, what we call essential air service. We've discussed in Colorado; the Essential Air Service program is an economic lifeline for some of our rural communities. Places like Cortez, Alamosa, Pueblo, connects them to Denver, as you know.

During the shutdown, we saw EAS funding nearly dry up multiple times before finally being included in the continuing resolution. But obviously, living CR to CR is not a viable way to operate. What is the FAA doing? Let now until we can get past shutdowns completely? What is the FAA doing to ensure that the Essential Air Service continues to serve its purpose of connecting rural, rural communities to urban hubs?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, thank you for the question. I want to make sure I stay in my lane here. I believe EAS is under the purview of the Department of Transportation not the FAA. But I can tell you as a 35-year operator in a lot of those markets, in Cortez, Pueblo, Farmington, Gunnison, Sheridan, I get all of that stuff and that lifeline is critical. Absolutely.

I think one of the things that is going to usher in an absolute change in our connectivity is advanced air mobility. We can finally find a vehicle that is cost effective, it's the right size, has the right operating parameter.

So, really excited about how we can actually reduce the need to have an economic supplement, but allow the market to actually address the need and with better frequency, you know, and better customer service. I think advanced air mobility is the key to unlocking that future.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. No, I agree, and lowering that cost as you're describing. That's exactly point on, so that they don't need that subsidy.

Mr. BEDFORD. Absolutely.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Thank you. I yield back to the Chair.

Senator MORAN [presiding]. Senator Hickenlooper, thank you. I will highlight that in March—this is legislation I've introduced in previous years as well—but in March, I introduced legislation to allow the FAA to withdraw from the Airport and Airway Trust Fund monies necessary to keep their operations functioning during a shutdown. And I'd welcome any support and—

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Sign me up.

Senator MORAN.—and joining with you. Thank you. Thank you for letting me market this effort. Senator Markey.

**STATEMENT OF HON. EDWARD MARKEY,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS**

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Administrator Bedford, at your nomination hearing, you told me, "I will follow the ethics agreement that I've signed with the Office of Government Ethics." And that ethics agreement requires you to divest your holdings in Republic Airways within 90 days of your confirmation, and you were confirmed back many, many, many months ago.

So, it's been FIVE months since your confirmation. Senator Cantwell asked you earlier but I will ask again, because in answer to her question, you said that you are in compliance. So, yes or no, have you divested your holdings in Republic Airways?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, I do appreciate the opportunity to add more clarity to it. I continue to comply with all of my ethics agreement requirements, especially the recusals that are in force. I've briefed the entire FAA front office team, political team, and the career ethics officers about the agreement.

Senator MARKEY. No, again, the question I'm asking is, have you divested from Republic Airlines? Again, it's a very simple question. And you said at the confirmation hearing, that would be what you were going to do. Have you done that?

Mr. BEDFORD. So, again, just to make sure we're level set here. I followed the advice I was getting from the career ethics officers to seek an extension due to the fact that the agreement to merge Republic and Mesa was being delayed.

Senator MARKEY. So, you received an extension?

Mr. BEDFORD. I applied for the extension at the advice of the career ethics officers.

Senator MARKEY. No, I understand that.

Mr. BEDFORD. I didn't get a no.

Senator MARKEY. Did you get an extension?

Mr. BEDFORD. I was not told I did not get an extension.

Senator MARKEY. Did you get an extension?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, I've learned after this hearing was scheduled, that the OG decided not to grant that extension.

Senator MARKEY. You have not been granted an extension?

Mr. BEDFORD. By the time that extension was—or that information was communicated to me, the merger had in fact closed. The certificates have been canceled. And I'm now in a position where I have to wait for them to be reissued, at which point they will be divested.

Senator MARKEY. You have not divested from Republic in your FIVE months on the job, and you have jurisdiction over that airline.

Mr. BEDFORD. Hence the need from my—

Senator MARKEY. And that's completely unacceptable because you were looking for an extension anyway. You should have just divested. So, you came before this committee, and you testified that you would follow your ethics agreements, and you have contradicted your testimony, and you've broken your promise to the American people.

And I understand that you requested a 60-day extension from the Office of Government Ethics to divest from Republic Airways, but you requested that extension on the last day. Your divestment was due on October 7, and you did not receive an extension. You didn't receive the extension.

So, Mr. Bedford, yes or no, did you make any effort to divest from Republic before the date that you asked for the extension and the divestment was due? Did you ever seek to divest before that request for an extension?

Mr. BEDFORD. I worked very closely with the career ethics officers at the department to make sure I maintained compliance with my ethics agreement. And the advice was to seek an extension, which I did, and I did not hear any response back from the OGE until first week of December.

Senator MARKEY. Well, the answer is no. You requested an extension at the very last second, and now you want to throw up your hands and say it's not your fault.

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, that is why the recusals remain in place, sir,

Senator MARKEY. Your request was denied. But even if it had been granted, those 60 days have already passed as well. This is five months ago that you were confirmed. So, even that 60-day extension would've already expired and you still have not divested. So, that is actually an egregious violation of your agreement.

So, Administrator Bedford, when do you intend to comply with your ethics agreement and fully divest from Republic? I would like a date that you are going to be in compliance with your ethics agreement. What's that date?

Mr. BEDFORD. So, as I sit here today, the shares have been terminated, and I'm waiting for the shares to be reissued under the new organizational structure. Those shares, as soon as they're reissued, they'll be sent to my broker, and the broker is instructed to sell them as reasonably practicable.

Senator MARKEY. Well, what does that mean? Does that mean a year from now?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, I don't know when the shares will be reissued. So, I can't give you a specific date.

Senator MARKEY. Wow. So, five months have gone by, and you haven't divested yet, and you have no idea when you will be divesting in the future. And the merger between Republic and Mesa closed on November 25. So, you could have sold before the closing date and avoided any issues with share certificates, but you didn't do that.

And shareholders tend to approve mergers because they increase shareholder value, not decrease it. So, is your recusal to comply with your ethics agreement at all motivated by the Republic and Mesa merger?

Mr. BEDFORD. I'm not sure I follow your question.

Senator MARKEY. Well, I think it's pretty simple what I'm saying, that merger.

Mr. BEDFORD. I'm recused from all things, both Republic Airways on regional airline industry.

Senator MARKEY. Right. But did you think that maybe it would be appropriate for you to divest before that merger?

Mr. BEDFORD. Sir, I followed the advice I was getting from the career ethics officers. I played it right down the fairway, completely transparent, open, honest about where I was at, what I was trying to accomplish. I accepted their advice, I followed their advice. And now I'm in a situation where the shares are canceled, and I can't sell them even if I wanted to today. As soon as they're reissued, I will divest—

Senator MARKEY. Your refusal to divest and the timing of this merger are just a coincidence? I think that ethics agreement was not a suggestion. It was something that you had to comply with. And obviously, there are going to be more and more conflicts that show up the longer that you stay in conflict with the advocacy agreement.

So, I thank you, Mr. Chairman, but I expect you'll be back at this hearing again and you still will not have divested. And it's just unacceptable.

Senator MORAN. Senator Duckworth's recognized.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. I'm going to continue on this question line. So, my understanding is Republic and Mesa, as my colleague has mentioned, merger was completed November 25, but your ethics agreement required you to have divested by July 9. So, that was quite a ways before the merger was completed.

Why is the merger relevant to your decision? I mean, you brought this up, you brought up the merger. Why is it relevant to whether or not you divested before July 9?

Mr. BEDFORD. What's the July 9th date again?

Senator DUCKWORTH. That was your ethics agreement required you divested by July 9, 2025.

Mr. BEDFORD. Oh, I didn't onboard to the FAA until July 10. So, I'm not sure where the July 9th date comes from.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Well, even then, 60 days when you are onboarded would still get you before the November 25, 2025 merger date.

Mr. BEDFORD. That's correct. Which is why I sought an extension from the——

Senator DUCKWORTH. On the last day?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, I've been working with the career officials——

Senator DUCKWORTH. So, you're blaming the career officials?

Mr. BEDFORD. No, I'm saying that there was transparency here. There was no attempt to hide anything.

Senator DUCKWORTH. OK. Well, now that it's happened, if you had sold your Republic shares on July 9 or 10, or the share price would've been \$14.40 per share, today it's \$19.94, will you forfeit any profit from your failure to comply within the 90-day deadline?

Mr. BEDFORD. I'm not sure where you're——

Senator DUCKWORTH. For when you eventually sell. If you eventually do divest, if the shares have increased in value since whenever your divested deadline was, will you forfeit those profits, give that money to the back to the taxpayer, do something with it because you're taking advantage and you're making more money off of it?

Mr. BEDFORD. My broker is instructed to sell the shares as soon as he reasonably can, once the shares are reissued.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Right. But I'm asking you about the profits. If you had sold when you were supposed to, the shares were worth \$14.40 per share. At this current point in time, they're worth \$19.94 per share. So, that's a \$5 per share profit.

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, I can't deal on hypotheticals. It's possible the share price could have gone down.

Senator DUCKWORTH. OK. Well, they're up. If you make a profit, are you going to——what are you going to do with the profits? I mean, you were supposed to supposed to divest and you haven't.

Mr. BEDFORD. I followed my recusals. I followed the ethics agreement. I worked with the career officials to seek an extension. And unfortunately, due to their lack of response, I'm in a position where the shares don't exist to sell.

Senator DUCKWORTH. But you could have sold them. You could have sold them without asking for the—you could have sold them when you promised us that you would have.

Mr. BEDFORD. I've been completely transparent with the ethics officers, including how the agreement came together. My intention was always to complete the merger and to sell the shares in the market. That was my intention coming into government.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Right. But my point is, you were opposed to divest within 60 days and you didn't. So, as you were getting to day 56, 57, 58, 59, you can't blame this on the ethics officer. You're the one who chose not to call your broker and say, "Sell. I have 60 days to sell."

Mr. BEDFORD. I'm not attempting to—anyone. I'm simply attempting to tell you what actually transpired.

Senator DUCKWORTH. OK. So, you chose not to make the decision to call your broker to say, "It's day 59 or it's day 60, sell the shares. I made a promise to the U.S. Senate that I would divest."

Mr. BEDFORD. There's no market to sell the shares. It's a private company. There's no market to sell the shares.

Senator DUCKWORTH. I think you're going to be coming back before this committee to answer these questions. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BEDFORD. I do welcome your oversight. Thank you.

Senator MORAN. What I want to talk about is Peraton. Mr. Bedford, I don't know, I may have missed this, but Peraton will be responsible for certain elements of the Administration's overall modernization goals from replacement of telecommunication systems to radars. What's the Peraton's contractual responsibility for those programs? What are they required to do?

Mr. BEDFORD. So, under the Peraton agreement, we set up a series of needs packages that clearly articulate what the work streams are and the estimated timeline to completion. Peraton's profit, if we want to think about that, is essentially broken into three different elements.

There's a fixed profit element of 3 percent, and then there's a variable profitable element of 6 percent. The 6-percent variable profitability element is contingent upon completing the plan on budget and on time with our satisfaction, and we will hold back 3 percent of the potential profits for any potential damages that might happen for failure to comply with our work packages.

So, it's a very strenuous agreement, and we have vigilant oversight on it.

Senator MORAN. An element of this modernization effort is radar systems replacement. Replacement of the aging surveillance radars for modern, reliable, interoperable systems. Your agency is working to replace up to 612 systems by June 2028.

What's an update to this, the aspect of this modernization effort? What's the timeline awarding a contract that you're working to meet?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, thank you for the question. Yes, we're very close. We've down selected three qualified vendors. We've tested their equipment. We will probably award over the next two weeks a contract to potentially two of those suppliers in order to meet our timelines.

So, I believe we will have that money committed by the end of the year, and we will begin installations in second quarter of 2026.

Senator MORAN. Tell me about the Common Automation Platform, CAP, next generation single unified air traffic control system that handles both civil and military. Your request for information for the CAP indicates that “the current NAS automation system infrastructure is siloed, and flexible, and increasingly costly to maintain”.

What mitigation efforts is the FAA considering to make certain that CAP will be implemented both safely, affordably, and on time, consistent with the objectives of the administration?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, this would certainly be worthy of a much longer dialogue, but let me try to explain it as straightforward as I can. So, we have 350 different FAA facilities. We might think of the 130-ish TRACON, and the 22 en route centers, and the rest are towers.

But each one of these FAA facilities has its own compute power, and this compute power also has an operating system. If it's a tower or a TRACON, it has a STARS application. If it's an en route center, it has an ERAM application.

In order to be successful, that next tranche of funding that we're requesting will enable us to actually rearchitect those systems so that we can lift them out of the local compute power and into the cloud. And as we get that architecture into the cloud, we essentially have unlimited compute power.

That will give us the ability to surveil the NAS as a consolidated system where today we surveil it as 350 separate systems. And every time a plane transitions from one system to another, it requires a human handoff and a tactical deconfliction.

We actually will be able, once we get the system in the cloud, we will be to strategically deconflict flights before they even leave the ground, giving us greater efficiency, greater safety, and greater surveillance.

Senator MORAN. It is worthy probably of a longer conversation, and one in which I can think more clearly about what you're telling me, but it is a significant undertaking.

Mr. BEDFORD. It will return us to the gold standard in the world.

Senator MORAN. That's great to hear. Just a couple of other things then I'll conclude the hearing. We have a number of air traffic control towers that the personnel are contract tower personnel.

Mr. BEDFORD. Yes, sir.

Senator MORAN. It's an important component of air traffic control in states like Kansas, I think in Illinois as well. Section 611 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 requires the FAA to work with the Department of Labor to update wage determinations for controllers and create a new wage determination category or occupation code for air traffic managers at contract towers. And there is a report on that is due to Congress in six months.

Would you be able to tell me about implementation of that requirement, and where you are, and where you're headed?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, I'm going to be honest with you and tell you I don't specifically know that one. I know we've got the 339 specific reauthorization requirements. We have 75 percent of them done. The other 25 percent are in work. But I can talk to you about our

thoughts on the Federal contract tower program, just not that specific one.

Senator MORAN. Well, I've accomplished my goal.

Mr. BEDFORD. You've planted the seed. We will get it done.

Senator MORAN. But anything you want to tell me about contract towers?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, so we also have an obligation to assess the towers to see whether or not we should bring them into the Federal tower program. We are doing that work. I think we're close to identifying the first potential transitions. We also have a focus on increasing the staff availability at our Federal, or sorry, our contract tower programs. We're allowing now our collegiate trained controllers to be able to report to duty at a contract tower to help supplement their workforce standing where if you think we're short-handed in the Federal towers, we're even more shorthanded in the contract towers. So, we are aware we need to supplement them and to help them, and ultimately the larger ones will convert to Federal towers.

Senator MORAN. Final question. I believe in addition to modernizing air traffic control systems, I also want to ask about what more can be done to improve aircraft certification processes.

We are a significant manufacturer of aircraft policies that would allow for more rapid certification and deployment of safety enhancements on the aircraft. So, sometimes this self-certification and this certification process is considered—there are safety concerns raised by people in this case. How do you get the certification done to get the safety devices into the manufacturing process?

Mr. BEDFORD. Well, thank you for that question. I couldn't agree more. This is an area of significant focus for the FAA right now. We've got so many certification programs going on between Advanced Air Mobility Supersonic, and of course, we do a lot of work in space, you may have heard.

So, this is probably an area where I would admit we're resource-challenged, and we could do some extra hands there. But the team is focused on it. We're bringing a theory of constraints mentality to look at bottlenecks in the certification process and how we can be more collaborative, but also improve our oversight and surveillance. So, there's a lot of work to do there.

Senator MORAN. Senator Duckworth, anything to conclude?

Senator DUCKWORTH. No.

Senator MORAN. Very good. Administrator Bedford, again, thank you.

Mr. BEDFORD. It's a pleasure to be here. Thank you.

Senator MORAN. Senators will have until the close of business on Friday, December 19, to submit questions for the record. In other words, there could be written questions coming your direction. The witness, Mr. Bedford, you will have until the close of business on January 7 to respond to those questions.

And with that, the hearing is concluded.

[Whereupon, at 4:26 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JERRY MORAN TO HON. BRYAN BEDFORD

Question 1. Can you provide an updated timeline for the FMDS acquisition, including key milestones, and clarify when initial fielding and operational deployment can be expected following contract award?

Answer. The FAA is currently executing a challenge-based acquisition process to choose a final FMDS vendor. The challenge-based acquisition focuses on evaluating solutions to FMDS for speed, safety, efficiency, and innovation. The selected vendor will offer a mature solution prepared to meet the FAA's FMDS goals. The final schedule is dependent on the selection vendor solution approach and may change. The following milestones are planned:

- Award contract in Quarter 3 Fiscal Year 2026
- Start pilot evaluation at key sites by Quarter 2 Fiscal Year 2027
- Complete key site initial operating capability no later than Quarter 1 Fiscal Year 2028

Question 2. How does the FAA plan to leverage existing, operationally proven commercial technologies to accelerate ATC and NAS modernization and deliver measurable operational improvements more quickly than traditional, custom-built acquisition approaches?

Answer. The FAA routinely evaluates and, where appropriate, adopts commercially available operational technologies that demonstrate safety, interoperability, and efficiency benefits in the National Airspace System (NAS). The agency continues to engage industry, gather performance data, and integrate proven technology where it supports modernization goals and delivers measurable operational improvements. We anticipate that evaluation of operationally proven commercial technologies will be part of the process. Our Flow Management Data and Services (FMDS) challenge award process is a solid recent example of this approach. Our evaluation of a common automation system will follow a similar acquisition strategy.

Question 3. How is the FAA utilizing this \$300 million from OBBB as it relates to fully implementing PBN/RNP in the NAS? What more can the FAA do to increase the utilization of RNP?

Answer. The FAA has established strategic initiatives to modernize the NAS, focusing on data-driven decision-making and collaboration with internal and external stakeholders.

Implementation of these performance-based navigation initiatives will be accomplished regionally. To date, the FAA has established a wide base of Performance Based Navigation (PBN) accessibility, publishing 6,600 RNAV (GPS) procedures at 2,980 airports nationwide and RNAV (RNP) or RNP AR (Authorization Required) for more complex or operationally constrained environments. The FAA utilizes RNAV (RNP) approaches and has published 432 procedures at 136 airports NAS-wide. These PBN capabilities include those covered airports under section 619 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 that now have PBN procedures that meet section 619 requirements. RNAV (RNP)/RNP (AR) is a requirement for the Established on RNP (EoR) reduced separation standard, which is already implemented at 4 locations and planned for additional locations across the NAS. FAA continues to support this investment by analyzing and identifying opportunities to optimize terminal and enroute airspace, procedures, and infrastructure to address structural inefficiencies, overall system throughput, and system resiliency. We are committed to being transparent and accountable as we execute these projects.

Question 4. The FAA has stated its commitment to enabling resilient operations across the NAS in line with the upcoming auction of spectrum in the Upper C-Band. Recognizing that the agency's upcoming rulemaking will prioritize meeting a proposed interference tolerance mask (ITM) as the means of compliance for this man-

date, will the FAA intend to also reference the upcoming new Technical Standard Order TSO-C221 for radar altimeters (which will meet the ITM by default) as an additional possible method of compliance, beyond ITM tolerant TSO-C87 and TSO-C87a radar altimeters?

Answer. Yes. The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM), Requirements for Interference-Tolerant Radio Altimeter Systems, was published on January 7, 2026, and defines the proposed next generation interference tolerance mask (ITM) (91 Fed. Reg. 459). As stated in the NPRM, when the RTCA standard is complete, FAA anticipates recognizing it with new TSOs, which would provide a means for obtaining an FAA design and production approval for compliant equipment to facilitate aircraft equipage as proposed in the NPRM.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. TED BUDD TO
HON. BRYAN BEDFORD

Question 1. Much of the equipment currently used by our controllers dates to the 1970s and 80s. Step into a tower and you might see a controller keeping track of the airfield, traffic aloft, weather conditions, and other information on a combination of paper flight strips, spreadsheets, and half a dozen or more monitors showing dated, unintuitive graphics.

Meanwhile, some of the largest major U.S. airlines are already using commercially available software and AI-enabled decision-support capabilities to improve their air traffic management operations to gain system efficiencies. U.S.-based companies are providing these capabilities today in the commercial aviation sector and to other government agencies for critical operations.

As the FAA looks to modernize the national air traffic control system, how is the agency evaluating and incorporating proven commercial technologies from U.S.-based technology companies into its modernization strategy?

Answer. The FAA is taking a disciplined, risk informed approach to modernizing the NAS while maintaining safety and operational continuity. The agency evaluates commercially available technologies, including decision support and automation tools already used in the aviation sector and other Federal operations. Through market research, industry engagement, pilot efforts, and competitive procurements, the FAA assesses maturity, cybersecurity, interoperability, and suitability for the NAS. Our recent challenge based acquisition of FMDS and Common Automation platform solutions is a good example of how we are exploring using commercial off the shelf solutions and accelerating deployment of best in class solutions. Where commercial solutions meet FAA safety, certification, and mission requirements, they are incorporated into modernization efforts to improve efficiency and controller effectiveness.

Question 2. In August the FAA released a draft rule for beyond visual line-of-sight (BVLOS) operations for drones. While the FAA's work on this is appreciated, I do have some concerns. For example, the draft rule does not include a pathway for current part 107 operators to smoothly transition to part 108. As a result, experienced operators with proven track records in safe BVLOS operations could be set back or even shut down.

What is the FAA doing to ensure that the extensive feedback provided by aviation experts, industry, and the public, are incorporated into the final BVLOS rule to ensure a smooth transition between part 107 waivers and full-scale operations under part 108?

Answer. The FAA is reviewing public comments submitted on the Beyond Visual Line-of-Sight (BVLOS) NPRM and may make changes from the proposed rule to the final rule.

Question 3. The BVLOS draft rule also mandates a level 3 TSA Security Threat Assessment for anyone who has "unescorted access to cargo loaded for transport" on a drone. If we take current drone operations as a baseline, this will mean that every customer walking into a Walmart store that has a drone delivery operation would need to be fingerprinted and cross-checked with FBI and DHS databases before entering the store.

How will you work with the TSA to set up a risk-based security framework without this sort of impractical red tape?

Answer. As stated in the NPRM, the FAA expects to issue a final rule for the portions of the proposal that fall within its authority. TSA will address matters within its authority in a separate final rule. However, the FAA will work with TSA throughout the rulemaking process as TSA addresses and responds to comments regarding the policy proposals within its statutory authority.

Question 4. The BVLOS proposed rule requires drone manufacturers to go through the prescriptive requirements of the aircraft type certification process to fly BVLOS operations. FAA abandoned this process several years ago and instead adopted the more flexible and performance-based approach for drone aircraft certification called Criteria for Making 44807 Determinations, or CMD process. A regulation should not make it harder to operate than before the rule was published.

As the FAA works to finalize a BVLOS rule, will you ensure that the FAA includes language that embraces streamlined, proven aircraft certification processes like CMD and resist efforts to move backwards towards a prescriptive and unworkable aircraft certification process?

Answer. In the BVLOS NPRM, the FAA proposed a regulatory framework for determining the airworthiness of unmanned aircraft for proposed part 108 operations. The intent of the proposed process is to allow for an efficient approval process of part 108 UAS, while maintaining the safety of the public and the integrity of the NAS.

The FAA is currently reviewing comments on the NPRM while being mindful of the statutory direction to ensure the final rule is both performance-based and enabling.

Question 5. In Section 911 the FAA Reauthorization Act passed last year, we required the FAA to establish a pilot program for drone inspections of FAA's infrastructure within 180 days. We are now well beyond that deadline. Do you have any status update on standing up the FAA infrastructure inspection pilot program?

Answer. The FAA successfully initiated an infrastructure inspection pilot program utilizing Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) in accordance with section 911 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. This program aims to assess the potential of UAS to enhance FAA inspection and oversight capabilities, improve data collection, increase employee safety, and reduce operational costs.

UAS have been utilized for a variety of inspection tasks, including:

- Radar Inspections: Conducting precise inspections of radar facilities.
- Air Traffic Control Tower Inspections: Inspecting control towers to support ongoing maintenance tasks.
- Navigational Aid Inspections and Testing: Using UAS for both inspection and testing of navigational aids to ensure accuracy and functionality.
- Land Inspections for Radar Tower Placement and Heights: Evaluating potential radar tower locations and optimal heights.
- Critical Infrastructure Inspections: Monitoring key infrastructure assets to enhance operational safety and reliability.
- Disaster Response Support: Assisting with disaster response by providing rapid UAS-based assessments of affected areas.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. ERIC SCHMITT TO
HON. BRYAN BEDFORD

Mr. Bedford, the recently released FY 2026 Airport Terminal Program (ATP) NOFO makes clear this is the final year of ATP funding, and emphasizes criteria such as capacity expansion, replacement of aging infrastructure, and readiness to obligate by October 30, 2026. Some airports, such as STL Lambert, have made the active choice not to apply in the earlier years of the grant program so they could submit an application only once their project was fully ready for construction.

Question 1. How is the FAA accounting for airports that did not receive any ATP awards in prior rounds, and is the agency giving consideration to providing higher preference in this final round to first-time applicants so that funding is not disproportionately concentrated among airports that applied and received awards in earlier years?

Answer. The Airport Terminal Program (ATP), authorized by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), requires the Secretary to "provide a preference to projects that achieve a complete development objective, even if awards for the project must be phased, and the Secretary shall prioritize projects that have received partial awards." The FAA also included this language in the FY26 ATP Notice Of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). The ATP is highly competitive, with FAA receiving over 500 applications requesting \$8 billion in funding for projects under last year's FY25 ATP NOFO. While the FAA is not permitted to give higher preference to first-time applicants, the FAA will give all applications full consideration based on the criteria set forth in the statute.

Mr. Bedford, Missouri is set to host major global events in the coming years, including 2026 FIFA World Cup matches in Kansas City and America 250 celebrations in St Louis. These events are expected to bring tens of thousands of international visitors who will depend on reliable connections through the busiest U.S. gateway airports to reach the Midwest. Congress has discussed the idea of evaluating intelligent approach technologies as a way to safely improve efficiency in this highly congested airspace.

Question 2. How does the FAA plan to ensure that its air traffic modernization efforts focus on preventing congestion at our coastal gateway airports from having a ripple effect at Midwest airports like St Louis?

Answer. The FAA is working toward the ability to manage the NAS as an integrated network and is focusing its modernization efforts on reducing congestion and improving flow across the entire system, including both coastal gateway and inland airports. The agency's current tools are both reactive and tactical. As part of its modernization efforts, the FAA is developing SMART digital twins using machine learning and AI to evaluate and deploy advanced arrival, departure, and surface management capabilities that improve predictability and throughput in congested airspace. In short we intend to become more proactive and strategic in future airspace management and design. These efforts will be coordinated through the Air Traffic Organization to ensure major events and peak travel periods do not adversely affect service to Midwest airports such as St Louis.

Question 3. Starting in August, the U.S. military has increased its military presence in the Caribbean, which reportedly includes multiple aviation assets. While no domestic U.S. air carriers fly to Venezuela, the Caribbean airspace has significant commercial traffic. The confluence of heavy commercial traffic and non-transpondering military aircraft is both a safety and security concern, exhibited not only by the accident at DCA in January but also the encounter last week between a U.S. air carrier and a U.S. Air Force tanker near Curacao, where the air carrier had to take evasive action to avoid a mid-air collision.

a. What formal and/or informal measures have been taken between the FAA and the Department of War to maintain clear communication and mutual airspace awareness to ensure that the Caribbean airspace maintains a high level of safety?

Answer. The FAA worked, and continues to work, closely with the Department of War (DoW) regarding the safe use of FAA-controlled and international airspace, including the Caribbean region. Through established interagency coordination mechanisms, the FAA and DoW exchange operational information, coordinate airspace use, and address potential conflicts between military and civil aviation activities. These efforts include both formal agreements and routine operational coordination at the national and facility levels to maintain situational awareness and mitigate safety-of-flight risks to civil aviation operations. The Air Traffic Organization continuously monitors conditions and adjusts traffic management strategies as needed to maintain a high level of safety for commercial and military operations.

b. Additionally, what additional efforts is the FAA taking to make sure operators (airlines) have appropriate real-time situational awareness of military operations in Caribbean airspace?

Answer. The FAA provides air navigation services in the San Juan Flight Information Region (FIR). Venezuela, Curacao, and Trinidad and Tobago, respectively, provide air navigation services in the Maiquetía, Curacao, and Piarco Flight Information Regions.

With respect to airspace that the FAA manages, the FAA provides operators with timely operational information through established communication channels, including air traffic control advisories, aeronautical information products, and traffic management initiatives. When military activity may affect civil operations, the FAA coordinates with the DoW to share relevant information and issue appropriate notices or advisories consistent with safety and security requirements. Air traffic controllers provide real time information to aircraft as conditions warrant to support pilot situational awareness. These actions are managed by the Air Traffic Organization to ensure operators receive accurate and actionable information without compromising operational or national security considerations.

In addition, the FAA issues airspace notifications, including Air Traffic Advisories and/or Notices to Airmen (NOTAMs), to inform airspace users of hazardous areas, special use airspace activity, or other conditions that may affect flight operations. These combined measures support clear communication, mutual airspace awareness, and a high level of safety for civil and military aviation operations in airspace managed by the United States.

With respect to U.S. civil aviation operations in airspace managed by other countries where such operations may encounter safety-of-flight risks related to conflict,

other military activity, extremist or militant activity, or heightened tensions, the FAA may issue flight prohibitions or advisories, as appropriate, for U.S. civil aviation. The FAA issued flight advisories for the San Juan FIR, Maiquetía FIR, Curaçao FIR, and the portion of the Piarco FIR west of 0570000W due to potential hazards from military activity. Those advisories were cancelled when the military operations in the region subsided.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. TIM SHEEHY TO
HON. BRYAN BEDFORD

Question 1. You have acknowledged that air traffic controller staffing challenges remain significant and that improving training pipelines is a priority for the FAA. One frequently discussed pathway is the transition of experienced military air traffic controllers into the civilian side. Please indicate whether you support, oppose, or are evaluating the following potential approaches to improving the military-to-civilian controller pipeline and explain the FAA's position on each:

a. Raising the maximum hiring age for former military air traffic controllers with substantial operational experience;

Answer. The FAA welcomes former military controllers to the Federal workforce. They bring valuable experience and leadership to the FAA. The FAA continues to evaluate potential changes to controller hiring policies based on safety data, workforce analysis, and training outcomes. Any consideration of age-related hiring criteria would require a data driven assessment of operational impacts and close coordination with Congress. The agency will follow statutory direction and engage stakeholders as appropriate before pursuing any changes.

b. Prioritizing medical and security clearance processing for former military air traffic controllers with current Department of War clearances;

Answer. Over the past 10 months, the FAA has reduced the time it takes for new controller trainees to get an Academy assignment from more than 13 months to as little as 39 days, and we continue to look for ways to further improve our processes. Former military air traffic controllers tend to move faster through the medical and security clearance processes, depending on individual circumstances. Department of War medical clearances cannot currently be transferred to meet FAA medical standards. However, those clearances can help move candidates through the medical qualification process more efficiently.

With respect to security clearances, the FAA utilizes existing authorities to accept prior completed background investigations and favorable security eligibility determinations conducted by other Federal agencies, including the Department of War. Consistent with these authorities, the FAA may apply reciprocity for former military air traffic controllers whose prior investigation meets the scope, sensitivity, and recency requirements for the FAA position. Reciprocal acceptance is substantially faster than initiating a new investigation. However, reciprocal acceptance may be precluded if the candidate's prior background investigation does not meet the requirements for the FAA position or if the FAA identifies new adverse information.

c. Allowing limited credit toward the FAA Academy requirements based on demonstrated equivalency between Department of War and FAA training curricula, while maintaining all applicable safety standards; and

Answer. The FAA continues to assess opportunities to align military and FAA training pathways where equivalencies can be clearly demonstrated through data and analysis. Any consideration of limited credit toward FAA Academy requirements would require assessment of training outcomes to meet all FAA safety, certification, and operational standards. The agency would pursue such changes only with appropriate oversight and consistent with statutory direction and workforce needs.

d. Establishing a limited pilot program under which certain military air traffic control training and experience may be credited toward FAA certification, subject to FAA evaluation and oversight.

Answer. Military experience may inform placement and training pathways, but all controllers must meet FAA facility-specific certification requirements under FAA orders and safety management processes. Military controllers transitioning to the FAA are evaluated individually and assigned directly to FAA facilities based on their demonstrated experience and qualifications. As with all FAA controllers, certification requirements are facility-specific and reflect the unique operational complexity and safety requirements of each location.

Transitioning military controllers are held to the same certification and performance standards as transferring FAA controllers. While prior military experience is fully considered and may reduce initial training requirements, all controllers must

meet FAA certification criteria under FAA oversight to ensure consistent safety and operational integrity across the NAS.

Question 2. Some contract towers do not have radar and rely solely on visual observation and pilot communication, which can become strained during periods of high traffic, complex operations, or reduced visibility. Airborne Position Reference Tools (APRT) can supplement these towers with additional resources for situational awareness. What more can Congress and the FAA do, from a policy or funding perspective, to ensure that these contract towers are equipped with APRT?

Answer. The FAA agrees that Airborne Position Reference Tools (APRT) can significantly enhance situational awareness at contract towers that operate without radar, particularly during periods of high traffic, complex operations, or reduced visibility.

Clarifying eligibility for airport authorities to use Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funds for these systems could support broader deployment.

Question 3. Helena Regional Airport is one of two towers nationwide with non-radar approach control despite meeting the FAA's standards for airport radar. Will you commit to working with Helena to design, fund, install, and maintain additional surveillance equipment in their ATC tower?

Answer. The FAA works with airports to assess surveillance needs based on safety data, operational requirements, and system priorities across the NAS. On December 12, 2025, the FAA operationally deployed Surface Awareness Initiative (SAI) to Helena Regional Airport. Any consideration of additional surveillance capabilities at Helena Regional Airport would require further analysis, coordination with stakeholders, and identification of available funding. The agency will continue to engage with Helena as appropriate and will follow established planning, budget, and congressional processes before pursuing any changes.

The FAA also inaccurately lists Helena as an airport with Terminal Radar Approach Control Facilities (TRACON) on its website—will you at the least ensure that this inaccuracy is corrected?

Answer. Thank you for bringing this to our attention. We have corrected the inaccuracy.

Question 4. Will you work with Glacier Park International Airport, which has experienced increased passenger volume, inclement weather, and adverse terrain, on its request for TRACON?

Answer. The FAA evaluates requests for terminal airspace services based on safety data, traffic demand, airspace complexity, and system wide priorities. Any consideration of TRACON services for Glacier Park International Airport would require further operational analysis, coordination with stakeholders, and identification of resources. The agency will continue to engage with the airport as appropriate and will follow established planning and budget processes before making any decisions.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. MARIA CANTWELL TO
HON. BRYAN BEDFORD

Ethics Agreement Violation. As we discussed at your hearing, I am very concerned that you have still failed to divest from Republic Airways (Republic) well past the deadline required by your ethics agreement. I sent you a letter on December 9, 2025, requesting documents and information about this matter. While I appreciate your initial response on December 15, 2025, you failed to answer several requests, and I have continued questions about this serious matter.

Question 1. In your OGE-278e, you acknowledged that Republic valued its stock “annually” when it was a private company from 2017 until its merger with Mesa Air Group (Mesa) in November 2025. You said that the purchase price of your privately held Republic stock would be based on the most recent valuation at the time of your resignation, which was in July 2025. Please provide the most recent valuation of Republic's private stock as of the deadline to divest in your ethics agreement (October 7, 2025).

Answer. I do not have a copy of that report.

Question 2. When you were still president and CEO of Republic, when was the last time the company valued its stock to the best of your recollection? Please provide the month and year.

Answer. To the best of my recollection, it was completed in February 2025.

Question 3. When you were still president and CEO of Republic, what third party did the company retain to conduct its most recent valuation of the company stock to the best of your recollection?

Answer. To the best of my recollection, it was performed by KPMG.

Question 4. According to a Certificate of Divestiture you obtained from the Office of Government Ethics (OGE) on September 11, 2025, you held 16,733 shares of Republic stock. Does this reflect the total number of shares you presently hold? If not, please specify the number of shares you presently hold.

Answer. No. The divestiture of my Republic Airways stock was complete as of February 20, 2026.

Question 5. Had you divested your Republic stock on or before October 7, 2025, as you were required to do, would your shares have been worth less than what they are presently valued as of December 18, 2025 (RJET closing share price was \$20.81)? If yes, please provide a complete description of the difference in value.

Answer. Information regarding my stock holdings, value of transactions related to such stock, and required divestiture is detailed in my OGE 278e and OGE 278—T public financial disclosure filings that are posted on the OGE website.

Question 6. Assuming you still intend to fully divest, if the value of your shares in Republic has increased since October 7, 2025—which appears likely given the completion of Republic's merger with Mesa—will you forfeit any increased capital gains you receive?

Answer. Because I obtained a CD, I am required by OGE regulation to reinvest the proceeds from the divestiture into “permitted property” within 60 days of the sale in order for the CD to remain effective. Permitted property is limited to U.S. government obligations (*i.e.*, Treasuries), diversified mutual funds, and diversified exchange-traded funds. *See* 5 CFR Part 2634, Subpart J.

Question 7. As requested in my December 9, 2025, letter, please provide all communications between you and any officer or employee of Republic since your confirmation on July 9, 2025, regarding or relating to Republic's merger with Mesa. If there are none, please certify that to be the case after a reasonable search was conducted.

Answer. Please see my response to Question 14 in Senator Duckworth's questions for the record.

Question 8. During your hearing on December 17, 2025, you claimed to have relied on the advice of a career DOT ethics official to excuse your violation of your ethics agreement. Did you ever inquire with any DOT ethics official or OGE official about the status of your October 7, 2025, extension request? If yes, please list the date of each such instance and the official(s) you contacted. If you do not provide this information, your response will be deemed to acknowledge there were no such attempts.

Answer. Once I submitted my extension request, the career Designated Agency Ethics Official (DAEO) for the Department of Transportation advised me that the request had been submitted to OGE and that it was pending with OGE for further action. I heard nothing further on the matter until December 1. By that time, the merger was completed and my shares were cancelled, subject to being reissued in the new, merged company. I completed all other requirements under my ethics agreement in advance of October 7.

Question 9. Please provide documentation reflecting each such instance listed in response to the preceding request.

Answer. Documentation of my communications with DOT career ethics staff was previously provided to the Committee in response to Senator Cantwell's December 9, 2025, letter.

Question 10. Do you acknowledge that the responsibility for ensuring full compliance with your ethics agreement is solely yours?

Answer. Yes. I have acted in good faith to remain in full compliance with my ethics agreement—after submitting my ethics agreement I followed OGE's process to request an extension before the deadline lapsed, I awaited OGE's response to that request, and, after receiving OGE's response, I began divesting the shares as soon as they were re-issued to me.

Question 11. Before you sought an extension on October 7, 2025, you received a Certificate of Divestiture from OGE on September 11, 2025. Why did you not complete the process for divesting your shares with Republic at that time?

Answer. When I executed my Ethics Agreement on June 4, 2025, I was advised that my confirmation would likely run into mid-to-late August, at the earliest. Given that I had expected the merger to be completed before the end of August, I felt confident that I would be able to dispose of my shares in the market post completion of the merger. However, the Senate ultimately voted on my confirmation on July 9 and I was sworn in on July 10; and the merger was not closed as quickly as I had anticipated in early June. I did attempt to tender my shares to the company

on September 29, 2025. However, the company informed me they would be unable to comply with the request before the end of October, at which point I asked for the extension.

Question 12. As requested in my December 9, 2025 letter, please provide a complete description of all actions you have taken since July 9, 2025, to divest your equity in Republic, including but not limited to all communications with Republic about accelerating the vesting of your stock, buying back your shares, or converting your vested restricted stock units into private company stock.

Answer. Please see the response to Question 11. In addition, as provided in my December 15, 2025, letter to you, DOT's DAEO told me that OGE would be unable to respond to my EA amendment request until after the lapse in appropriations ended. Therefore, DOT's DAEO and I both understood that my EA amendment request was still a live matter until December 1, 2025, when OGE e-mailed DOT's DAEO stating that OGE would not grant the request.

At that time, the share issuer was working to process these certificates, and at that time I did not have a means of further accelerating the timeline for divestiture beyond the steps I had already taken. It was my intent to ensure that the Republic divestiture occurred as quickly as possible, and I instructed my account managers to ensure this happened as soon as reasonably practicable.

Question 13. At the hearing on December 17, 2025, you testified that you do not know when you will be able to divest from Republic because your shares have now been terminated and you are waiting for your shares to be reissued under the new organizational structure post-merger. But as noted above, you sought and received a Certificate of Divestiture on September 11, 2025—which indicates you had the ability to divest your shares at that time, before the merger closed. Yes or No: Had you divested by October 7, 2025, would you need any shares to be reissued to effectuate your divestment?

Answer. I did request that Republic Airways divest my shares in late September. However, Republic Airways indicated it would be unable to complete the divestiture until the end of October. Accordingly, I requested an extension from OGE.

Question 14. You testified during the hearing that your “intention was always to complete the merger and to sell the shares in the market.” Provide a complete explanation for why you “always” intended for Republic’s merger with Mesa to complete before you complied with the divestiture requirement in your ethics agreement.

Answer. Please refer to the answer to Question 11 above.

Question 15. In addition to fully responding to my questions for the record, do you commit to fully complying with any additional request or inquiry regarding your ethics agreement?

Answer. Yes, subject to any applicable legal privileges.

Military Training Flight Loopholes.

On July 29th this year, you delivered remarks at Chairman Cruz’s press conference unveiling the ROTOR Act stating that “most all of the comments and identified safety weaknesses that the families identified have been incorporated in this key legislation and I certainly hope it has strong bipartisan support” yet during the December 17 hearing you said that you “shouldn’t opine for the administration on whether the administration is in favor or not.”

Question 1. Can you please clarify for the record whether you agree that military flights—including proficiency flights (also known as “check rides”)—should be required to broadcast their location in DC airspace and in other busy airspace nationwide using *ADS-B Out* to prevent safety risks to commercial flights?

Answer. Immediately following the accident on January 29, 2025, the FAA changed operations in the National Capital Region requiring aircraft to broadcast Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) Out signals, subject to extremely limited exceptions. The FAA works with the Department of War (DoW) to ensure safe integration of military and civil operations in the National Airspace System. This includes implementing more restrictive measures for DoW aircraft to broadcast ADS-B Out signals in the Washington Tri-Area, DC, Class B airspace. ADS-B Out Off authorizations are limited to missions critical to law enforcement, national security, active continuity operations, and Presidential transport. These exceptions do not include routine training missions or transportation of personnel missions. The agency supports measures that enhance situational awareness and mitigate risk, including the use of surveillance technologies such as ADS-B Out, consistent with operational, safety, and security requirements.

Air Traffic Organization Oversight and Fixing Controller Safety Reporting Loop.

As we discussed at the hearing, controllers testifying at NTSB's hearings on the DCA collision sounded the alarm that their reporting system for filing safety concerns at FAA's Air Traffic Organization does not work. They said this system—known as the Air Traffic Safety Action Program (ATSAP)—is “obsolete” and “ineffective”. This is a safety issue—safety reporting systems are critical components of a strong Safety Management System (SMS) and healthy safety culture. The ATSAP is an important part of the Air Traffic Organization's SMS. You and I have discussed this and have agreed that both FAA's and the Air Traffic Organization's SMS does not work. That's why I've introduced multiple bills requiring an expert review panel to ensure the FAA has a mandatory, effective agency-wide SMS, which would also help fix the SMS in individual FAA offices like the Air Traffic Organization. It's encouraging to see in your testimony that you support my push and are taking steps to implement an agency-wide SMS to ensure FAA better manages and responds to safety risks.

But I am still very concerned that controller concerns were ignored by FAA managers leading up to the DCA collision and that they are still not being listened to at FAA. These systemic problems must be fixed.

Question 1. What specific actions are you taking to fix the broken feedback loop that controllers and other air traffic personnel rely on to voice safety concerns?

Answer. The FAA recognizes that timely and effective safety reporting is essential to a strong Safety Management System. We are aware of past concerns with ATSAP and are actively taking steps to strengthen the feedback loop for controllers and other personnel, including improving how reports are collected, analyzed, and addressed. These efforts focus on integrating ATSAP data into broader SMS processes, enhancing oversight, and reinforcing a safety culture where employees can raise concerns without fear of reprisal. The agency remains committed to ensuring that frontline safety observations inform risk mitigation and operational decisions across the National Airspace System, consistent with best practices and statutory guidance.

Question 2. Do I have your commitment to work with controllers and other frontline employees to fix the safety culture and SMS at the Air Traffic Organization? This is critical to ensure we don't see another tragedy like the DCA collision.

Answer. The FAA is fully committed to working with controllers and all frontline employees to strengthen the safety culture and Safety Management System within the Air Traffic Organization. We take seriously our responsibility to ensure that safety concerns are heard, analyzed, and acted upon, and we will continue to prioritize continuous improvement to prevent accidents and protect the flying public.

Question 3. As part of the FAA's newly announced agency-wide Flight Plan 2026 Strategy, you mentioned that FAA will “create one FAA Safety Management System (SMS)” and establish a Safety Integration Office to promote a FAA-wide safety risk management process. How will ensuring one integrated SMS at FAA help to fix problems with the individual SMS at certain lines of business like the Air Traffic Organization?

Answer. Creating one integrated FAA Safety Management System (SMS) will address longstanding challenges that arise when individual lines of business implement SMS practices in isolation, with varying levels of maturity, consistency, and effectiveness. A single FAA SMS will establish common governance, standardized safety risk management (SRM) processes, and shared accountability across the agency, while still allowing lines of business such as the Air Traffic Organization to manage specific operational safety risks.

The Aviation Safety Management System Organization will implement an FAA-wide safety risk management process, develop comprehensive FAA safety risk heat maps, and proactively identify hazards in the National Airspace System (NAS) to mitigate risks before incidents occur. By centralizing these functions, the FAA can ensure that hazards, causal factors, and mitigations identified within one organization, are evaluated and addressed consistently across organizational boundaries.

For the ATO specifically, this approach strengthens its SMS by reinforcing disciplined SRM practices, improving data integration and transparency, and ensuring that identified risks are elevated, assessed, and mitigated using consistent FAA-wide criteria. Ultimately, one integrated FAA SMS reduces fragmentation, improves risk visibility, and strengthens the agency's ability to proactively manage safety across the National Airspace System.

Question 4. Please describe what specific actions the Safety Integration Office will take to proactively identify and address safety hazards in the National Airspace System. How will the office ensure safety data and actions to address related avia-

tion safety concerns are not siloed at any particular office of the FAA and that FAA employee safety reports are acted upon?

Answer. An integrated SMS led by the Safety Integration Office enables more effective use of safety data that already exists across the agency. Data from programs such as Flight Operational Quality Assurance (FOQA), the Air Traffic Safety Action Program (ATSAP), and the Aviation Safety Action Program (ASAP) can be analyzed holistically rather than within organizational stovepipes. This allows the FAA to identify systemic and NAS-wide safety trends, validate risk assumptions, and prioritize mitigations, including technological investments, based on enterprise-level risk assessments rather than localized perspectives and operating norms.

Air Traffic Control System Upgrade Accountability and Transparency.

The reconciliation law enacted in July mandates air traffic facility closures and consolidations, raising legitimate concerns. It requires the closure and consolidation of multiple Air Route Traffic Control Centers (ARTCCs) and Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACONs) facilities. This means FAA must select at least three existing ARTCCs for divestment and at least 10 existing ARTCCs for closure or consolidation. Yet the law provides no guidance on how these impactful decisions should be made. When the reconciliation bill came before the Senate, I filed amendments to remove provisions that called for facility consolidation and closure and instead reallocated those funds to where they should go—to hire, train, and recruit more controllers and invest in the replacement and modernization of air traffic control towers at airports.

Question 1. What specific criteria does FAA intend to use to select the ARTCCs and TRACONs that will be closed or consolidated?

Answer. While the One Big Beautiful Bill directs the FAA to conduct realignment and consolidation of Air Route Traffic Control Centers and TRACONs and provides funding to support analysis, planning, and transition activities, the statute does not prescribe specific facility selection criteria. The FAA intends to develop and apply criteria that reflect safety data, operational requirements, capacity, and cost considerations, consistent with statutory direction and existing realignment frameworks. Any criteria will be informed by detailed analysis, stakeholder engagement, and system-wide safety and performance considerations, and the agency will ensure decisions are guided by data and operational priorities.

Question 2. Will you commit to conducting a safety risk management assessment **before** taking any actions to close or consolidate these facilities to assess how such actions would impact FAA's workforce and the safe management of air traffic in the NAS?

Answer. Yes, the FAA will conduct a safety risk assessment on the consolidation of facilities to assess the safety risk and develop mitigations to minimize that risk and ensure the continued safety management of air traffic in the National Airspace System.

Question 3. How does FAA intend to notify and consult with affected communities and segments of the FAA workforce before decisions are finalized?

Answer. The FAA will follow applicable collective bargaining agreements, labor-management obligations, statutory requirements, and established consultation processes to notify and engage affected employees, unions, and other stakeholders. The agency also intends to coordinate with local communities, airport authorities, and relevant partners. All engagement will be conducted in accordance with safety, operational, and legal requirements.

Question 4. How will you ensure that facility closures and consolidation don't displace controllers and other FAA air traffic personnel and that FAA's ability to manage air traffic isn't compromised in affected areas?

Answer. The FAA will carefully manage workforce impacts by following collective bargaining agreements, applicable labor laws, and established personnel policies. Any facility closure or consolidation will be planned to mitigate adverse staffing impacts and ensure operational capability, including reassignment, retraining, or other workforce measures as needed to ensure that air traffic management and safety are not compromised in affected areas.

Shutdown Flight Reductions at Top 40 Airports.

On November 6, the FAA announced that airlines had to reduce flights by up to ten percent at the top 40 high-traffic airports nationwide, citing controller staffing triggers and aviation safety information system data. On November 12, DOT changed its order to hold flight reductions steady at six percent, citing "substantial and rapid improvement in facility staffing conditions." FAA further reduced flight

cuts to three percent on November 14 before cancelling the flight restrictions on November 17, returning the aviation system to normal operations.

Question 1. Beginning on November 14, airlines were required to cut three percent of flights. According to aviation analytics data from Cirium, on Sunday, November 16, airlines canceled only a quarter of a percent of flights, far below FAA's requirement. Later that evening, FAA announced it would cancel flight restrictions. Mr. Bedford, you and Sec. Duffy have cited safety data as the reason for cutting flights. So, in your view, why did some airlines fail to comply with FAA's requirements?

Answer. The FAA investigated apparent noncompliance with the flight reduction orders. During the investigations, the airlines were afforded the opportunity to provide information to the FAA, including information on how they scheduled flights to attempt to comply with the flight reduction requirement. The FAA considered the information presented in determining whether the airlines were in compliance or made a good faith effort to comply with the order.

Question 2. Early this month, the FAA sent letters to airlines requesting that they prove their compliance with the required flight cuts. Do you expect that FAA will fine airlines that did not comply? Why or why not?

Answer. The FAA sent letters of investigation to airlines asking them to submit information on apparent noncompliance with the required flight reductions. After reviewing each airline's response explaining how it complied with the flight restrictions, the FAA determined that all airlines except one were in substantial compliance with the restrictions. The one airline not in compliance received an administrative warning letter based on the totality of the facts.

Question 3. Last year, we required the FAA to set maximum hiring targets through FY 2028 to maximize its training capacity and increase controller staffing. My bill would require FAA to do this for five more years through FY 2033. Do you support this and agree with me that we must ensure FAA continues maximum controller hiring for at least 10 consecutive years to better position FAA to offset future attrition and retirements?

Answer. The FAA remains focused on sustaining a strong controller workforce through continuous recruitment, training, and pipeline development. Under Secretary Duffy's leadership, the agency has implemented "supercharged" hiring initiatives and set an aggressive goal, which the FAA exceeded. The FAA is also working with accredited schools to expand the pipeline of controller candidates through our Enhanced Air Traffic Collegiate Training Initiative for FAA facilities and Control Tower Operator Partnership (CTO-P) to assist in staffing Federal contract towers. Additionally, the FAA is using tools to address attrition, including retention bonuses. These are just some examples of the initiatives currently in place. The FAA will continue to evaluate staffing needs and hiring targets to ensure the Air Traffic Organization is prepared to meet operational demands and maintain safety across the National Airspace System.

FAA Workforce Brain Drain.

The FAA's ability to carry out its safety mission is seriously hindered by the Trump Administration's attacks on the Federal workforce. Both ACSAA and FAA Reauthorization call for more safety staff, not less. FAA must invest in recruiting and training aircraft certification experts, safety inspectors, maintenance technicians, and more safety personnel who maintain our gold standard in aviation safety.

Yet, this Administration has fired probationary personnel—the future of the agency; encouraged about 2,100 FAA employees to retire via buyouts; and FAA told its workforce in May to expect a Reduction in Force. The flying public is counting on this administration not to short-change safety.

Question 1. How will these personnel losses at FAA affect the agency's ability to deliver a brand new air traffic control system in three and a half years?

Answer. The FAA remains focused on delivering the Brand New Air Traffic Control System on schedule while maintaining safety and operational standards. The agency manages workforce changes through recruitment, training, and strategic planning to ensure critical expertise and program continuity.

Question 2. Are the departures from FAA's Deferred Resignation Program affecting the ability of FAA's Air Traffic Organization to implement airspace safety reforms in response to the DCA mid-air collision? If not, has ATO done an assessment to assess and verify the impacts of losing such personnel?

Answer. The Deferred Resignation Program did not include employees in safety-critical job series such as air traffic controllers and technicians. The Air Traffic Organization continuously monitors workforce capacity and evaluates staffing levels to ensure it can implement airspace safety reforms and maintain operational perform-

ance. Any workforce changes are assessed to confirm that safety and mission-critical functions are preserved.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. EDWARD MARKEY TO
HON. BRYAN BEDFORD

Question 1. Administrator Bedford, at your nomination hearing you committed to convene airport service workers and other aviation stakeholders to assess the need for an airport service worker wage and benefit standard. Can you provide an exact date we can expect this convening to occur?

Answer. Section 438 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, PL 118–63, directed GAO to complete a comprehensive review of the domestic airport service workforce and its impact on the aviation economy. The Department of Transportation has received and reviewed GAO–25–107678, Aviation Workforce: Contributions and Characteristics of Selected Airport Workers and has no comments on the report but will continue to monitor this issue.

Question 2. Airline competition is a vital component of a healthy aviation industry. More competition among airlines simultaneously leads to more consumer choice and improves airport workers' ability to fight for better working conditions. Can you explain how you'll use airport funding not only to enhance safety and capacity, but also to promote access and competition amongst airlines at gates and other facilities so the public can better realize the benefits of this investment in our broader system?

Answer. Under 49 U.S.C. § 47106(f), certain medium and large hub airports where one or two carriers control more than 50 percent of passenger boardings are required to submit a competition plan to the FAA to receive an AIP grant or approval for a new Passenger Facility Charge. These plans are intended to demonstrate how the airport will facilitate access for new entrants and support expansion by existing carriers. In addition, the Airport Terminal Program (ATP) authorized by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) specifically requires the FAA to consider "projects that encourage actual and potential competition" as a factor when assessing projects applying for ATP.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. TAMMY DUCKWORTH TO
HON. BRYAN BEDFORD

You were confirmed by the Senate on July 9, 2025. In your signed ethics agreement with the Office of Government Ethics (OGE), you pledged to divest all Republic equities "as soon as practicable but not later than 90 days after my confirmation," **and** you also "verified that I will be able to carry out the divestiture within the time-frame described above."

Question 1. What individuals at Republic Airways, or outside consultants, advisors or accountants, did you consult with to confirm that you would be able to divest all holdings in Republic within 90 days of confirmation, before you signed your OGE ethics form verifying that you would be able to carry out the divestiture within 90 days of confirmation?

Answer. During this confirmation process, I consulted with my financial advisor who I connected with Republic to facilitate the transaction.

Question 2. What specific individuals at the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and FAA did you consult with regarding your intention to seek an extension, and on what specific dates did you consult such ethics officials?

Answer. I attempted to tender my shares to the company on September 29, 2025. However, the company informed me they would be unable to comply with the request before the end of October at which point I asked for the extension. I communicated with the career DOT ethics officials regarding such extension on October 6 and 7.

Question 3. Please provide all communications between you and DOT and FAA employees regarding your OGE ethics agreement.

Answer. Please see my response to Question 9 in Ranking Member Cantwell's questions for the record.

Question 4. When you led Republic Airways, did the company have a policy where a non-response from Republic management to an employee request for an extension, or a vendor request for an extension on providing a contractually obligated payment, constituted an automatic approval of the request?

Answer. For any questions regarding Republic Airways' policies and procedures on employment or contractual matters, I would refer you to the airline's counsel.

Question 5. Did you delay carrying out your divestiture in July 2025 because you anticipated the RJET share price rising once the Republic and Mesa merger was finalized?

Answer. No—when I executed my Ethics Agreement on June 4, 2025, I was advised that my confirmation would likely run into mid to late August, at the earliest and, given that I had expected the merger to be completed before the end of August, I felt confident that I would be able to dispose of my shares in the market post completion of the merger. However, the Senate ultimately voted on my confirmation on July 9 and I was sworn in on July 10, and the merger did not close as quickly as I had anticipated in early June. I did attempt to tender my shares to the company on September 29, 2025. However, the company informed me they would be unable to comply with the request before the end of October at which point I asked for the extension.

In accordance with my ethics agreement, I obtained a Certificate of Divestiture (CD) from OGE before selling my Republic shares. Since the CD was not issued until September 11, 2025, I could not have reasonably divested before that date without voiding the effect of the CD.

Question 6. Did you delay carrying out your divestiture in August 2025 because you anticipated the RJET share price rising once the Republic and Mesa merger was finalized?

Answer. Please see the answer to question 5 above.

Question 7. Did you delay carrying out your divestiture in September 2025 because you anticipated the RJET share price rising once the Republic and Mesa merger was finalized?

Answer. Please see the answer to question 5 above.

Question 8. Did you delay carrying out your divestiture in October 2025 because you anticipated the RJET share price rising once the Republic and Mesa merger was finalized?

Answer. Please see the answer to question 5 above.

Question 9. Exactly how many shares of RJET did you own on July 9, 2025, and what was the total value?

Answer. I owned 16,733 shares.

Question 10. Exactly how many shares of RJET did you own on October 7, 2025, and what was the total value?

Answer. I owned 16,733 shares.

Question 11. Exactly how many shares of RJET do you own today, and what is the total value?

Answer. None. The divestiture of my Republic Airways stock was complete as of February 20, 2026.

Question 12. If you earn a profit from the increase in share value from the date you were originally directed to divest by, will you commit to donating your capital gains to charity, while forgoing claiming the charitable tax deduction?

Answer. Because I obtained a CD, I am required by OGE regulation to reinvest the proceeds from the divestiture into "permitted property" within 60 days of the sale in order for the CD to remain effective. Permitted property is limited to U.S. government obligations (*i.e.*, Treasuries), diversified mutual funds, and diversified exchange-traded funds. See 5 CFR Part 2634, Subpart J.

Question 13. During the hearing, you stated you had not heard back from OGE but then stated you did receive a response in early December. You signed the agreement agreeing to complete the divestiture within 90 days of confirmation—why did you not have your financial advisors or other consultants prepared to initiate the process on July 9, 2025, so that it would be completed well before October 7, 2025.

Answer. Please see the answer to question 5 above.

Question 14. Between July 9, 2025, to today, did you engage in written or verbal communication with former colleagues at Republic Airways where the yet to be finalized Republic-Mesa merger was mentioned?

Answer. Yes, only to the extent that I was seeking information in furtherance of the divestiture process and when I requested Republic Airways effectuate the divestiture at the end of September, which it was unable to complete prior to October 7.

Question 15. Did you discuss your non-compliance with your OGE divestiture commitment with Secretary Duffy verbally or in written communication?

Answer. All conversations on this matter were addressed to DOT career ethics officials.

Air Traffic Controller and FAA Technician Workforce Infrastructure

Question 1. Do you consider the Air Traffic Controller and FAA Technician workforce to be a critical component of the Air Traffic Control (ATC) system?

Answer. Yes.

Question 2. Do you believe modernizing the ATC system to build a brand new, better ATC system requires strengthening FAA capabilities and capacity to recruit, train and retain controllers and technicians?

Answer. Yes.

Question 3. In providing FAA with a \$12.5 billion downpayment for ATC modernization, did Congress include a statutory prohibition banning FAA from investing in workforce facilities, such as additional FAA academies, or a statutory prohibition banning FAA from investing in new controller training equipment and technology for partner institutions participating in the Air Traffic Collegiate Training Initiative (AT-CTI) and the Enhanced Initiative (E-CTI)?

Answer. Congress appropriated \$12.5B in section 40003(a) of Public Law 119-21. That statute allocated the funds to 14 enumerated purposes and, under 31 U.S.C. § 1301(a), the FAA is prohibited from using those amounts for other purposes.

Question 4. Do you concur with me that FAA possesses statutory authority to invest a portion of the \$12.5 billion downpayment to establish additional FAA Academies and expand the number of E-CTI partners?

Answer. Section 40003(a) of Public Law 119-21 did not make funds available to establish additional facilities specifically for training air traffic controllers or technicians. However, several enumerated purposes, including constructing a new air route traffic control center (§ 40003(a)(7)) and consolidating terminal facilities (§ 40003(a)(9)), may support facility improvements that increase the FAA's workforce development and training capacity. In addition, the act provided \$100M for air traffic controller advanced training technologies (§ 40003(a)(14)).

Section 40003(a) did not make funds available specifically for expanding the number of E-CTI institutions.

Question 5. What would be the cost of opening and operating an additional FAA Academy?

Answer. Section 119H of the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2026, effectively prohibits the construction of a new Air Traffic Control Training Academy.

Question 6. Regarding locations for additional FAA Academies, what strategic considerations would FAA prioritize in selecting host communities to maximize effectiveness and efficiency of FAA ATC recruitment and training initiatives?

Answer. Section 119H of the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2026, effectively prohibits the construction of a new Air Traffic Control Training Academy.

Question 7. Anecdotally, I have heard a roadblock to expanding E-CTI is initial equipment costs for interested colleges. What grant programs or financial assistance can FAA provide to expand the program to more schools?

Answer. The FAA does not use Federal funding to subsidize equipment costs for colleges or universities participating in the E-CTI program. While the FAA welcomes partnerships with colleges able to demonstrate appropriate training capability, the agency focuses investment of Federal funds on training, technology, and needed equipment upgrades at federally owned air traffic facilities.

Question 8. As FAA works to expand E-CTI participation, how many additional E-CTI institutions is FAA seeking to add by the end of calendar year 2026?

Answer. Based on current outreach and ongoing discussions with interested institutions, as well as the rigorous review process, FAA anticipates the potential addition of at least five new E-CTI schools by the end of calendar year 2026. FAA continues to engage with prospective institutions and support expansion of the E-CTI program, while recognizing that final participation decisions and implementation schedules rest with the institutions themselves.

ATC Implementation

Question 1. At the hearing, you referred to a plan for BNATCS with milestones and goals. Please provide my office with copies of the implementation plans you referenced containing measurable outcomes and precise milestones between now and December 31, 2028.

Answer. The BNATCS Program Plans were finalized with Peraton, our Integrator, in early March 2026 with program milestones through December 2028. We are currently on track to complete our public facing website within the next 45 days.

Below is a list of milestones that have been completed as of the beginning of FY 2026 Quarter 3.

- 2,431(out of 5,170) Telco connections transformed
- 36 (out of 450) IP voice switches installed
- 54 (out of 220) new surface awareness initiatives
- 3 (out of 612) new radar systems installed
- 253 (out of 1,581) radio sites converted nationwide
- 16 (out of 89) towers with electronic flight strips
- 4 (out of 191) weather systems installed in Alaska

Question 2. What specific steps is the FAA taking to ensure that the first phase of ATC modernization prioritize investments that address the most critical and at-risk ATC systems identified in FAA's 2023 operational risk assessment?

Answer. FAA has prioritized the systems to be modernized within the Brand New Air Traffic Control System based on most critical need. GAO identified 17 systems in the 2024 Report needing urgent action of which 11 are in Phase 1, having received funds from the One Big Beautiful Bill. The FAA will address the other 6 systems that GAO identified with other funding sources, including its annual F&E appropriation.

Question 3. How will the FAA ensure the ATC modernization project preserves redundancy, resiliency, and careful transitions to avoid disruptive gaps in capabilities that emerge when functional systems are sunset and the replacement is not yet operational?

Answer. FAA has hired a best-in-class systems integrator, Peraton to assist the FAA in delivering the Brand New Air Traffic Control System without compromising safety, security or disrupting the National Airspace System. Through the implementation of the Brand New Air Traffic Control System, FAA aims to improve redundancy and resiliency by deploying current and more advanced technology, such as fiber optic telecommunications as opposed to copper wire and the latest surface detection radars to replace unsustainable, decades old radars. Together with Peraton, FAA will ensure thorough testing of new systems prior to sunseting legacy systems.

Question 4. What systems are being put in place to establish a continuous, open line of communication between FAA's acquisition staff and Peraton employees and ATC's rank and file controllers, supervisors and technicians?

Answer. The FAA has established a governance structure with leadership representing air traffic controllers and acquisition staff. In addition, Peraton employees have obtained the necessary suitability clearances to work inside FAA facilities and use FAA technology for optimal partnership and cooperation with FAA staff.

Question 5. What will be the specific penalty triggers, dollar amounts at risk, and NAS performance metrics that must be met before Peraton receives full compensation?

Answer. The Integrator Accountability Contract contains award fee criteria of schedule, quality, cost control, and management. Peraton's failure to meet these criteria will result in reduced profits. In addition, if Peraton creates unmanaged disruptions in the NAS, it will incur financial penalties commensurate with the level of disruption.

Question 6. Do you commit that the employment of Peraton will not be used as a means to escape responsibility for the implementation of ATC modernization efforts? That ultimately the buck stops with you as the FAA Administrator?

Answer. Yes.

GAO Reports

The GAO released a report titled "Air Traffic Control Workforce: FAA Should Establish Goals and Better Assess Its Hiring Processes" on December 17, 2025. The following questions are related to its recommendations and findings.

Question 1. What plan has the FAA developed to meet the recommendations outlined by the GAO report?

Answer. Following the Government Accountability Office's December 17, 2025 report *Air Traffic Control Workforce: FAA Should Establish Goals and Better Assess Its Hiring Processes*, the FAA has agreed with GAO's recommendations and is developing internal plans to address them. The agency is working to establish measurable goals for recruiting, hiring, and training air traffic controllers to support ac-

countability and improve outcomes. The FAA is also enhancing its use of data and metrics, including planned dashboards and improved analysis of applicant and training data, to better assess the effectiveness of its hiring processes and inform decisions about where improvements are needed. These efforts are ongoing and aligned with the FAA's broader controller workforce strategy and modernization priorities.

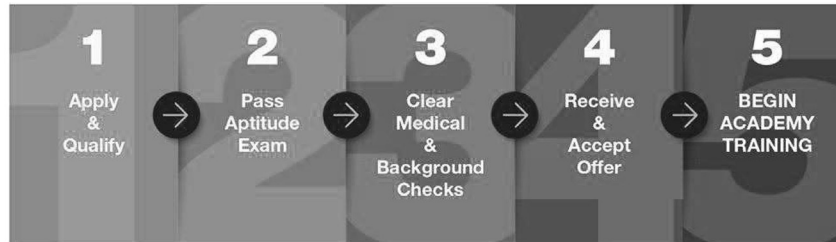
Question 2. What actions will you take to address the lengthy medical review process that applicants face? Does that data suggest specific or recurring medical issues that applicants do not realize will be disqualifying?

Answer. The FAA is applying the same “3 E's” (Education, Early Intervention and Evolution of Standards) principles the agency used to address the backlog of pilot medical certification requests. This includes providing information to potential applicants and Air Traffic Control Collegiate Training Initiative programs about possibly disqualifying medical conditions and using science-based approaches to large-scale data analysis to update standards as appropriate.

The FAA has increased staffing and support for the medical team responsible for this work and is using computer automation to expedite portions of the medical clearance process. We have hired physicians and other resources which have dramatically reduced processing times. To incentivize hiring, in FY25 the FAA was active in the recruitment of retiring or separating military flight surgeons, and Aviation Medical Examiners (AME). We hosted booths at large medical meetings that were used as platforms for recruitment. We also utilized contract case managers to more effectively manage the hiring goals.

Question 3. Which steps were removed or combined to change the hiring process from eight steps to five?

Answer. Under Secretary Duffy's leadership to supercharge air traffic controller hiring, FAA moved from a linear, gated process—where all candidates had to wait for each applicant to complete the entire step in the hiring process before moving to the next step—to a continuous flow model. Under the prior approach, applicants frequently advanced in larger batches as hiring actions progressed, which could create delays unrelated to an individual applicant's readiness to move forward.



Under the current five-step process, applicants progress on an individual basis as soon as they complete the requirements for each step, rather than waiting for other applicants in the same announcement or batch to reach the same point.

Under the consolidated continuous flow process, FAA reduced time-to-hire for these positions by over five months.

Question 4. How has the FAA increased capacity at the FAA Academy?

Answer. Following the transition of governance of the FAA Academy to the Air Traffic Organization (ATO), the ATO optimized resource management and schedules to increase capacity, to include:

- Adding additional labor categories to bring on teaching assistants and adult educators as part of the instructor workforce
- Expanding specialized training in regional locations to free up capacity
- Implementing a tutoring center for students to augment formal instruction
- Updating curriculum and training scenarios to ensure the most relevant skills are emphasized for successful on-the-job training in the facilities, which reduces the time to become a certified professional controller