



Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

For more on Trump administration actions regarding air safety, see our [Aviation Disaster Tracker](#).

Timeline of Attacks

- **January 28, 2025:** FAA employees, including air traffic controllers, [received](#) deferred resignation offers. After the deadly crash at Reagan National Airport, the Office of Personnel Management said air traffic controllers were not eligible to take the offer.
- **February 5, 2025:** Musk and DOGE [said](#) they would “make rapid safety upgrades to the air traffic control system.”
- **February 14, 2025:** DOGE [fired](#) approximately 400 probationary FAA employees, including aviation safety assistants, nautical aviation specialists, and maintenance mechanics.
- **March 5, 2025:** Musk’s company SpaceX [began](#) deploying Starlink terminals to airports across the country. The terminals were deployed shortly after reporting [revealed](#) that the FAA was considering canceling a contract with Verizon to upgrade the national airspace system and awarding it to SpaceX instead.
- **March 7, 2025:** During a cabinet meeting, Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy [accused](#) Musk and DOGE of attempting to fire air traffic controllers. Musk denied the allegation but “insisted that people hired under diversity, equity and inclusion programs were working in control towers.”
- **April 25, 2025:** DOGE staffers at the FAA [directed](#) employees to sign non-disclosure agreements regarding “Project Lift,” a plan to upgrade the FAA’s communications network.
- **May 15, 2025:** 2,700 FAA employees [reportedly](#) signed up for the deferred resignation program, though a portion of them may be deemed ineligible.

Impacts on Capacity

While the administration claims that no “critical” staff [were](#) let go as part of DOGE’s incursion, the 400 dismissed employees were still involved in maintaining aviation safety. For example, DOGE terminated nautical aviation specialists that were responsible for updating maps used by pilots and mechanics that repaired air traffic control facilities.

DOGE cuts and resignation offers [came](#) while the FAA was already [dealing](#) with severe understaffing of both air traffic controllers and support staff.



Material Harms

Investigations into aviation disasters can often take months or years to determine all the causes of a given accident. While there is no indication that DOGE resignations and cuts have directly caused the extensive flight delays or aviation disasters throughout the year, experts and FAA employee union leaders have warned that the cuts make it harder to do “safety oversight.”

Notable Names

Ousted Leadership

- **Michael Whitaker:** FAA administrator who resigned upon Trump’s inauguration after a months-long pressure campaign from Elon Musk. Musk called for his resignation in 2024 after the agency proposed \$633,009 in fines for SpaceX due to the company’s alleged failure to follow license requirements during two rocket launches.

DOGE Agents

- **Elon Musk**
- **Brady Glantz**
- **Thomas Kiernan**
- **Ted Malaska**
- **Sam Smeal**