

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 5, 2026

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

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon,
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Duffy and Secretary Hegseth:

I write today raising growing concerns about the recent plane crash in New Mexico that tragically killed all passengers aboard. Preliminary reports indicate that the U.S. military's use of radar jamming technology played a significant role in altering the pilot's flight path and instrumentation. This incident comes after the abrupt closure of airspace in El Paso and southern New Mexico earlier this year, also due to uncoordinated testing of military equipment, which raises more serious concerns about your agencies' coordination with other federal agencies, local governments, private companies, and other impacted stakeholders.

Pertaining to this incident, on May 14, 2026, a medical transport plane carrying four passengers crashed near Ruidoso, New Mexico, in the Capitan Mountains. The plane departed from Roswell with its final destination to the Sierra Blanca Regional Airport in Alto, New Mexico. However, at 12:15 a.m., the plane crashed, killing the four passengers onboard and sparking the Seven Cabins wildfire in the surrounding area, which burned over 31,000 acres and delayed the investigation into the crash and recovery of evidence.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) preliminary report on this incident noted that the pilot of the aircraft experienced navigational issues while radar jamming technology testing was concurrently underway by the Department of Defense (DoD) at White Sands Missile Range (WSMR). Additionally, during a briefing provided to me last month, the NTSB confirmed that during the course of the flight in question, the Department of Defense was asked to turn off the jamming technology by the Air Route Traffic Control Centers (ARTCC) controller and their supervisor after the pilot reported navigational issues, but shortly thereafter resumed the jamming activity. The pilot had to abruptly change their flight path and, ultimately, make a last-minute decision before the flight ended in a fatal collision.

This crash follows the abrupt closure of the El Paso airspace in February. That disruption was caused by inadequate coordination between the FAA, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the DoD around the use of military counter-drone technology. Together, these incidents raise serious questions and show a disturbing pattern involving the impact of testing of military technology near civilian air travelers in southern New Mexico.

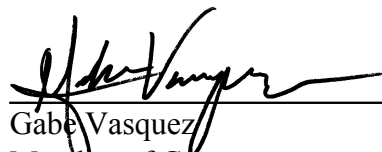
I remain in close coordination with the NTSB as their investigation is being carried out to completion. While we await the final report from the NTSB on the factors that led to this crash, I request a joint briefing from both the DoT and DoD no later than September 6, 2026 to review the policy and coordination procedures between the Department and FAA to ensure the safety of civilian aircrafts in domestic airspace when DoD technology is being tested.

The briefing should answer the following questions:

1. What are the standard procedures that DoD carries out to notify the FAA and regional, local and state airports of future testing of DoD technology that could impact civilian flight operations? How do these internal policies or procedures treat specific technologies including jamming and directed energy capabilities?
2. How does the FAA work with ARTCC, local, regional and state airports, and airlines to notify them of ongoing testing being conducted by DoD?
3. What binding precautions are in place to ensure the safety of civilian aircrafts that may be flying in and around areas where DoD technology is being tested?
4. What does the communication chain entail between ARTCC and relevant DoD point of contacts when managing civilian aircraft flights during and around DoD technology testing?
5. How are ARTCC controllers trained to provide guidance to civilian aircrafts and pilots during and around flight paths where DoD technology is being tested?
6. How are both DoD and the FAA working alongside the NTSB during this investigation?

It is of utmost importance that the airspace in New Mexico is safe for both military and civilian passengers alike, and I strongly urge you to make this issue among your top priorities. I look forward to your prompt responses.

Sincerely,



Gabe Vasquez
Member of Congress