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February 26, 2025

Chris Rocheleau
Acting Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Acting Administrator Rocheleau,

I write to request information about the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) recent decision to deploy three Starlink terminals from SpaceX in an effort to upgrade the FAA's information technology (IT) systems. While I support efforts to modernize our air traffic control system and improve aviation safety, this decision raises conflicts-of-interest concerns, given Elon Musk's dual position as Chief Executive Officer of SpaceX and wide-ranging role in the Trump administration. Any effort to upgrade the FAA's IT systems must be performed objectively and without political interference. I urge the FAA to be transparent about this agreement and ensure that Musk does not wrongfully steer federal funds to his companies.

Following the tragic crash of an American Airlines flight near Reagan National Airport in January, the Trump administration has devoted significant attention to upgrading the FAA's IT systems. Congress has also prioritized modernizing FAA systems, including through various provisions in last year's *FAA Reauthorization Act*. But any effort to upgrade these systems must be conducted diligently, so that no passengers or crew members are put at risk if a system fails. It is especially important that the FAA award contracts to modernize the IT system without any political interference. Although I recognize the need to move quickly with any modernization effort, the FAA must balance that imperative with careful analysis and testing.

The FAA's recent announcement — made on X, another company owned by Musk — that it was testing one Starlink terminal in Atlantic City and two terminals at non-safety critical sites in Alaska raises questions about the process by which this deployment occurred.¹ Although Musk's role in the Trump administration remains ambiguous, he is reportedly serving as a "special government employee" and SpaceX engineers have reportedly been touring FAA facilities and were brought on as your senior advisers.² The FAA has not released any information about these employees' role in the FAA or whether the Administration has agreed to

¹ The FAA (@FAANews), X (Feb. 24, 2025, 8:03 PM), <https://x.com/FAANews/status/1894191384019525693>.

² Vittoria Elliott & Aarian Marshall, These Are the SpaceX Engineers Already Working Inside the FAA, *Wired* (Feb. 19, 2025), <https://www.wired.com/story/faa-doge-elon-musk-space-x/>.

or implemented any ethics agreements to ensure Musk and the SpaceX employees do not improperly use their FAA access to benefit SpaceX. Although I recognize that Starlink could be helpful in ensuring reliable connections in remote areas, such as Alaska, given the overlapping relationships with Musk and SpaceX employees, transparency is critical to ensure that the Starlink deployments are serving FAA's core safety mission.

With Musk reportedly having shipped 4,000 Starlink terminals to the FAA last week³ — potentially, significantly increasing Starlink's role in the FAA's IT systems — I request that the FAA turn over documents and answer the following questions in writing by April 9, 2025:

1. Please provide any final contract award to SpaceX for the three SpaceX terminals that FAA recently deployed.
 - a. Was this contract awarded through a competitive bidding process? If not, why not?
 - b. Is the FAA obligated to deploy additional Starlink terminals? If so, how many terminals is it required to deploy?
 - c. Does the FAA have the option to deploy additional Starlink terminals? If so, how many terminals does it have the option to deploy?
 - d. Does the FAA currently possess 4,000 Starlink terminals? If so, does the FAA have any plans for deploying those terminals?
 - e. What evaluation was conducted to determine how the SpaceX terminals will improve FAA's core mission of safety?
 - f. What is the full value of this contract with SpaceX?
2. Are reports accurate that SpaceX engineers are currently serving as your senior advisors?
 - a. If so, have these SpaceX engineers signed ethics agreement related to their dual employment with the FAA and SpaceX? If not, why not?
 - b. If not, have any of your senior advisers been employed at SpaceX within the last six months? If so, have any of these employees signed ethics agreements?
 - c. Has Musk had any access to the FAA's offices or FAA employees? If so, please describe the nature of this access.

³ Jason Leopold & Allyson Versprille, *Musk Begins Testing His Starlink Terminals in US Airspace System* (Feb. 25, 2025), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-02-25/musk-seeks-to-install-starlink-terminals-in-us-airspace-network>.

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- d. Have you had any communications with Musk about using Starlink terminals as part of the FAA's IT systems? If so, please identify the dates, nature, and substance of those communications.
3. Did Musk or any SpaceX engineers have any role in any agreement with SpaceX to deploy the Starlink terminals?
 - a. If so, please describe their specific involvement in that agreement process.
 - b. Please provide any emails, text messages, or other documents in which Musk or SpaceX engineers communicated with FAA staff about awarding a contract to SpaceX or otherwise reaching an agreement with SpaceX to deploy Starlink terminals.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Edward J. Markey". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator