

United States Senate

June 4, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

The Honorable Stephen Dickson
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Administrator Dickson:

I am deeply concerned about the reports of several helicopters that operated in a low-hover over large groups of people gathered in Washington, DC on the evening of Monday, June 1, 2020. I have asked for an independent investigation into this matter by the U.S. Department of Transportation Office of the Inspector General (USDOT OIG) and the Department of Defense Office of the Inspector General. I am also requesting any additional information the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) may have regarding the potential misuse and unsafe operation of military, government or civilian aircraft flying at low altitudes over countless U.S. citizens on the evening in question.

In order to understand if these flight operations were in violation of Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs) or United States Code of Federal Regulations (CFRs), I request you conduct an internal investigation. As part of that investigation, I ask that the following questions regarding the potential misuse of military, government or civilian aircraft be answered no later than June 30, 2020, accompanied with all appropriate FAA documentation. To the extent a question refers to the military, the question shall be interpreted to cover all of the U.S. Department of Defense's military branches and sub-agencies, including Reserve and National Guard forces.

1. Did the FAA have any involvement in the low altitude flight operations of rotary aircraft on the evening of Monday, June 1, 2020, and if so, what is the extent of that involvement?
2. Did the FAA approve any portion of the low altitude flight operations of the rotary aircraft?
3. While operating in the DC Metropolitan Flight Restricted Zone (DC FRZ), did the aircraft maintain two-way communication with air traffic control at all times?
4. While operating in the DC FRZ, did air traffic control maintain positive radar contact of the aircraft at all times?

5. Did the aircraft violate any airspace regulations?
6. Did the aircraft violate any air traffic control communication regulations?
7. Did the operators of these rotary aircraft violate any other Federal laws, regulations or policies?
8. Did the air traffic controllers responsible for helicopter flight operations in the DC FRZ violate any Federal laws, regulations, or policies?

I encourage the FAA to act swiftly to fully understand the potential flight infractions that may have occurred in our Nation's capital and the potential scope of undue hazard hundreds of civilians were exposed to.

If the results of the FAA or DOT IG's investigations reveal a flight violation did, in fact, occur during these low-level flight operations, I fully expect the appropriate annotations to be made in the offending members' records and these members to be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law. The safe operation of all aircraft and maintaining the safety of people and property at all times is of utmost concern. Thank you in advance for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator