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ICYMI: U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy Announces Lifting of Nationwide Ground Stop, Provides Updates from FAA

Friday, November 13, 2026

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy and Department of Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin provided updates on airspace conditions following a nationwide ground stop issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

Out of an abundance of caution, the FAA issued a ground stop due to intermittent telecommunications outages impacting the stability of communications and radar systems utilized by Air Traffic Control. Safety will always be the Department's number one priority.

Watch the White House Press Briefing HERE and read highlights below:



Secretary Duffy on how this happened:
"At 3:36 p.m., we experienced instability for our radar and our communications and our centers and our TRACONs across the country. So, at airports we have towers. The next rung out is a TRACON. After that, we have En Route Centers. At the TRACONS and the centers, we started to have inconsistency in the data from the radars and our communication with airplanes. We have procedures for this. Our pilots are well trained. Our air traffic controllers are well trained. At that point we issued a ground stop, we had over 3,500 airplanes in the air. They all engaged and last time I looked we had less than 400 in the airspace as they were all coming in to safely land. And we navigated it with our well-known procedures that we have when these incidents happen…We didn't lose all telecom, we didn't lose all radar, but that instability because of abundance of caution and making sure we keep the American flyer safe, we did the ground stop…"

Secretary Duffy on the outdated air traffic control system:
"What we have is an incredibly old air traffic control system. I think every single one of your networks have covered the President and myself talking about this for the last two years. The president for the last year has been asking Congress to fully fund a full build of a brand new air traffic control system. We have TDM telecom–so this is analog telecom. Our *switches, our routers actually got overloaded with data and they…started to give us inconsistency in the data from those routers, and because of that we shut the system down. Now, I have already replaced some of those switches with President Trump and our new IP switches did not go down. It's the old hardware that went down."*

Secretary Duffy on asking Congress to fully fund air traffic control modernization:
"And I think the question for the American people is do you want your Congress to fund this? President Trump has asked for the money. He's asked the Congress on a bipartisan approach to say, 'Give us the resources to build a state-of-the-art air traffic control system.' Let's not do a patchwork fix to a system that's critical for every single family. It's not red, it's not blue, it's not Democrat, it's not Republican, it's American. Give us the money to fix it. Now, if y*ou look at the past administrations, going back 25 years, $15 billion has been given to the FAA to fix this air traffic control system. And guess what? Barely anything was done. We had a downpayment—President Trump asked for it in the One Big Beautiful Bill—of $12.5 billion… That portion of the build will be done by the time President Trump leaves office. We are moving at a speed that has never been seen before with regard to the FAA. But that's a partial funding. I think America demands that the Congress give the rest of the resources to finish the build."*

Secretary Duffy on the status of the airspace:
"At 8:15 tonight, Eastern Time, we've opened up the airspace. Now, does that mean every flight is going to fly right now? It's going to be slow. So, if you're watching, you're at an airport, check with your airline. It depends on do we have crews available, do we have pilots and flight attendants available to fly your flight? We're going to try to move as many of those as we can tonight if we have the capacity with crews to move those flights. If not, we're going to start tomorrow morning with our airline partners moving those aircraft. But it's going to take us some time to unwind what's happened this afternoon."

Secretary Duffy on the FAA's new SMART tool:
"This is all the old legacy equipment. All of the new equipment that's been deployed did not go down. SMART is completely disconnected…This is not even plugged in. What this [SMART] does is gives information from the airspace to a human being and gives them a prompt on how they could better navigate weather or trajectories. Then the human being will actually decide to accept or deny that prompt…So, there's no possible way SMART would have impacted what happened."

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