

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 31, 2025

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

The Honorable Mark Averill  
Acting Secretary of the Army  
101 Army Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20310-0101

Dear Secretary Hegseth and Acting Secretary Averill:

In the wake of Wednesday's crash at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport ("National"), we write to request a continued operational pause or redirection of training for the Army UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter unit with the 12<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion at Fort Belvoir away from National, and to request a safety review on the future of military helicopter training near National.

We are deeply concerned about this tragic collision and its broader ramifications for the National Capital Region's airspace. We have long warned that this airspace, and particularly the area immediately surrounding National, is overcrowded and above recommended capacity. National's runway 1/19 is the busiest runway in the country, and National typically sees 800 daily aircraft takeoffs and landings, with an above average number of missed approaches and early turnouts. This is compounded by regional helicopter travel and a restricted airspace over our nation's capital—just the day before Wednesday's collision, another airplane was reportedly forced to abort a landing at National due to a near miss with a helicopter. Each of these factors further constrains the National Capital Region's airspace, making local air travel increasingly challenging.


We appreciate your swift leadership in immediately grounding the battalion involved in this tragic event for 48 hours. We also thank you for your collaboration thus far with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) on its forthcoming investigation and report. As the causes of this collision are yet unknown, we request that you continue the current operational pause or to divert this unit away from National until the NTSB's preliminary report is released.

Furthermore, following the release of NTSB's preliminary report, we request that the Army review strategies in accordance with any forthcoming findings of the NTSB preliminary report to permanently relocate such helicopter training out of the National Capital Region's airspace, or, at a minimum, redirect helicopter trainings away from National, with exemptions for exigent circumstances called for by a national security imperative. Secretary of the Army-designate

Daniel Driscoll told Senators during his nomination hearing regarding this incident, "I think we might need to look at where is an appropriate time to take training risk, and it may not be near an airport like Reagan." Situating helicopter trainings beside the busiest runway in the country is an inappropriate risk when much of America has significantly clearer airspaces that could provide the same benefits to such training with much lower risk. We absolutely cannot risk further loss of life, both civilian and military, for entirely preventable reasons.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to your swift response and to working for the best interests of our armed forces and the National Capital Region.

Sincerely,



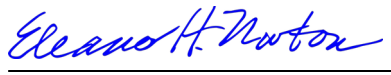
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Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



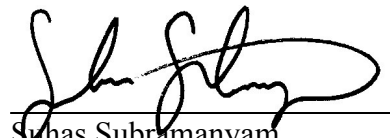
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Steny H. Hoyer  
Member of Congress




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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



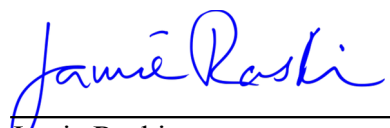
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Suhas Subramanyam  
Member of Congress




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Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress



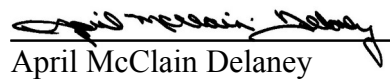
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Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



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Eugene Simon Vindman  
Member of Congress

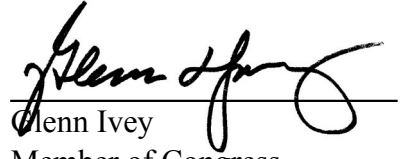


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April McClain Delaney  
Member of Congress



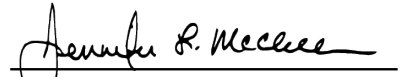
Sarah Elfreth  
Member of Congress



Glenn Ivey  
Member of Congress



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott  
Member of Congress



Jennifer L. McClellan  
Member of Congress