A team from SpaceX is being brought in to overhaul FAA's air traffic control system

A team from Elon Musk's SpaceX is visiting the Air Traffic Control Command Center in Virginia Monday to help overhaul the system in the wake of last month's deadly air disaster in Washington, DC, US Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy announced. The news comes after *CNN* reported that the Federal Aviation Administration fired hundreds of probationary employees who maintain critical air traffic control infrastructure.

In a post on X, Duffy said the team from SpaceX went to Virginia to "get a firsthand look at the current system, learn what air traffic controllers like and dislike about their current tools, and envision how we can make a new, better, modern and safer system." Previously, Duffy said that Musk's DOGE team would "plug in" to the FAA to help "upgrade our aviation system."

Duffy also dismissed criticism about opening the door to a Musk-led team to another sensitive area of the federal government. "Because I know the media (and Hillary Clinton) will claim Elon's team is getting special access, let me make clear that the @FAANews regularly gives tours of the command center to both media and companies," Duffy said. (Clinton has previously criticized the DOGE team's lack of experience.)

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The FAA is under heightened scrutiny three weeks after a

midair collision over the Potomac River resulted in the deaths of 67 people. The tragedy highlighted shortages of air traffic controllers as well as congestion at major hubs like Ronald Reagan National Airport. The FAA has fielded hundreds of complaints from air traffic workers describing dangerous conditions from staff shortages to dilapidated buildings. And the agency itself lacked a permanent head at the time of the crash — mostly because Musk had a hand in ousting the last administrator after the FAA fined SpaceX for failing to submit safety data.

Duffy's post doesn't mention Musk's role in the ouster, nor the hundreds of workers who were just laid off. CNN says the probationary employees were likely targeted because they've been employed for less than a year and lack the right to appeal.

"This draconian action will increase the workload and place new responsibilities on a workforce that is already stretched thin," David Spero, National President of the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, AFL-CIO, said in a statement. "This decision did not consider the staffing needs of the FAA, which is already challenged by understaffing."

https://www.theverge.com/news/614078/faa-air-traffic-control-spacex-elon-musk-layoff-staff-shortage