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FAA nationwide ground stop of November 13, 2026: full report

Prepared 2026-11-25 2140Z The root cause is still officially under investigation; corrections are dated on the briefing page.

Action level: monitor (real but contained; watch the signals) **Confidence:** moderate

Evidence tags used in this report:

- **[P]** Primary document (government or congressional record, or an official advisory), read directly.
- **[M]** Media report only.
- **[U]** Unverified, or sources conflict.

Primary sources are linked to their original URLs. Where an archived copy is available, it is linked as well.

All times are Zulu (UTC). On November 13, Eastern time was UTC-5, so 2054Z is 3:54 p.m. ET.

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1. The event

On Friday, November 13, 2026, the FAA's Air Traffic Control System Command Center stopped every departure from every U.S. airport. The order took effect at 2054Z and was cancelled at 0119Z on November 14, about 4 hours 25 minutes later. The trigger was a telecommunications failure. A flood of network traffic on the FAA's leased telecom backbone destabilized radio and radar feeds at 17 of the 22 Air Route Traffic Control Centers (the facilities that handle high-altitude traffic). It also spread into several approach control facilities (TRACONs).

Aircraft already flying were not ordered down. The FAA says about 3,500 airborne aircraft landed safely. No injuries, accidents or near-collisions have been reported in connection with the event.

The FAA and the Department of Transportation trace the flood to a router newly installed by the contractor L3Harris at a remote radio site in El Dorado, Arkansas. A second site, a radar facility in Amarillo, Texas, also contributed. As of today, officials have not said *why* the router flooded the network: a faulty device, a configuration or installation error, or something else.

2. Situation

ITEM	FACT	SOURCE
What	A national ground stop, meaning no departures from any U.S. airport. Inbound international flights were "managed on a case by case basis."	ATCSCC Advisory 111, 2026-11-13 [P]
Who ordered it	"By order of the Federal Aviation Command Center," the ATCSCC in Warrenton, Virginia. The advisory gives the reason as "Equipment / Outage" and "extraordinary circumstances and for reasons of safety."	Advisory 111 [P]
Where it started	Chicago first. At 2021Z the Command Center warned of O'Hare arrival delays "due to equipment issues" (Advisory 106). It then ground-stopped O'Hare, citing "COMMS ISSUES," with a stop period beginning 2010Z (Advisory 107, signed 2028Z), and Midway from 2017Z (Advisory 109).	Advisories 106, 107, 109 [P]
Facilities affected	Instability at **17 of 22** en route centers, spreading into "several" TRACONs. Early official wording conflicted: the FAA said "multiple" centers, while Secretary Duffy's post said "all."	FAA Q&A, 2026-11-15 [P]; FAA statement, 2026-11-13 [P]; Duffy post as quoted by media [M]
Not a total blackout	"This was not a full outage. Some frequencies and radar feeds remained reliable," the FAA says, and life-saving, law-enforcement and military flights continued. This is the FAA's own account. No independent review has been published.	FAA Q&A [P]
Failure mechanism	Data flooded the FAA Telecommunications Infrastructure (FTI) network "at a rate of 1,000 connection attempts every 4 to 5 seconds," destabilizing legacy equipment. L3Harris blocked the two sites and the network stabilized.	FAA Q&A [P]; DOT release 2026-11-14 [P]
Recovery	At 2246Z the stop formally remained, but departures were allowed "as enroute facilities recover" through Command Center coordination (Advisory 120). The FAA says traffic resumed at 8:15 p.m. ET (0115Z). The cancellation advisory was signed at 0119Z on November 14 (Advisory 005).	Advisories 120, 005 [P]; FAA Q&A [P]
Duration	**About 4 h 25 min** by the advisories (2054Z to 0119Z). The Congressional Research Service says "approximately 4 hours and 45 minutes." **[U]** The difference is unexplained; CRS may be counting from first symptoms.	Advisories [P]; CRS IN12756, 2026-11-18 [P]

ITEM	FACT	SOURCE
Flights	FAA: about 12,462 flights cancelled on November 13, including 9,082 by major airlines, and "not all" were directly caused by the stop. CRS: about 6,700 more cancellations on November 14 and more than 2,300 on November 15. Media counts for Friday to Sunday range from about 15,600 (Cirium) to about 18,000 (FlightAware).	FAA Q&A [P]; CRS [P]; [M] as cited
Precedent	Senate Commerce Chairman Ted Cruz called it the longest nationwide ground stop since September 11, 2001. CRS lists only two earlier nationwide stops since 2000: 9/11 and the January 11, 2023 NOTAM system failure.	Senate Commerce notice, 2026-11-24 [P]; CRS [P]

Timeline (Zulu)

TIME	EVENT	SOURCE
11-10	FAA expands its SMART traffic-planning tool (cloud-based, made by Air Space Intelligence) to all 22 centers. Relevant only because of later rumors.	FAA statements page [P]
11-13 ~2010Z	O'Hare stop period begins (backdated in Advisory 107)	[P]
11-13 2021Z	O'Hare arrival delays "due to equipment issues"	Advisory 106 [P]
11-13 ~2030Z	The FAA says the "technical problem" began "at approximately 3:30 p.m. ET." **[U]** This is about 20 minutes later than the Chicago advisories; Duffy's own figure is 3:36 p.m. (next row).	FAA Q&A [P]
11-13 2036Z	Duffy: "At 3:36 p.m., we experienced instability for our radar and our communications and our centers and our TRACONs across the country."	DOT release, 2026-11-13 [P]
11-13 2054Z	**National ground stop**	Advisory 111 [P]
11-13 ~2100Z	FAA statement: "communication issues impacting multiple Air Route Traffic Control Centers. FAA technicians are investigating." (Exact posting time not recorded.)	FAA statements page [P]
11-13 2121Z	Flight-plan drop times extended to 240 minutes at all en route centers "due to nationwide comms failure"	Advisory 117 [P]
11-13 2246Z	Stop "remains in effect"; departures released by coordination as centers recover. Reason now listed as "communications failure."	Advisory 120 [P]

TIME	EVENT	SOURCE
11-13 evening	Duffy and Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin brief at the White House: routers "got overloaded with data." Mullin: no indication "as of yet" of a nefarious act.	ABC News [M]
11-14 0115Z	Traffic resumes (FAA: "as of 8:15 p.m.")	FAA Q&A [P]
11-14 0119Z	**Ground stop cancelled**	Advisory 005 [P]

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3. Context: what led to it

The network. The FAA does not own the wires its controllers talk over. Its telecommunications backbone, FTI, links about 5,000 FAA facilities, radars, voice systems and data links. It is owned and operated by L3Harris, which has run it for more than 20 years. In Duffy's words, "L3Harris actually owns that network" (DOT, 2026-11-14 [P]; GAO-26-107992, 2026-09-14 [P]).

The work under way. Telephone carriers are retiring the old copper lines the FAA has relied on for decades, so the network is being moved from copper to fiber. In networking terms, the move is from TDM (time-division multiplexing) to IP. As part of that move, Cisco routers are being replaced with Juniper routers (Juniper is part of HPE).

- **Progress.** L3Harris says more than 70% of the planned conversion is complete (L3Harris statement, 2026-11-14 [P, corporate]). GAO counted 2,560 of 5,170 copper lines replaced as of May 2026 (GAO [P]).
- **Scale of the router swap.** Senate Commerce Democrats, citing L3Harris, say 3,648 routers are being converted. They put 400 as installed and 69 as operational (letter, 2026-11-16 [P]). Duffy said the El Dorado router was "the 69th installation" and that "sixty-eight times it worked well" (DOT, 2026-11-17 [P]).
- **Policy origin.** CRS says the TDM-to-IP migration dates to a 2015 strategy. The work was prioritized in May 2025 under the FAA's "Brand New Air Traffic Control System" (BNATCS) initiative (CRS [P]).
- **The administration's distinction.** Bedford says the router swap is "ordinary course-of-business stuff," not part of the $12.5 billion modernization effort run with the integrator Peraton (DOT, 2026-11-14 [P]). CRS, a nonpartisan congressional research office, links the same work to BNATCS. **[U]** The two characterizations conflict.

What happened on the day, per officials.

- **El Dorado.** L3Harris was switching a line from copper to fiber at a remote radio communications site in El Dorado, Arkansas. When the new router was turned on, it "started to broadcast into our network," Duffy said (DOT, 2026-11-15 and 2026-11-17 [P]).
- **Amarillo.** A system at an Amarillo, Texas radar site, which L3Harris had replaced about three weeks earlier, "started to flood our system as well" (DOT, 2026-11-15 [P]).
- **Containment.** The FAA disabled the broadcast function on more than 60 other Juniper routers already in the network and paused new installations (FAA Q&A [P]).
- **Timing.** The work was done in the middle of a Friday afternoon. The FAA says daytime work is normal at remote sites and that it "will reevaluate" the practice (FAA Q&A [P]).

Why a whole country stopped. The FAA says its legacy TDM equipment could not absorb the flood of traffic. Because every center depends on the same shared backbone, one faulty node could destabilize centers hundreds of miles away. Before November 13, FAA telecom failures in 2025–2026 stayed local:

- Philadelphia TRACON in 2025, and again on September 21, 2026, when a cut backup fiber left a single path.
- Minneapolis Center in August 2026.

(CRS [P]; GAO [P].) **Analysis, not an official finding:** this is the first public case in which a fault spread across most centers at once, which points at the shared layer rather than at any one facility's equipment.

Earlier warnings. In September 2026, GAO reported that the FAA had no reliable cost estimate or integrated schedule for BNATCS. It warned that conflicting installations across thousands of concurrent projects could "cause unnecessary disruption" (GAO-26-107992 [P]).

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4. Decision makers

These are public-record facts only. "Political" means appointed by the President or the administration. "Career" means a civil servant.

Department of Transportation and FAA

NAME	TITLE	TYPE AND APPOINTMENT	ROLE IN THIS EVENT
Sean P. Duffy	Secretary of Transportation	Political (Trump, second term). Confirmed 2025-01-28, 77–22 (Ballotpedia News [M]). Former U.S. Representative (Wisconsin).	Lead public spokesperson from the first hour. Named L3Harris and the El Dorado router. Requested $50.1B in new funding (DOT releases [P]).

NAME	TITLE	TYPE AND APPOINTMENT	ROLE IN THIS EVENT
Bryan Bedford	FAA Administrator	Political. Confirmed 2025-07-09, 53–43, to a five-year term (Roll Call [M]); sworn in July 2025 (FAA bio [P]).	Former CEO of Republic Airways for 26 years (FAA bio [P]). Co-briefed on Nov 14 and 17. To testify before House Transportation & Infrastructure next week (UPI via Yahoo, 2026-11-25 [M]).
Liam (William) McKenna	Deputy Administrator (acting) and Chief Strategy Officer	Political. FAA Chief Counsel from January 2025; earlier General Counsel of the Senate Commerce Committee (FAA bio, updated 2026-11-17 [P]).	No public role found. The previous deputy, Chris Rocheleau, left on 2026-07-31 [M].
Franklin J. McIntosh	Chief Operating Officer, Air Traffic Organization (ATO)	Career. Began as an air traffic controller in 2000. Acting COO from 2025-05-23, named COO on 2026-01-26 (FAA bio [P]).	Heads the organization that contains the Command Center. No public statement found.
Randa Hayes	Deputy COO (acting), ATO	Career (FAA leadership page [P])	No public role found
LaKisha A. Price	Vice President, System Operations Services	Career (FAA leadership page [P])	The Command Center sits in her service unit. No public statement found.
Dan Murphy	Vice President, Technical Operations	Career (FAA leadership page [P])	Oversees the technicians who maintain NAS equipment. No public statement found.
Rebecca Guy	Deputy Assistant Administrator, Airspace Modernization Office	Career/agency official. The Assistant Administrator post is **vacant** (FAA AMO page [P]).	Present at the Nov 14 briefing, described there as FAA chief technology officer (Aviation Week [M])

Other federal officials

NAME	TITLE	ROLE
Markwayne Mullin	Secretary of Homeland Security	Briefed at the White House on Nov 13. Said CISA, NSA and DoD were involved in checking for a cyber cause and saw "no footprints" [M].

NAME	TITLE	ROLE
Kash Patel	FBI Director	Duffy says he asked Patel to send agents to the router analysis (DOT, 2026-11-17 [P]). The FBI says it is giving technical assistance and "has not taken possession of any equipment" (NBC Palm Springs, 2026-11-17 [M]).
Russ Vought	Director, Office of Management and Budget	Co-signed the $50.1B funding letter to appropriators (DOT, 2026-11-17 [P])
Mitch Behm	Deputy Inspector General, performing the duties of the DOT Inspector General	There is no confirmed DOT IG [P per House testimony, 2026-03-05]. No IG review of this event has been announced.

Contractors

ORGANIZATION	ROLE
L3Harris Technologies	Owner and operator of FTI. Was doing the El Dorado work. Says it is "supporting the FAA in its investigation" (statement, 2026-11-14 [P, corporate]). The FAA says L3Harris is responsible for workmanship (CNN, 2026-11-24 [M]).
HPE / Juniper Networks	Router maker. Says the device "did not fail" and functioned "as it was configured" (KATV [M])
Peraton	Prime integrator for BNATCS, selected 2025-12-04. No public role in this event.
Verizon, AT&T	Hold contracts for the future replacement network (FENS). No evidence of any role in this event.

Congress

- **Senate Commerce Committee.** Chairman Ted Cruz (R-Texas). Aviation Subcommittee Chairman Jerry Moran (R-Kan.). Ranking Member Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.).
- **House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee.** It has scheduled testimony from Bedford [M].

Turnover worth knowing

- **Deputy Administrator.** The post has been held in an acting capacity since the previous deputy left on 2026-07-31 [P/M].
- **Airspace Modernization Office.** Its top post is vacant. This is the office that runs the modernization program [P].
- **Air Traffic Organization.** Its COO was acting for eight months, from May 2025 to January 2026 [P].
- **DOT Inspector General.** There is no Senate-confirmed IG [P].

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5. Decision path: who decides, who approves

What the rulebook says. FAA Order JO 7210.3EE, ¶18-13, puts national ground stops with the ATCSCC (the Command Center). The Command Center must:

1. Evaluate "less restrictive traffic management initiatives" first.
2. Conference affected facilities and users "time permitting."
3. Issue an advisory.
4. "Continually monitor, adjust, and cancel."
5. Develop a release plan when the stop ends.

Aircraft "must not be released from a GS without the approval of the originator" (FAA Order JO 7210.3EE, ch. 18 §13 [P]; archived copy). The order does not require the Administrator's or the Secretary's approval.

What the record shows.

- **Issued.** "By order of the Federal Aviation Command Center" at 2054Z (Advisory 111 [P]).
- **Partially released.** By Command Center coordination from 2246Z (Advisory 120 [P]).
- **Cancelled.** By the Command Center at 0119Z (Advisory 005 [P]).
- **No named individual.** None of the advisories names a person. No official has said who personally made the call to stop or to resume.
- **Hold before resuming.** The FAA says it "waited for a period of time to ensure the system was stable" before lifting (FAA Q&A [P]).

Who was in the loop at the top. Bedford said the White House Situation Room and "national security infrastructure" were activated. Duffy said "President Trump actually had the whole government on the phone on Friday" (DOT, 2026-11-15 [P]; Fortune, 2026-11-14 [M]). That shows senior officials were informed. It does not show they made the operational decision.

Plain reading. The ground stop was a standard safety tool used by the career operations staff who own it. Political leadership took over the public messaging and the funding argument. It is not known whether political leadership shaped the timing of the stop or of the restart.

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6. Official statements and what they mean

STATEMENT	WHAT IT SAYS	WHAT IT DOES NOT SAY
FAA, Nov 13: "communication issues impacting multiple Air Route Traffic Control Centers. FAA technicians are investigating." [P]	Something broke in communications at more than one center.	Which system, how many centers, or whether planes were at risk

STATEMENT	WHAT IT SAYS	WHAT IT DOES NOT SAY
Duffy on X, Nov 13: "impacting all Air Route Traffic Control Centers" [M]	A broader claim than the FAA's	It conflicts with the FAA's later count of 17 of 22
DOT, Nov 14: a contractor "was doing routine maintenance... it started flooding other routers." "We haven't determined what the fault was. Was it the router or were they not doing great work for us at L3Harris?" [P]	Officials know *where* the flood started, not *why*	A root cause
DOT, Nov 14, on cyber: "Once we were able to isolate the work... all of our systems came back online. So, we don't believe this was cyber at all." [P]	The problem stopped when the work site was isolated, which fits an equipment or installation fault	It is a belief, not a forensic finding
FAA Q&A, Nov 15: "no indication that this was a cyberattack or an outside nefarious actor." [P]	No evidence of attack has been found	It does not rule an attack out
FAA Q&A, Nov 15: "Was safety compromised? No." [P]	The FAA's own judgment; every aircraft landed safely	No independent review has been published yet
FAA Q&A, Nov 15: modernization did not cause this; "this is due to the legacy TDM system causing instabilities." [P]	Blames the old equipment that could not handle the flood	The flood came from a *new* router being installed. Senate Democrats call this a "discrepancy" (letter [P]).
Duffy, Nov 17: "We've been able to recreate what happened in El Dorado, but the root cause of what happened, we don't have clarity yet." [P]	The failure can be reproduced in the lab	Why it happened
CNN, Nov 24, one unnamed source: an "overlooked setting" on the new router in how it interfaced with old routers being retired; "90% sure" no nefarious actor; a report is being prepared [M/U]	The first account of a mechanism	It is not official, and no report has been released

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7. Sources and who controls them

SOURCE	TYPE	OWNERSHIP / CONTROL	FACTUAL RELIABILITY (QUALITATIVE)
FAA ATCSCC advisories	Primary, operational	FAA	Highest for times and orders. Terse, and gives no causes.
FAA Q&A, FAA statements	Primary, agency	FAA (DOT)	Authoritative on what the agency says. It is a party to the event, and some answers defend its programs.
DOT releases ("ICYMI")	Primary, political messaging	DOT Office of Public Affairs	Accurate as quotations. Framed for advocacy ("Trump's Transportation Secretary," funding push).
Senate Commerce notices and letters	Primary, legislative	Committee majority (R) and minority (D) staff	Accurate as records of what members say and ask. Each side frames for its own position.
CRS Insight IN12756	Primary, nonpartisan analysis	Library of Congress	High. Neutral summary for Congress.
GAO-26-107992	Primary, audit	Congress's nonpartisan audit agency	High. Predates the event.
L3Harris statement	Primary, corporate	L3Harris Technologies (public company)	A party with liability exposure; minimal detail
Reuters	Wire	Thomson Reuters	High. One early error the same day (an NWS radar "outage" later denied by NWS).
AP	Wire	Nonprofit news cooperative	High
CBS News	Broadcast	Paramount Skydance	Generally reliable. Early sourcing ("update caused reboot") was not confirmed.
CNN	Cable	Warner Bros. Discovery	Generally reliable. Its "FBI took the router" report was denied by the FBI. The Nov 24 cause report rests on one source.
CNBC, NBC	Broadcast/cable	NBCUniversal (Comcast)	Generally reliable

SOURCE	TYPE	OWNERSHIP / CONTROL	FACTUAL RELIABILITY (QUALITATIVE)
ABC News	Broadcast	Disney	Generally reliable
WSJ	Newspaper	Dow Jones (News Corp)	Strong technical reporting on the router and L3Harris
Aviation Week	Trade	Informa	Specialist, reliable on technical detail
Fortune	Magazine	Fortune Media	Reliable for quotations
PolitiFact	Fact-checker	Poynter Institute	Established fact-checker
TMZ	Entertainment	Fox Corporation	Fast. Pushed the "days after AI rollout" timing angle.
RedState	Opinion/blog	Townhall Media (Salem Media)	Early "pilots and controllers can't talk" framing was overstated
Washington Examiner	Newspaper/web	Clarity Media (Anschutz)	The "rolling frequency outage" report was later broadly consistent with official accounts

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8. Claims vs evidence

#	CLAIM	WHERE IT CIRCULATED	EVIDENCE	VERDICT
1	It was a cyberattack (Iran, China, Russia, hacktivists)	Social media; speculation in early coverage	FAA: "no indication." Duffy: "we don't believe this was cyber at all." DHS: no "footprints." No group claimed responsibility. FBI is assisting and has made no public cyber finding.	**Unsupported**, though not formally ruled out
2	The FBI seized the router	CNN, Nov 16 [M]	FBI: "has not taken possession of any equipment." Router is at an L3Harris lab in Florida with FAA staff and FBI agents present (DOT [P]; [M])	**Unsupported** (disputed by the FBI)
3	The new AI system (SMART) caused it	TMZ, Futurism, Washington Times and others, based on timing	FAA: "The two systems are not related. SMART is a data aggregator, and it does not feed information into the air traffic	**Unsupported**

#	CLAIM	WHERE IT CIRCULATED	EVIDENCE	VERDICT
			control system" [P]. The flood traced to router sites [P].	
4	The AI firm donated to Duffy's son-in-law, then caused the outage	X posts, Nov 14	PolitiFact: the $2,500 PAC donation is real; no causal link or quid pro quo shown. Rated Mostly False (WRAL/PolitiFact, 2026-11-24 [M])	**Unsupported** (link to outage)
5	Sabotage or insider attack	Social media	No official or credible report. Officials describe a device or installation fault.	**Unsupported**
6	Every plane lost contact; planes were in danger	Early blogs (RedState)	FAA: "not a full outage"; some frequencies and radar stayed up; all ~3,500 airborne aircraft landed; no near-miss reported [P]. Safety judgment is the FAA's own; no independent review yet.	**Unsupported** as stated. Communications were degraded, not lost.
7	Cover for a secret operation; aliens; manufactured crisis to privatize the FAA	A Stephen King joke post, then conspiracy threads (Primetimer)	No evidence	**Unsupported**
8	Caused by FAA staffing cuts	Rep. Jim Himes, Face the Nation	PolitiFact: the departure figures are broadly accurate, but the link to the outage is "speculative at best," because contractor work was involved (PolitiFact, 2026-11-17 [M])	**Unsupported** (causal link)
9	Biden-era officials or contracts broke the system	President Trump, Truth Social, Nov 15	The failing work was a 2026 installation on a network L3Harris has run since 2002. PolitiFact found no support.	**Unsupported**

#	CLAIM	WHERE IT CIRCULATED	EVIDENCE	VERDICT
10	It was the legacy system, not new equipment	DOT/FAA, Nov 13–15 [P]	The flood began when a *new* router was switched on. The legacy equipment is where the instability showed. Both are part of the story. Senate Democrats call the framing a "discrepancy" [P].	**Unknown** (partly supported; framing contested)
11	L3Harris caused it	Duffy; WSJ; Reuters	L3Harris owns the network and did the work [P]. Juniper says its device worked "as configured" [M]. Device vs installation error is not determined [P].	**Unknown** (involvement supported; fault not established)
12	Free Starlink was rejected and would have prevented this	Elon Musk on X, Nov 16	Offer terms unconfirmed. Duffy says an earlier Starlink test had problems. Nothing shows satellite links would have prevented a ground-network flood (The Hill [M]).	**Unknown** (unverified)
13	Flights were grounded for days	Social media	The stop lasted about 4 h 25 min. Knock-on cancellations ran through Sunday (Advisories [P]; CRS [P]).	**Unsupported**
14	A nationwide weather-radar outage at the same time	Early Reuters report	The National Weather Service said this was false, caused by stale static pages (WBTV [M])	**Unsupported**
15	"Longest nationwide ground stop since 9/11"	Sen. Ted Cruz	CRS lists only two other nationwide stops since 2000: 9/11 and the January 2023 NOTAM failure (CRS [P]). Their durations are not compared here.	**Unknown** (plausible; the 2023 stop's duration is not verified in this report)

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9. Assessment

What is established. A new router installed by the network contractor at a remote Arkansas site flooded the FAA's shared telecom backbone. A second site in Texas added to the flood. This destabilized radio and radar feeds at 17 of 22 en route centers. The Command Center stopped

all departures as a precaution and released traffic once the two sites were cut off. Every record that can be checked agrees on this sequence: the advisories, the FAA Q&A, DOT transcripts, the congressional letter and CRS.

What is not established.

- **Why the router flooded the network.** Officials say it has been reproduced in a lab but not explained. The one account of a cause, an "overlooked setting," comes from a single unnamed source.
- **Whether the "safety was not compromised" judgment holds up.** No outside review has been published.

Cyberattack. There is no evidence of one. The symptom stopped when a specific work site was isolated, and that fits equipment or configuration far better than intrusion. Officials have not formally ruled out an attack, and FBI cyber staff are assisting. No one has claimed responsibility.

Risk to the public now.

- **Safety.** Low. The system has been stable since the night of November 13. The suspect broadcast function is disabled on the other new routers, and installations are paused.
- **Disruption.** Moderate. Two things keep a repeat possible: the root cause is open, and the network is mid-conversion with thousands of routers still to change. A repeat would most likely look like November 13: a ground stop, delays and cancellations, not danger in the air. This is analysis, not an official finding.
- **Separate local events** (Delta automation on Nov 22, O'Hare radar on Nov 24) are not linked to November 13 [M].

Action level: monitor. The failure was real and wide, but it is contained. Travel disruption, not physical danger, is the realistic downside.

Confidence: moderate. The sequence of events rests on primary records. The cause, and the safety judgment, rest mostly on the FAA and DOT describing their own system, before any independent review or root-cause report.

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10. Signals to watch

Would raise concern:

- A second network-wide instability, especially once router installations resume.
- Installations resuming without the testing and rollback steps that senators requested.
- A credible finding of unauthorized access, or an FBI or CISA statement that changes the cyber picture.

- The root-cause report slipping past the December hearings with no date.

Would lower concern:

- A published root-cause report naming the specific setting or defect and the fix.
- Independent validation, for example by the DOT Inspector General, GAO or NTSB, of the "safety was not compromised" finding.
- Router installations resuming with documented testing and no further incidents.

Dated markers:

- **Next week:** House Transportation & Infrastructure testimony from Administrator Bedford [M].
- **December 2, 2026:** Senate Commerce Aviation Subcommittee hearing with Secretary Duffy, "Preventing the Next Ground Stop" (1500Z) [P].
- **Pending:** answers to the Senate Commerce Democrats' letter, which were requested by November 23. Whether they were delivered is not known.

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11. Open questions

1. What exactly made the El Dorado router flood the network: a device defect, a configuration choice, or an installation step? Who set the configuration?
2. What happened at Amarillo? That system was installed about three weeks earlier. Did it misbehave before November 13?
3. Why did a fault at one remote site reach 17 centers? What isolation or rate-limiting existed on the backbone, and why did it not contain the flood?
4. Who in the Command Center ordered the stop and approved the restart, and on what criteria?
5. The FAA counts 4 h 25 min and CRS counts 4 h 45 min. Which start time is right?
6. Did the FAA approve the daytime work window in advance? Were the testing and rollback procedures followed? A commentary claim that oversight of contractor maintenance was relaxed in 2025 is unverified and disputed by the FAA.
7. Will the DOT Inspector General, GAO or NTSB review the event? None has announced a review.

Sources

Primary sources (government and congressional records)

- FAA ATCSCC Advisory 106, ORD arrival delays, 2026-11-13: original; archived copy
- FAA ATCSCC Advisory 107, ORD ground stop, 2026-11-13: original; archived copy

- FAA ATCSCC Advisory 109, MDW ground stop, 2026-11-13: original; archived copy
- FAA ATCSCC Advisory 111, national ground stop, 2026-11-13: original; archived copy
- FAA ATCSCC Advisory 117, extended flight-plan drop times, 2026-11-13: original; archived copy
- FAA ATCSCC Advisory 120, coordinated departures, 2026-11-13: original; archived copy
- FAA ATCSCC Advisory 005, ground stop cancelled, 2026-11-14: original; archived copy
- FAA, Nationwide Ground Stop: Questions and Answers, 2026-11-15: original; archived copy
- FAA, General Statements (Nov 13 statement; Nov 10 SMART expansion): original; archived copy
- U.S. DOT, Duffy announces lifting of nationwide ground stop, 2026-11-13: original; archived copy (from an existing Internet Archive snapshot)
- U.S. DOT, Duffy and Bedford update on restoration of airspace, 2026-11-14: original; archived copy (from an existing Internet Archive snapshot)
- U.S. DOT, Duffy on Sunday shows, 2026-11-15: original; archived copy (Internet Archive snapshot; gzip-encoded)
- U.S. DOT, Duffy update after Senate briefing, 2026-11-17: original; archived copy (Internet Archive snapshot; gzip-encoded)
- U.S. DOT, $50.1 billion funding request, 2026-11-17: original; archived copy (Internet Archive snapshot; gzip-encoded)
- U.S. Senate Commerce Committee Democrats, letter on root cause (dated 2026-11-16, released 2026-11-17): original; archived copy
- U.S. DOT, FAA and OMB, joint letter to appropriators requesting $50.1 billion, 2026-11-17: original; archived copy (Internet Archive copy, byte-identical to the file on transportation.gov)
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