



# Congress of the United States of America

## House of Representatives

Vernon J. Ehlers

August 29, 2006

Michigan

The Honorable Marion C. Blakey  
Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
800 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20591

Dear Marion,

I am writing to inquire about the status of the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) efforts to provide specific aeronautical data to pilots and consumers.

In 2004, the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) within the Department of Defense announced its intention to withdraw several resources utilized by the aviation community from public access. I understand that the aeronautical data are being withdrawn from public circulation primarily because increased numbers of foreign source providers are claiming intellectual property rights or are warning that they intend to copyright their data. While I appreciate this concern, it is extremely important for the U.S. government to make as much flight information available to the public as possible. I am pleased that the NGA agreed to a phased removal after numerous groups expressed strong concerns about this proposal. This approach was intended to provide the FAA with the necessary time to address its ability to collect and disseminate these important data. Although the NGA will continue to distribute its Flight Information Publications (FLIP) until October of 2007, the Digital Aeronautical Flight Information File (DAFIF) will be removed from the Internet in October of 2006, just a few short months away.

The DAFIF database, currently available only from the NGA, is the only government-sourced digital database with robust domestic aeronautical information. Many consumers and vendors providing electronic flight planning programs rely on the availability of the domestic DAFIF information to provide safety of flight information to users of the national airspace system. On another note, most flight simulators make extensive use of DAFIF, and if we want our next generation of pilots to be well trained, they need continued access to these digital data. While the FAA has developed its own database product known as the National Flight Database (NFD), the NFD does not adequately meet the needs of consumers in its current state. The FAA and the NGA must work together to continue providing domestic, government-sourced digital aeronautical flight information until the FAA's database has fully matured and contains all of the necessary domestic digital information.



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The agencies must also work together to continue providing the necessary FLIP products needed for travel within the United States, South America and the Caribbean. While the NGA's phased plan allows continued distribution of these products through October of 2007, there must be a transition plan in place for the FAA to continue producing these products with no adverse impacts on pilots and consumers.

Given the critical nature of this information, I would appreciate your response to the following questions:

1. Will the FAA be able to fully integrate the domestic data in DAFIF into its own NFD by October of 2006? If not, how are the agencies working together to ensure that all the domestic data continue to be available to the public from the government?
2. What steps is the agency taking to ensure the NFD includes all instrument approach procedures and route segments in the near term?
3. What is the FAA's transition plan to provide the enroute charts, supplemental flight information, and instrument approach procedures for the U.S., the Caribbean and South America?

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Vernon J. Ehlers  
Member of Congress

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