



One Hundred Ninth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

June 22, 2006

The Honorable Michael Chertoff
Department of Homeland Security
Mail Stop MS 0150
Office of Legislative Affairs
Attn: Secretary
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

I am writing to inquire as to what role, if any, the Department of Homeland Security had in the rulemaking process, initiated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), to codify the flight restrictions for general aviation in the National Capitol Region.

The Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) was established as a temporary measure in response to concerns about the security of the Capitol, White House, Pentagon, and other known terrorist targets. In the intervening years, enforcement of the ADIZ has proven to be operationally burdensome. I am told by general aviation pilots that FAA's enforcement of the ADIZ and operational difficulties such as increased hold times, lost flight plans, and confusing clearances, have caused many pilots to view the ADIZ as a no-fly zone. In fact, according to the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, over sixteen percent of pilots who once flew from or to airports in the ADIZ have stopped since it was established.

When the ADIZ was instituted, it was presented as a temporary measure to afford the Department the time needed to implement other procedures to enhance aviation security around our nation's Capitol. Since then, numerous security measures have been established including enhanced security screening for current and student pilots, restrictions on flight training to foreign nationals, the creation of a ground based laser warning system, and enhancements to the Department's air interdiction capabilities.

In light of the improvements to the security of the airspace surrounding our nation's Capitol, I would like to know whether the Department has assessed whether the ADIZ is still necessary today. Additionally, I would like responses to the following questions:

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1. What, if any, role did the Department of Homeland Security take in establishment of the ADIZ in February of 2003?
2. Has the Department done any risk-based analysis on whether the ADIZ needs to be maintained and whether there are alternative, less burdensome approaches to securing the National Capitol Region's airspace? If so, please provide the analysis. If not, please explain why the Department has not taken such action.
3. What, if any, role does the Department have in the FAA's rulemaking effort to codify the ADIZ over the National Capitol Region? If so, please describe the Department's role.
4. Given the enhancements to aviation security since the establishment of the ADIZ, does the Department believe that changes can be made that will not reduce security?
5. Has the Department developed a comprehensive plan for aviation security in the National Capitol Region? If so, I would appreciate a briefing. If not, please explain why no such plan has been developed.

I appreciate your assistance in this matter and look forward to receiving your responses in a timely manner. Should you have questions about this request, please contact Jessica Herrera-Flanigan, Minority Staff Director, at (202)226-2616.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bennie G. Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "B".

Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security