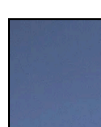


ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE   MACHINE LEARNING

SMART

## America Trembles as Transportation Secretary Announces Plans for Air Traffic Controllers to Lean on AI Tools

Someone's got their head in the clouds.



By [Joe Wilkins](#) / Published **Apr 26, 2026 11:15 AM EDT** / [Add Futurism](#)



Illustration by Tag Hartman-Simkins / Futurism. Source: Getty Images

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As if air travel in the United States wasn't [cursed enough](#), the Trump Administration wants to ease the burden of air traffic scheduling with the help of some private-market AI solutions.

US Department of Transportation secretary Sean Duffy — the same guy who was [briefly in charge of NASA](#), weirdly — recently confirmed that the government is working on integrating AI software into the air traffic management system. At a [Semafor event](#) last week, Duffy said the software, called Strategic Management of Airspace Routing Trajectories (SMART), is being toolled by three competing companies.

Later, a person familiar with the matter [told Bloomberg](#) the Federal Aviation Administration had brought on Palantir, Thales SA, and Air Space Intelligence to compete for the SMART contract. Palantir then released a [statement to investors](#) confirming the company was contracted by the FAA to “provide a data analytics tool that will help advance the agency’s modernization objectives for aviation safety.”

Then on Tuesday, Duffy went [on the record with CBS News](#), explaining that SMART will cost \$12 billion, and will supposedly help flight controllers schedule flights weeks in advance to cut down on delays.

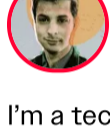
“This software will say, ‘well, listen, we can see this 45 days out. Let’s move some of those flights a little bit later, or five, seven, 10 minutes earlier, and we can resolve the issue. And so then you are not delayed,’” Duffy said.

While the transportation secretary says the software will stop short of “replac[ing] humans in how we manage the airspace,” there are some obvious concerns with the idea of shoehorning AI into the air traffic workflow.

On top of generally being susceptible to [severe hallucinations](#), AI systems have consistently failed when applied to applications like [staffing schedules](#), [traffic safety predictions](#), and even simple management tasks like [operating a vending machine](#).

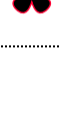
All we'll say is this: if some of the best available AI on the market today can't run an office snack machine without breaking down into a [de facto cartel](#), good luck when you put it in charge of scheduling the country's flights.

**More on the FAA:** [You Are Not Prepared for What Actually Shut Down the El Paso Airport This Morning, But Let's Just Say It Involves a Military Mega-Laser Shooting Something Down](#)



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I'm a tech and labor correspondent for Futurism, where my beat includes the role of emerging technologies in governance, surveillance, and labor.



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