

**STATEMENT OF**  
**ADMIRAL WILLIAM E. GORTNEY, UNITED STATES NAVY**  
**COMMANDER**  
**UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND**  
**AND**  
**NORTH AMERICAN AEROSPACE DEFENSE COMMAND**  
**BEFORE THE**  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM**  
**APRIL 29, 2015**





Chairman Chaffetz, Ranking Member Cummings, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to represent the men and women of the United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) and North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). I come before you today as one of many interagency partners committed to understanding and addressing potential threats from low altitude and slow speed aerial vehicles to the National Capital Region (NCR). I want to preface my comments by emphasizing the sensitive nature of much of the information surrounding this event. Discussing unclassified but extremely sensitive national security capabilities in an open forum could be exploited by potential adversaries. I am happy to provide a more in-depth analysis of this event in a closed session.

Under my command, NORAD's role is to provide aerospace warning and control to defend the United States, including the NCR, from all potential air threats. The airspace surrounding the NCR, known as the Washington D.C. Special Flight Rules Area (SFRA), is monitored by the Integrated Air Defense System (IADS), which is a vast network of radars, cameras, and other detection and warning devices. Each system is designed to detect, track, and monitor specific parameters. The fusion of data from all the systems provides a robust surveillance and track capability.

The IADS system was implemented following, and in direct response to, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and has continued to evolve with the threat over time, to the point that we are extremely capable of identifying and tracking a wide range of potential threats to the NCR, including anything from commercial aviation down to small, single engine aircraft. However, a small manned gyrocopter or similar low altitude and slow speed aerial vehicle, despite the low threat capability associated with such a vehicle, presents a technical challenge.

The small, manned gyrocopter that departed Gettysburg, PA on April 15, 2015 flew to the NCR, landing on the grounds of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. Through post-event analysis, what we now understand is that the gyrocopter was detected by several of the integrated sensors as it approached and transited through the SFRA. However, the aircraft's flight parameters fell below the threshold necessary to differentiate aircraft from weather, terrain, birds, and other slow flying objects so as to ensure that the systems and those operating them focus on that which poses the greatest threat.

We are in the early stages of conducting a thorough reconstruction and analysis of all aspects of this incident, including timelines, communication and sensor data. Identifying low altitude and slow speed aerial vehicles from other objects is a technical and operational challenge. Our initial analysis of this event has further confirmed the need to continue to improve our ability to identify low altitude and slow speed aerial vehicles operating in the NCR. We are working with the Services on technical and procedural solutions, including integrating advanced sensors into the IADS architecture. One example of these advanced sensors is the Joint Land Attack Cruise Missile Defense Elevated Netted Sensor System (JLENS), which is currently in an operational exercise out of Aberdeen Proving Ground.

DoD's role is primarily accomplished through the Eastern Air Defense Sector (EADS) and the Joint Air Defense Operations Center (JADOC). EADS provides the NCR Coordination Center (NCRCC) with an operational air surveillance picture, intelligence, and air defense readiness posture. The JADOC, located in Washington, D.C., provides tactical level command and control for NCR Air Defense Artillery (ADA) assets as part of NORAD. These DoD activities are fused by the NCRCC, an interagency organization whose coordinated actions enhance the effectiveness of both air security and defense operations in the NCR. Rapid

coordination and information exchange is facilitated among participating agencies to fulfill air security and defense responsibilities in the prevention, deterrence, and where necessary, interdiction of air threats to the NCR.

## **CONCLUSION**

Along with our interagency partners, we are engaged in a detailed review of the event and subsequent actions and responses to determine lessons learned and ways to improve our response moving forward. We remain confident that the established tactics, techniques and procedures used by all NCR entities are effective, but will share results from this review to develop short- and long-term mitigation of low and slow threats in addition to the DoD efforts currently ongoing. I look forward to your questions.

