

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 28, 2019

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro  
Comptroller General of the United States  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G St. NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

We write to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) conduct a study of helicopter noise within the Washington metropolitan area. Many of our constituents live with the impacts of regular helicopter noise that interrupts sleep patterns, causes their homes to shake and negatively impacts their quality of life. While disturbances from helicopter noise have been a longstanding problem for some, others have noted recent increases in the frequency and severity of helicopter noise in their neighborhoods. We understand that helicopter activity is an essential part of law enforcement, military and medical operations and appreciate the critical efforts of employees serving in those sectors. However, we also believe that, through information collection, analysis and coordination, we can identify strategies to minimize the negative impacts of helicopter activity without impeding the work of the agencies operating helicopters within the region.

We have engaged with constituents, federal agencies and local governments on the problem of helicopter noise in our region. A number of questions have emerged that can only be addressed through a formal study. Among other issues your study may find relevant, we ask that your study include an analysis of the following issues:

- The types of helicopters that generate the most noise and the make of the helicopters flying over the Washington metropolitan area;
- Current helicopter flight paths within the Washington metropolitan area, including an analysis of which neighborhoods are most impacted by helicopter noise;
- The frequency of flights over neighborhoods, including information on each agency operating helicopters, the times of flight and flight altitude;
- The number of flights that occur during the day and at night;
- The altitude at which helicopters currently fly within the Washington metropolitan area today compared to the altitude at which helicopters operated within the Washington metropolitan area in the past;
- Potential causes of the increase in the severity and frequency of helicopter noise in the Washington metropolitan area;
- The degree of coordination that currently exists among the various government and non-governmental entities operating helicopters in the Washington metropolitan area regarding flight paths, altitudes and other pertinent considerations; and

- Viable options for noise mitigation, potentially including modifications to current training practices that would reduce the number of training hours that must be completed in the Washington metropolitan area and modifications to night training times so that pilots do not fly when most residents are sleeping.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and ask that you respond to our request for a study within 30 days of the date of this letter.

Sincerely,

  
ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON  
Member of Congress

  
DONALD S. BEYER, JR.  
Member of Congress

  
JAMIE RASKIN  
Member of Congress

  
ANTHONY G. BROWN  
Member of Congress

  
DAVID TRONE  
Member of Congress