



## Memorandum

Date: March 19, 2026

Subject: INFORMATION: Audit Announcement | FAA's Oversight of the Human Intervention Motivation Study (HIMS) Program | Project No. 26A3004A000  
Federal Aviation Administration

From: Nelda Z. Smith   
Principal Assistant Inspector General for Auditing and Evaluation

To: Director, Audit and Evaluation

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On October 22, 2023, an Alaska Airlines flight was diverted after an off-duty pilot sitting in the jump seat attempted to activate the fire suppression system to shut down the aircraft's engines. The pilots operating the aircraft were successful in stopping the off-duty pilot, who later admitted to having recently consumed psychedelic mushrooms while experiencing depression. The incident highlighted the importance of mental health and substance misuse treatment for pilots.

Established in 1974, the Human Intervention Motivation Study (HIMS) is a substance misuse treatment program for pilots that operates as a partnership between the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), pilot unions, airline management, and medical professionals. HIMS coordinates the identification, treatment, and return-to-work process for participating pilots. Citing concerns with recent incidents involving the mental health of pilots, the Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation requested that we review the administration of the HIMS program and its effectiveness.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, our audit objective will be to assess FAA's oversight of the HIMS program.

We plan to begin the audit in the coming weeks and will contact your audit liaison to schedule an entrance conference. We will conduct our work at FAA Headquarters, Civil Aerospace Medical Institute (CAMI) in Oklahoma City, and other locations as needed.

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<sup>1</sup> On November 8, 2023, Ranking Member Ted Cruz of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation requested this audit.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Christopher Frank, Program Director.

cc: DOT Audit Liaison, M-1  
FAA Audit Liaison, AAE-001