

**C-Band 5G, the FAA, and the Chinese Threat**  
**By Mike Rogers, Former Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee**

America's economic and technological future will be based in large part on the availability of high-speed internet, and the spectrum needed to run it. Unfortunately, China may be poised to make important gains over the United States if federal regulators take steps that slow down the deployment of our nation's 5G networks.

Just as the space race between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. defined the Cold War, the current technological race between the U.S. and China may determine the future of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Key to this race will be the nation that can most quickly and efficiently deploy the next generation of high-speed 5G wireless services.

Not only is this issue important for the United States, but it also carries global implications as well. Other nations are more likely to adopt the hardware and technologies of the country that is viewed as the most cutting-edge.

China understands the importance of rapidly deploying advanced networks. China's public and private sectors have committed to spending \$1.6 trillion through 2025 to help develop next generation internet infrastructure including its 5G networks. It is also aggressively looking to move these efforts abroad.

In 2015, the communist country launched its Digital Silk Road initiative. Under this policy, China is seeking to provide support and assistance to help other nations improve their own telecommunications networks, and in the process, make these countries more dependent on Chinese technology. In response, the United States is offering its own financial incentives to countries willing to reject Chinese owned telecommunications equipment. This is also why the U.S. government sought to ban telecommunications networking equipment from companies like Huawei.

Amidst this backdrop, it would seem highly risky for the Biden Administration to do anything to slow down the deployment of our own 5G networks. Yet such a slowdown happening due in part to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) – regrettably pushed by the aviation industry.

In early December, the FAA issued restrictions to the aviation industry involving so-called interference from 5G wireless that they say could impact cockpit safety systems. As a result, the industry trade group for the nation's airlines said that this could mean the cancellation of thousands of flights unless the roll out of 5G is delayed. The result has been news stories with incendiary headlines, "U.S. airlines warn 5G wireless could wreak havoc with flights."

Given the stakes for our economic and national security, how did we end up here? How and why didn't these concerns get raised sooner?

The process of launching 5G was years in the making and its safety was thoroughly and carefully vetted by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) with other federal agencies, including the FAA, given the opportunity to work through any concerns. None were brought forward, and 5G was set to roll out.

There is no rational or reasonable answer to why the FAA adopted this position so late in the game – a position not born out by the facts and the data. To that point, earlier this week a bipartisan group of 6

former FCC Chairs sent a letter to current FCC Chair Jessica Rosenworcel and Acting NTIA Administrator Evelyn Remaley urging a quick resolution and underscoring the fact that “the FAA position threatens to derail the reasoned conclusions reached by the FCC after years of technical analysis and study.”

Moreover, if the FAA’s concerns were accurate, we would already be seeing the impacts in countries around the world. However, nearly 40 other countries including the United Kingdom, Japan and New Zealand have been actively deploying 5G, using the same spectrum the U.S. will be deploying. None of these countries have reported any evidence of harmful interference to aviation equipment and some are even authorized to operate at a higher power than what’s permitted in the United States.

The impact of these FAA actions will slow down the deployment of these new 5G internet services. But this technological race is too important to lose and moving too rapidly for us to slow down. Slowing down our deployment of continued technology development will have serious consequences. We cannot allow China and other countries to aggressively deploy 5G networks at our expense

To date, there’s been no demonstration or real-world evidence of inference between aircraft and the 5G networks. Additionally, there are guard bands or "spaces" created to protect equipment from interference. The airline industry knows this but refuse to acknowledge this fact. These issues were debated domestically going back to 2017. The FAA has had ample time and opportunity to engage on any substantive concerns on this issue; now it’s time for America’s technological future to move forward. China is not slowing down, and neither can we.