

EARL L. "BUDDY" CARTER
FIRST DISTRICT OF GEORGIA

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February 16, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C., 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

I write to respectfully urge the Department to investigate the use of foreign-based Remote Assistance Operators (RAOs) by autonomous vehicle companies operating on public roads in the United States.

During a recent hearing before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and in sworn testimony before the same committee, Dr. Mauricio Peña, Chief Safety Officer at Waymo, testified that the company employs remote vehicle operators located in the Philippines. This testimony raises serious and reasonable concerns about roadway safety, situational awareness, and national security.

Decisions affecting traffic flow, emergency responses, and vehicle behavior on U.S. streets may be influenced—or directly controlled—by individuals who are not Americans, are not subject to U.S. jurisdiction, and may not understand English, our road signs, and American traffic laws. This raises serious and reasonable concerns about roadway safety, situational awareness, and national security.

American motorists and pedestrians are safest when those assisting in the operation of vehicles on our roads can fully understand and interpret U.S. traffic laws, roadway signage, emergency instructions, and local driving conditions. Operators who may not be fluent in English or familiar with American road signs create avoidable risks—particularly in complex or high-stakes environments such as interstates, construction zones, and school zones. For example, in October 2025, an illegal immigrant commercial driver named Jashanpreet Singh caused a fatal eight-vehicle collision on the I-10 Freeway in California that killed three people and injured several others.

Further, those operating these vehicles may have no allegiance to the United States or regard for passenger safety, meaning reckless and life-threatening decisions could be made by an individual who will not face the consequences of their actions.

In addition, I respectfully request that any investigation examine whether audio or video conversations inside autonomous vehicles are recorded, stored, or accessed by foreign personnel.

Passengers deserve clear answers regarding their privacy, especially when vehicles may traverse areas involving sensitive discussions, federal facilities, or national defense infrastructure.

This issue is not about hindering innovation. Autonomous vehicle technology holds promise, but public trust depends on transparency, accountability, and prioritizing the safety and privacy of Americans above cost-cutting or convenience. A thorough review by the Department would help ensure that companies operating on U.S. roads are meeting appropriate safety, language, privacy, and security standards.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and for your continued service to the American people. I appreciate your leadership and stand ready to support efforts that keep our roads—and our nation—safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Earl L. 'Buddy' Carter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Earl L. "Buddy" Carter
Member of Congress