

Military and Civilian Flights Avoid Collision After Air Traffic Miscommunication

July 23, 2025

— Categories: *Defence & Security*



A U.S. Air Force B-52 Stratofortress and a SkyWest Airlines passenger jet came dangerously close to colliding over Minot, North Dakota, on July 18, following a breakdown in coordination between military and civilian air-traffic controllers. The commercial aircraft, operating as a Delta Connection flight from Minneapolis to Minot, was unaware of the

bomber's proximity and had to make an abrupt evasive maneuver during its final approach.

According to Air Force officials, the B-52 had been cleared for a flyover at the North Dakota State Fair in coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Minot Air Force Base controllers. After completing the scheduled flyover, the bomber crew contacted Minot International Airport's control tower and was directed to fly two miles west. Critically, the controller failed to inform the B-52 crew that a passenger jet was on approach to the same airspace.

The SkyWest pilot, upon visually spotting the bomber, quickly banked the aircraft to avoid collision. In audio recordings of the event, the pilot can be heard apologizing to passengers, stating, "Sorry about the aggressive maneuver. It caught me by surprise... This is not normal at all." The flight, which carried 76 passengers and four crew members, landed safely. A joint investigation by the FAA, U.S. Air Force, and SkyWest Airlines is now underway.

This incident has drawn renewed attention to coordination gaps between military and civilian aviation, especially at contract towers run by private operators. Although these towers adhere to FAA training standards, critics argue that the absence of radar at smaller regional airports such as Minot can limit situational awareness. Ordinarily, regional FAA centers assist with airspace management, but this near miss has raised concerns about procedural lapses.

The Minot event follows a troubling pattern of recent aviation incidents, including a deadly midair collision involving a military helicopter and a passenger plane over Washington, D.C., and a near-runway incursion in

Chicago. These events underscore growing concerns over the safety of overlapping air corridors and the need for improved integration between military and civilian operations.

For conservative observers focused on national security and public safety, this case highlights the need for better systems and clearer communication protocols. As the Air Force continues to modernize the aging B-52 fleet, strengthening airspace management procedures will be critical. The near-miss in Minot serves as a serious reminder: operational tradition must never come at the expense of safety.