

FAA CHIEF ARRESTED FOR DRUNKEN DRIVING, EMPLOYMENT BEING QUESTIONED



The chief of the Federal Aviation Administration, Randy Babbitt was recently arrested on charges of drunken driving in suburban northern Virginia. As a result of his arrest, officials with the Transportation Department are working on how to handle his charges, according to the [Washington Post](#). The first thing they did was place Babbitt on a leave of absence the Monday following his arrest. The officials with the department are now in discussions with legal counsel regarding his employment status with the FAA. Babbitt is midway through his five-year term with the FAA, which is a part of the Transportation Department. A police officer spotted Babbitt driving on the wrong side of a road around 10:30 p.m. Saturday night in Fairfax City, Virginia. Babbitt is 65 and lives nearby in Reston, Virginia. Police told officials with the FAA and the media that Babbitt cooperated with police and was released on his own recognizance. What might make matters worse for Babbitt is the fact that he delayed telling FAA officials about the arrest. Jay Carney, the White House spokesman, said that President Barack Obama and officials from the Transportation Department did not learn about Babbitt's arrest until late in the day on Monday. In fact, Babbitt had been placed on leave at his own request. Michael Huerta, the Deputy FAA Administrator, will serve as acting administrator according to the Transportation Department, while Babbitt is on his leave. Over the past couple of months, Huerta has been working with NextGen to transition its air traffic control system from World War II era radar to satellite technology. Babbitt was chosen in 2009 by Obama to become the head of the FAA because of his history of success as a former airline captain and expert in aviation and labor relations. For 25 years, Babbitt worked as a pilot for the now-extinct Eastern Airlines. Babbitt also served as the president of the Air Line Pilots Association. While serving as president of the Air Line Pilots Association, Babbitt was responsible for the one level of safety initiative that was created back in 1995 in an effort to increase safety standards across the industry. When Babbitt took over the FAA, the agency was still suffering from widespread safety problems across the industry. The problems with the safety were revealed to the country by an investigation that was performed by the National Transportation Safety Board in February of 2009. Babbitt urged airlines to adopt a series of voluntary safety measures, but most experts claim those safety measures are not enough since they are voluntary. Under Babbitt's leadership, the FAA has also been working on creating new safety regulations for airlines across the country. Those regulations would include how to keep pilots from fatigue, training for airline pilots, and the experience levels of airline pilots.