

# Pentagon supports restarting tests involving runaway blimp

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In this Oct. 28, 2015, file photo, an unmanned Army surveillance blimp floats through the air while dragging a tether line just south of Millville, Pa. The Pentagon says Defense Secretary Ash Carter supports resumption of a military exercise that was suspended last October when a radar-carrying blimp broke away from its mooring and floated for hours over rural Pennsylvania, triggering blackouts as it dragged its tether across power lines. After tearing free from its base at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, the blimp eventually came down about 80 miles north of Harrisburg. No one was hurt, but thousands lost electricity. (Jimmy May/Bloomsburg Press Enterprise via AP)

Defense Secretary Ash Carter has approved resuming a military exercise suspended last October when a radar-carrying blimp broke away from its mooring and floated for hours over rural Pennsylvania, triggering blackouts as it dragged its tether across power lines.

Pentagon press secretary Peter Cook said Thursday that Carter "concurred" with a recommendation that the exercise be resumed. A restart, however, will require [congressional action](#).

After tearing free from its base at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, the blimp eventually came down about 80 miles north of Harrisburg. No one was hurt, but thousands lost electricity.

The blimp is part of an air defense program called JLENS. At the time of the accident it was involved in an "operational exercise" to test its ability to defend the Washington area from cruise missiles and other low-flying military threats.

The Army's report on what caused the accident has not been released. However, officials said Thursday that the blimp might have been brought down more rapidly, averting some of the damage caused by its tether, if an auto-deflation [device](#) aboard the blimp had been activated.

Michael Kucharek, a spokesman for the U.S. Northern Command, said the device did not work because it lacked batteries.

"A lack of batteries—or more correctly—the lack of installed batteries prevented the (auto-deflation device) from deploying as it was designed to do," Kucharek said. He stressed that the lack of batteries did not contribute to the cause of the blimp tearing free of its anchor.

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