

ALLIED PILOTS ASSOCIATION CALLS ON CONGRESS TO MAKE FEDERAL FLIGHT DECK OFFICER PROGRAM A TOP NATIONAL SECURITY PRIORITY

September 10, 2003

Issue: Since the Arming Pilots Against Terrorism Act (APATA) went into effect in November 2002, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has neglected its obligation to train pilots desiring to become Federal Flight Deck Officers (FFDO's).

APA Position: Congress must intervene and provide firm direction and any necessary funding to the TSA in order speed the training of FFDO's. FFDO's remain a critical last line of defense as well as a cost effective means of providing additional security to the nation's airlines.

Background: In response to the War on Terrorism, Congress mandated through the APATA that the cockpits of the nation's passenger airliners be staffed with volunteer pilots who would be trained in the limited use of lethal force to defend against another attempt to use a commercial airliner as a weapon of war. This legislation was passed over the objections of the Administration and the TSA. Now it appears that the TSA is trying to accomplish through implementation much of what they could not achieve through legislation.

Currently, the Federal Flight Deck Officer program is operating at a reduced capacity as a consequence of the Transportation Security Administration's recent decision to discontinue training at the federal law enforcement training center in Glynco, Georgia and shift all training to a remote site in Artesia, New Mexico. The Artesia facility is located 269 miles from the closest major airport in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Each weekly training class is limited to 48 pilots, and these individuals must undergo extensive background and psychological screening that far exceeds the standards for other armed federal officers. The training program is voluntary and pilots must pay all of their travel expenses, lodging and daily expenses. Some members of Congress have proposed contracting out the training to private companies at multiple locations – a proposal that APA strongly endorses.

APA would also like to note that armed pilots are a very cost effective means of providing additional security for aviation. Beyond the initial costs for training and periodic requalification, FFDOs cost the taxpayer nothing. Their employers pay their salaries, so it is possible to provide for a large number of armed officers at relatively little expense. With the renewed threat of terrorism against commercial aviation and the cutbacks in the number of Federal Air Marshals aboard flights, APA is more convinced than ever that arming the cockpit could well be the key in preventing another successful attack against our industry.

Bottom Line: Congress must step in and remove the obstacles currently delaying the training and deployment of additional FFDO's. The Federal Flight Deck Officer program must be expanded and recognized as a top national security priority