

The only way to truly ensure security in any situation is to ultimately ensure that those who would do good are equitably armed to those who would be wrong. As such, all commercial flights should have on-board a firearm, and a person legally able to use it who is proficient in its use. In this way, the safety of the passengers and crew can be better assured.

Some will suggest that the carrying of a firearm be voluntary. This is all well and good, except that the passengers would not be secure in all cases. Not only this, but which flights were secure and which were not would have to be kept secret, to prevent potential terrorists from simply targeting the unarmed flights. I, as an airline passenger, would certainly feel more at ease if I knew that the crew could protect me from danger (I would much rather be able to protect myself from danger, however this is another issue entirely).

As for the training required of those carrying the firearms, I think that only a small amount will be required. However, some training is necessary; it would do no one (except maybe terrorists) any good to have someone who has never picked up a handgun in their life in charge of defending the plane.

A second important aspect in the armament of pilots is the location of the weapon. Ideally, the weapon would be right where it would be needed in an emergency--on the pilot himself. To require it to be kept in a locker or other such constraints would slow down the weapon's legitimate user as much as it would any unauthorized ones. The weapon should, for this reason, be kept as near to the pilot as possible. If, by keeping it on the pilot, the FAA decides that the likelihood of the weapon being taken away is too high, then a backup weapon should be used, rather than locking up the initial weapon.

The possession of less-than-lethal weapons by other members of the crew is, in my eyes, of far less importance once a firearm is present and in the hands of a knowledgeable individual. Once you have a last line of defense with the likelihood-for-success of a firearm, earlier lines of defense become optional. In general, I believe that any sort of non-lethal weaponry (tranquilizer gun, stun gun, etc.) contained in a secure location (cockpit, on a high-ranking crew member, so on) would benefit security, rather than detract from it.

I hope these statements will be helpful in the FAA's decision to implement firearms. I sincerely hope that your decision is for the betterment of our nation's security, the commercial airline industry, and our country at large.