

To put it bluntly, if the pilots of the four hijacked planes on 9-11 had been armed, the world trade center would still be standing and the pentagon would not need new construction. As a former Marine, licensed pilot, and the holder of a VA carry permit, I believe that an armed society is a polite society. I also believe that overwhelming firepower is the best, swiftest and safest answer to a criminal intent on causing death and destruction. Can an armed pilot guarantee that the plane won't crash and kill the passengers? No. Can it prevent the takeover of an aircraft in-flight? Yes.

Let's face it, if someone is willing to give their life, your only option is to help them on their way. There is quite simply no way other than armed confrontation to stop a trained, suicidal hijacker. And the best airport security in the world would not stop someone capable of inflicting unarmed injury or death.

We trust the pilots with our lives every time we step onto a commercial flight. It is nonsense to think that they should be trusted with making decisions that can kill everyone on the plane and not trust them to defend themselves, and therefore us, against a hijacker. Most professional pilots are ex-military and already have the necessary firearms training. The others are generally smart people and could be taught just as every private in bootcamp is taught how to be safe with a weapon.

I wouldn't want them armed with .44 magnums, but a nice .380 auto would stop the hijacker without taking out three people behind him. And it would be a lot cheaper than having two or three "armed" skymarshalls on every flight.

Of course, in order to make this work, the pilot is going to have to be able to "see" into the cabin without opening the cockpit door and that door is going to have to be strengthened. But with current airport security measures and passengers willing to take responsibility for their own fate, the terrorists of the world would never again be able to use a commercial aircraft as a guided missile.

We have already accepted the idea of armed marshalls on flights. I personally would rather rely on the proven decision making skills and training of the pilot than of someone who is less educated, knows next to nothing about an aircraft and probably doesn't have experience making life and death decisions as a routine part of their job.