

I am 110% in favor of allowing pilots on commercial aircraft to carry firearms for self-defense of the aircraft and its passengers and cargo. I believe these pilots should be qualified and licensed in a manner similar to the concealed weapons training already being conducted in most of the states nationwide. There should be some form of annual refresher training for pilots who voluntarily take part in this program. The license should be separate from the FAA's current pilot licensing system and should be tracked by the individual airlines. There should be pressure to insure each pilot is trained; this is a completely voluntary program. There should be no minimum requirement for firearms on each flight, but a maximum number of firearms would be the number of flight deck crewmembers on a particular flight. This would introduce a variable that would make it more difficult for potential hijackers to take command of a commercial airliner.

I believe the caliber of the weapon needs to be no larger than 38 caliber. This would reduce the amount of damage done to the aircraft hull in the event of a weapon discharge. I also believe the bullet should be designed to be lethal but with minimum penetrating power so that the chance of hull penetration and damage to other aircraft systems are minimized.

The weapons should be carried in the individual pilot's kit bag and he/she would be personally responsible for the security and use of the firearm. There is plenty of precedence for this type of firearm carriage in both the early US Postal system flights and the 1970's when pilots were armed to prevent hijackings. The airlines would be responsible for tracking pilots who voluntarily participate in the program, but the airlines would not be responsible for purchasing or maintaining the weapons. This would always be the responsibility of the individual participating pilot.

I believe lethal firearms are significantly more desirable over non-lethal weapons. They provide much more deterrent in the event of multiple hijackers onboard a single aircraft. They are simple to use and most pilots are already familiar with their design and use. An individual can practice with a firearm whenever he/she chooses to maintain proficiency and become more familiar and competent with a firearm; most non-lethal weapons do not allow for this type of repetitive training.

In summary, lethal weapons in the cockpit provide a definite deterrent to persons attempting to hijack a commercial aircraft.