

Federal Flight Deck Officer Program

The Federal Flight Deck Officer (FFDO) program continues to provide a critical layer of defense in protecting airline flight decks from hostile takeover and, thereby, helps ensure the survival of the aviation industry.

Since its inception in 2003, the FFDO program has been tremendously successful, primarily due to an excellent basic training curriculum and the quality of the pilots who comprise its ranks. Unfortunately, as we reported last year, the program still suffers from a lack of resources and management structure.

Today, many thousands of FFDOs protect the flight decks of our nation's airliners and defend more than 100,000 flight segments per month, at very minimal cost to the US government and the American taxpayer. Nearly seven years have passed since the program's inception, yet the Federal Air Marshal Service (FAMS), which administers the program, is depending upon the same annual budget that was appropriated when the program was first instituted with only 43 FFDOs. This funding is inadequate to accommodate the selection and training of new FFDOs and the continued support of the existing cadre. In effect, the program has reached critical mass, being unable to expand meaningfully and minimally sustained with insufficient human and financial resources.

Because funding has not increased commensurate with the growth of the program, significant deficiencies exist in the following areas:

- Appropriately sized and organized managerial structure
- Internal program communications
- Regular provision of guidance and threat information to FFDOs
- Reimbursement of out-of-pocket training expenses

In order for the FFDO program to thrive and maintain its record of reliability and success in accomplishing its mission, these critical, core needs must be resolved. ALPA is determined to remain focused on these issues in 2010 and encourages the Administration and Congress to do all that it can to properly support this extremely valuable program.

1/28/10