

AIRLINE PILOTS SECURITY ALLIANCE

ONE PARK LANE, SUITE 412
BOSTON, MA 02210

www.Secure-Skies.org

PRESS RELEASE

RELEASE DATE: MARCH 27, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Blame Shifts to TSA in Pilot's Gun Mishap

Airline pilots and federal flight deck officers (FFDO) say ill-conceived TSA weapons handling rules were to blame for the accidental discharge of a pilot's firearm in the cockpit of a US Airways jet last weekend.

Federal officers familiar with the investigation say they repeatedly warned TSA officials that an unprecedented TSA requirement that pilots take off and lock up their guns before leaving the cockpit is manifestly unsafe and would result in accidents.

"The pilot was trying to lock his gun and remove the holster in an airplane going 300 miles per hour in preparation for landing and the padlock depressed the trigger," said a federal flight deck officer who declined to be identified. "TSA knew this could happen but didn't get rid of the requirement."

A special working group within the Federal Air Marshal Service recommended TSA adopt standard federal weapons carriage rules for flight officers last year to prevent accidents. But, TSA officials declined to implement the group's recommendation.

"Every other federal law enforcement officer in the air and on the ground carries his gun concealed on his person where he can control it. And he never touches it except in an emergency, because the less it is handled, the better," said David Mackett, president of the Airline Pilots Security Alliance. "TSA's got these pilots taking off and putting on their guns 10 times a day. It's a recipe for disaster and that's why no other agency does it."

Mackett says TSA's unilateral policy that pilots' guns be carried 'off-body', has resulted in numerous guns being lost or stolen, and now in an accident. "We have to have the FFDO program since screeners miss so many weapons at checkpoints and air marshals will never protect more than 1 or 2% of flights. But, TSA can't continuously ignore standard procedures proven over thousands of other law enforcement officers and then blame the pilot when it goes wrong."

"We said, 'Just use the same procedures you use for your own air marshals,'" said one federal flight officer. "How hard is that to understand? It's long past time Congress took a hard look at the way this program is being run."

The Airline Pilots Security Alliance was formed in the wake of 9/11 to provide unbiased, nonpartisan expert guidance and information to policymakers and the public on aviation security issues, and has since become a leading voice in this arena. Our all-volunteer organization, representing thousands of pilots from every major U.S. airline, has been instrumental in crafting several key pieces of aviation security legislation. Our expertise has been called upon by personnel at the Federal Aviation Administration and the Departments of Transportation and Justice. We have also briefed numerous members of Congress and their staff on important aviation security matters. While many other organizations and entities have articulated positions on these matters, APSA remains unique in its independence and single-issue focus.

CONTACT: AIRLINE PILOTS SECURITY ALLIANCE
615-479-4140
david.Mackett@secure-skies.org