

Coalition of Airline Pilots Associations



Cargo Screening for “All-Cargo” Aircraft

Background: The Coalition of Airline Pilots Associations (CAPA) which represents over 28,000 pilots at both passenger and all-cargo carriers is calling for improved screening of cargo carried aboard all-cargo commercial flights. CAPA has long advocated for “one level of security” for all commercial flights, emphasizing the necessity for inclusion of screening of “foreign” cargo as well as developing much needed parallel security screening programs for the “all-cargo” arena. The fact remains that aviation is still at the top of Al Qaeda’s terror target list.

On October 29, 2010, an all-cargo carrier narrowly avoided a potentially devastating detonation of an Improved Explosive Device (IED) onboard an all-cargo jet. Two known bombs were found; one in a toner cartridge which was timed to detonate over the United States. Fourteen other packages that originated in Yemen were tracked as suspected bombs. Two confirmed bombs contained the same explosives used in the attempted “Christmas Bombing” nearly two years ago. CAPA’s concerns are confirmed by these attempts, and reinforce the requirement for the same level of cargo security for all commercial flights; a multi-layered approach is necessary.

In August of 2007, the Coalition of Airline Pilots Associations (CAPA) played a significant role with Congressman Ed Markey by drafting and making recommendations to the resultant language “Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007” which mandates 50% screening of all passenger cargo by Feb 2009 and 100% by Aug 2010. At the same time, specific language sought to include all-cargo aircraft as part of this mandate, however, the cargo carriers fought this requirement and it was subsequently removed.

In the aftermath of the Yemen terrorist plot of October 29th, 2010, the lack of comprehensive screening of cargo carried on “all-cargo” aircraft continues to leave a gaping hole in our aviation security system putting pilots, cargo, and people on the ground at risk.

While the TSA has met the new requirement of 100% screening of cargo transported on narrow-body “passenger-only” aircraft, it falls short in the air cargo supply chain. CAPA continues to warn of our concerns that TSA policies and protocols focus primarily on “passenger-only cargo” and fall short of addressing the total threat, leaving significant gaps in aviation cargo security.

Primary Considerations:

- Cargo security procedures are still fraught with program weaknesses which must be addressed.
- All-cargo screening remains unaddressed.

CAPA Recommendations/Solutions:

- A multi-layered approach to cargo screening that includes increased physical screening of cargo and random physical inspections of cargo for all-cargo carriers, as opposed to screening based on the “known shipper” program.
- Increased deployment of canine units and random neutron scanning at all-cargo facilities.
- Increased funding for research and development for future screening technologies.