

# Coalition of Airline Pilots Associations



## Federal Flight Deck Officer (FFDO) Program

**Background:** The inception of the Federal Flight Deck Officer (FFDO) Program in 2001, as envisioned by the members of Congress, has been described as (and still remains) the *“First line of deterrence and the last line of Defense” against 9/11-style terrorist attacks; for the benefit of the American people.* The fact remains that aviation is still at the top of Al Qaeda’s terror target list.

Following the terrorist attacks of “9/11”, the Federal Flight Deck Officer (FFDO) program was developed, and is recognized as a necessary component and “critical layer of security in our nation’s “National Security Program” - *to protect the flying public, our aircraft, and our country.* The program initially began with arming pilots of passenger carriers and was subsequently extended to all-cargo carriers. In 2002, Arming Pilots Against Terrorism Act of 2002 (APATA) called for the program to operate at “no cost to the pilot or airline”, however, the TSA interpreted APATA’s language to mean they will only pay for the direct cost of the training course and for the cost of the weapon; all other costs would be borne by the FFDO. When the program began in 2002, the entire budget was directed toward the initial training of FFDOs. The initial budget for the program was set at \$25 million dollars. However, nearly \$3 million of that budget is dedicated to the Crewmember Self-Defense Training (CMSDT) program; leaving only \$22 million dollars for the FFDO Program.

The \$22 million dollar budget for the FFDO program has not changed since 2002 which has severely limited the deterrent value of the program. The unintended consequence of the stagnant budget has been a capping of the number of FFDOs in the program. FFDOs must go through requalification training every five years, so after the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the program, more and more of the \$22 million dollar budget went to the requalification of FFDOs versus the initial training of FFDOs. This year (2011), the program stopped all “initial training” for FFDOs due to lack of funding.

While the FFDO budget has remained at \$22 million dollars since the programs’ inception, the FAMS budget has grown from \$626 million dollars to over \$860 million dollars. Moreover, in 2010 the FAMS budget request is an additional \$50 million dollar increase.

The FFDO program has been extremely successful, although it has come at a significant expense to the individual FFDO. One of the greatest items to impact the number of volunteers is the **cost of the program** to the individual FFDO. The actual cost of initial training personally incurred by the

volunteer FFDO can exceed \$4,000.00; recurrent training is approximately \$3,500.00. Over a 6-year period, these training expenses incurred by the FFDO are well over \$10,000. Initial training requires FFDO candidates to set aside 8 days, and recurrent training (required before end of 5th year) requires another 4 days. FFDOs are also required to spend one day each 6 months to re-qualify. “Trip loss” for the days spent in training is also at the expense of the FFDO. (Pilots are only paid when the wheels of the airplane are moving: on the ground or tucked into the belly of the aircraft). Carriers do not acknowledge any requirement to provide time off, which leaves the entire burden on the individual FFDO. Despite the large expense to the FFDO, we’re not asking for any money for the FFDOs, we’re asking for funding to increase the size of the program.

The pilots involved in the FFDO program are dedicated individuals that believe in the program and in the value of that their service provides to the security of the flying public, our nation, and to a vital aviation system.

### **Primary Considerations:**

- Current budget is being used to maintain and re-qualify for existing FFDOs; without a budget increase there will not be enough funding to permit initial training of FFDOs.
- The unintended consequence of the stagnant budget has been a capping of the number of FFDOs in the program.
- *The FFDO Program is an excellent low-cost layer of security and is a critical component of our National Security Program.*
- FFDOs are considered an asset for any level threat – whether in the cockpit or cabin.

**CAPA Recommendations/Solutions:** While we support the doubling of the budget over a five-year period to merely \$44 million dollars, we understand budget constraints. At a minimum, direct funding for the FFDO program to restart initial training and grow the program at a modest rate should be provided; with no new entrants to the program we actually decrease the number of FFDOs due to retirements.

*A reasonable and realistic budget increase, tied to the expected growth of the program,* would help to achieve what Congress originally anticipated; a “2-year goal” that has not been met nearly 10 years later.

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