



*A bold voice for transportation workers*

## **SELF DEFENSE AND SECURITY TRAINING FOR FLIGHT AND CABIN CREW**

In an era of unprecedented instances of violent and unruly passengers, alongside the evergreen threat of terrorism and other dangers in the skies, it is clearer than ever that flight attendants and pilots must be given the necessary tools to best protect both themselves and the traveling public. In order to address both the current spike in violence as well as unacceptable and dangerous behavior that has existed since long before the pandemic, Congress must take action.

The 2003 FAA Reauthorization Act required passenger air carriers to create basic security training programs for flight and cabin crew members to prepare them for potential threat conditions on board an aircraft. The bill also created a new advanced self-defense training program under the Transportation Security Administration. While the bill initially made this training mandatory for cabin crew members, regrettably, at the last moment that requirement was diluted to instead be optional. Further, current law does not require airlines to foot the bill for such training for employees, potentially and illogically placing the burden on the shoulders of an individual instead of a carrier.

The current climate on board aircraft demonstrates that this was the wrong choice, and employees and the traveling public have suffered as a result. Continued reliance on a voluntary program for flight attendants, or gentle encouragement to air carriers to utilize these trainings, as Congress did in the 2018 FAA Reauthorization, is simply inadequate.

We call on Congress to right this wrong, and swiftly enact legislation that would make advanced self-defense training mandatory for all cabin crew members. In doing so, Congress should update the current curriculum requirements of the self-defense program to best reflect current security threats and conditions, particularly those presented by unruly passengers. Additionally, regardless of whether the employee is required to participate as a cabin crew member, or participates voluntarily as a flight crew member, no individual should be required to pay costs associated with the program, and they should be compensated for the time they spend training.

Congress should also address a key flaw within the basic security training requirements, which today only apply to scheduled passenger air transportation, and not to all-cargo operations. As such, the key security training and guidance found in TSA's "Common Strategy" document is not given to all-cargo employees on a mandatory basis. This dissimilarity is representative of a continued misunderstanding of the nature of all-cargo operations and the potential presence of threats aboard an aircraft in cargo operations, such as those presented by the carriage of supernumerary passengers.

Efforts to address threats must also be inclusive of rectifying this security gap, and making mandatory the application of the basic security training program to all-cargo operations, including access to relevant TSA-issued security directives. This will allow these crews to better

secure themselves and their aircraft against threats, as well to respond cooperatively in the event of an on board incident while traveling aboard passenger aircraft.

The events of the past two years have exposed what we've known for years — that security and self-defense training for the cabin and air crew tasked with keeping aircraft, passengers, and themselves safe in the sky is lacking. We call on Congress to address these notable shortfalls in existing law, and act to improve security conditions on board.

**Policy Statement No. S22-08**  
**Adopted April 4, 2022**