



Robert MacLean <rjmaclean@gmail.com>

Flight deck cable steel barriers

Robert MacLEAN <rjmaclean@gmail.com>
To: Rhonda Schwartz <Rhonda.Schwartz@abc.com>

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Rhonda,

Here is an article about the steel cable barrier that told you about. This is really a GREAT device. I was amazed when I first saw them. Put a shotgun in the flight deck, Kevlar in the wall and install these barriers and you won't need FAMs on the planes.

Airline is adding to cockpit security

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/technology/chi-0409010159sep01,1,6776422.story?coll=chi-techtopheds-hed>

United installs steel barriers

By Jon Hilkevitch
Tribune transportation reporter
Published September 1, 2004

United Airlines said Tuesday it is installing steel barriers that can be quickly fastened across front aisles of planes to protect pilots from attacks when the cockpit door is opened during flight.

The voluntary security move, the first by a U.S. airline, goes beyond the reinforced cockpit doors mandated by the Federal Aviation Administration after the suicide-hijackings of four airliners by terrorists on Sept. 11, 2001, authorities said.

"We've always been intent on taking security an extra step with a secondary barrier to prevent unauthorized access to the cockpit and protect passengers and crew members from potential harm," United spokesman Jeff Green said.

Terrorists commandeered two United planes in the Sept. 11 attacks, crashing one into the south tower of the World Trade Center in New York. The second plowed into a field near Shanksville, Pa., as passengers tried to prevent the hijackers from flying into a target thought to be the White House or U.S. Capitol.

The security barrier, which Green said looks somewhat like a child gate used in a home, is made of steel cables and extends from the aircraft's floor almost to the ceiling. The devices can be slid into a locking position to wall off the galley, forward lavatory and cockpit.

The airline has received FAA approval to mount the barriers, starting with United's Boeing 757 fleet, officials said.

Airline and federal security officials declined to say whether United's decision to build the double-protection system was linked to recent reports from some flight crews at several airlines about suspicious behavior among passengers.

Some individuals reportedly have made aggressive moves toward the cockpit area or disobeyed orders from flight attendants to return to their seats--situations that the crews interpreted as possible tests by terrorists of on-board security. In some cases, the passengers attempted to flush out any undercover federal air marshals on the flights, according to the Air Line Pilots Association.

The strengthened cockpit doors ordered by the FAA are bulletproof and designed to withstand a hand grenade exploding. But the flight deck still becomes vulnerable when the cockpit door is opened while pilots use the lavatory or receive meals.

Since Sept. 11 all airlines have instructed flight attendants to coordinate communication with the pilots and block access

to the cockpit with beverage carts when the cockpit door is open. But the carts would have limited ability to slow down hijackers, officials said. In addition, unsecured carts pose a danger if they are bounced around by turbulence.

FAA officials said the steel barriers, while an improvement over the carts, are not impenetrable.

"The secondary barriers are a visual restraint as well as a physical one," FAA spokeswoman Diane Spitaliere said.

The barriers would delay an intruder from getting beyond the galley and into the cockpit, said Amy von Walter, a spokeswoman for the Transportation Security Administration. In tests at United's engineering base in San Francisco, the cables withstood the force of beverage carts rammed into the barrier.

Israel's El Al Airlines and some European air carriers have installed bulkheads containing walls at the front of aircraft that completely separate the pilots from the passenger cabin. Pilots enter and exit the aircraft by separate doors. But retrofitting would be extremely expensive to carry out on more than 6,500 planes in the U.S. airlines' fleets.

United declined to say how much the barrier system is costing to install on its 500 aircraft.

Green said United has installed the barriers on 25 of its 757s and plans to finish the 757 fleet of 97 planes in October. He said the rest of United's aircraft will be outfitted with the barriers over the next year.

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Robert MacLEAN

Email: RJMACLEAN@GMAIL.COM

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