

Rep. Fitzpatrick Testimony

I'd like to begin by thanking both Chairman Thornberry and Ranking Member Smith for allowing me the opportunity to be here today.

With the continued threat of terrorism to the homeland, each of us only has to remember back to the attacks of 9/11 to comprehend the devastation caused when our nation's airliners are turned into weapons.

That is why, I am asking for the House Armed Services Committee's help in protecting our skies from terror hijackings by requiring any aircraft that participate in the Department of Defense Civil Reserve Air Fleet program to secure their cockpits by installing secondary barrier doors

These secondary barriers are light, inexpensive wire gates that protect the flight deck while the cockpit door is open. While it is true that cockpit doors have been strengthened in light of terrorist attacks, the preventative measure only works when it is closed – what happens when a pilot needs to open the door to eat or use the restroom during the course of the flight? This lapse in security can provide an attacker just enough time to strike and take control of the plane. In fact, a video has surfaced online that shows it takes only two seconds for a terrorist to breach the cockpit once the door is opened under current protocol.

The recent Germanwings tragedy shows us the danger when someone with bad intentions is able to lock themselves behind the reinforced door. Unlike the heroic efforts of the passengers of United 93 that crashed in my home state of Pennsylvania on September 11th, there is almost nothing the passengers can do to retake the aircraft in this very real scenario.

As a Congress, we are tasked with many responsibilities – chief among them, the protection of our constituents and our country. We can no longer ignore this obvious hole in our anti-terror measures. This Congress must act now, in any method possible, to address this shortcoming.

If there is one thing Al Qaeda or ISIS seeks, it is a high profile attack that is cheap for them to execute. And right now, for the cost of one trained extremist, and a first class ticket, Al Qaeda or ISIS can turn our aircraft into a weapon once again.

This is our reality:

- Earlier this year, ISIS sympathizers were arrested by law enforcement in New York City and found to have had plans to hijack an aircraft. ¹
- Last month, a passenger on a United Airlines flight rushed the cockpit.
- 3 weeks ago, the whole world was tragically shown the heart-wrenching consequences of this danger when someone locked the pilot out of the cockpit and deliberately crashed Germanwings Flight 9525

¹ <http://www.cnn.com/2015/02/25/us/new-york-terror-plot/>

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As pilots will tell you, this isn't a hard fix. A 2013 study found that secondary barriers are "very cost-effective," require little maintenance, and "reduce risk...at a modest cost."

Pilots, flight attendants, and federal law enforcement have been making the case to have these doors on every aircraft. Last Congress, 60 members of the House and 10 Senators joined our effort understanding that the mandate of the 9/11 Commission to protect the cockpit will only be realized when every passenger aircraft in the country is secured with these cost-effective barriers. Nearly One Third of the 38 cosponsors on my bill, H.R. 911, that adds secondary barriers to every single aircraft in the country, are members of the Armed Services Committee.

My ask today is much more tailored. The NDAA is one way Congress can work to at least eliminate this glaring vulnerability that is putting our troops at risk. We must guarantee that any aircraft that transports our brave men and women in uniform is never turned into a weapon, and our troops into helpless victims.

Here's how we can fix this. As you know, the Department of Defense, in partnership with the U.S. airline industry, operates the Civil Reserve Air Fleet, or CRAF.² In exchange for the air carriers committing a limited number of aircraft to this program, the airlines receive the opportunity to do business with DOD. In fact, a Government Accountability Office report shows that the airline industry has received over \$30 billion in business since 2001 through the CRAF program.

Only about 350 aircraft would be effected by this requirement.³ But those are the 350 aircraft that transport some of our most precious cargo—our troops.

The warnings and the threats are clear. In 2013, outgoing FBI Director Robert Mueller said the terror scenario he fears most remains an attack on an aircraft.⁴ Our nation's first Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge was just on Fox News talking secondary barriers as a way we can secure the cockpit when that reinforced door is opened.⁵

We cannot ignore all these warnings. I ask for your help now to begin this process through the NDAA. Let's put these cost-effective security measures on any aircraft that transports our men and women in uniform.

I appreciate the opportunity to address the committee and I would be happy to answer your questions.

² <http://www.amc.af.mil/library/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=234>

³ https://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/apl/aviation_forecasts/aerospace_forecasts/2014-2034/media/2014_FAA_Aerospace_Forecast.pdf

⁴ <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/08/22/mueller-fbi-doomsday-aircraft-attack/2685025/>

⁵ <http://video.foxnews.com/v/4138927414001/tom-ridge-on-critic-slamming-move-to-reinforce-cockpit-doors/?#sp=show-clips>