

Robert Hesselbein

Robert "Bob" Hesselbein is a lifelong professional pilot and recognized administrator, aviation safety and security expert. He flew throughout the world for Northwest and Delta Air Lines piloting Boeing, Airbus and McDonnell-Douglas aircraft. He is a career military pilot, a highly-decorated combat veteran, a trained safety/accident investigator focused on human factors, and a graduate of the prestigious United States Air Force Weapons Instructor School.

Hesselbein served in many positions of responsibility both inside and outside the flightdeck. At the age of nineteen he began his flying career as a U.S. Army helicopter gunship pilot flying the AH-1G attack helicopter during combat operations in Vietnam and Cambodia. He then transitioned to the United States Air Force (USAF), and later the Wisconsin Air National Guard, flying A-10 and F-16 jet fighters until his retirement as a lieutenant colonel in 2000.

In 1983 he attended the USAF Flight Safety Officer Course. Following graduation, he specialized in human factors research involving perceptual errors and response, and in 1985 his work led to significant revisions in flight training procedures throughout the United States Air Force. Additionally, he designed a solution to a flight control loss phenomena causing fatal accidents in two-seat F-16 fighters. His solution was employed worldwide.

In 1986 Captain Hesselbein began a dual career flying passengers and cargo for Northwest Air Lines and military fighters for the Wisconsin Air National Guard. He also became actively involved sharing his safety expertise as a member of the Air Line Pilots Association, International (ALPA).

Following the tragedy of September 11, 2001, he was selected to chair the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) National Security Committee in Washington, DC (2004-2008). As the NSC Chairman, Captain Hesselbein provided oversight of all committee activities ranging from airport security to flight deck defense, participated in government and industry meetings, and made presentations to the public and media, world-wide, to represent the security interests of 62,000 airline pilots in North America, their crewmembers, passengers and cargo.

Captain Hesselbein possesses an extensive background in aviation security. He performed airborne counter-drug surveillance duties in support of diverse law enforcement agencies, researched and created the current standard airline crewmember procedures guide for countering inflight Chemical/Biological/Nuclear/Radiological threats, and continues to provide a pilot-based security perspective to government entities and the aerospace industry through his liaison, writing and public speaking venues.

Retired from Delta Air Lines and living in the Madison, WI area, he served on the Middleton Cross-Plains Area School District Board of Education, and continues to fly, write, and serve as a pilot for AIR-ONE, a volunteer law enforcement aviation coalition flying helicopters in Illinois and Wisconsin.

A veteran with thirty years of combined military service, he continues to participate in military legacy activities. He is a former Vietnam Helicopter Pilot Association (VHPA) President, serves on the Wisconsin 2nd Congressional District Service School Selection Board, is a docent and presenter specializing in the Vietnam War at the Wisconsin State Veterans Museum. Providing military education tours at Civil War National Military Parks, he is a member of the Order of Daedalians, Red River Valley Fighter Pilots Association, Air Force Association and Veterans of Foreign Wars.

He is married to Wisconsin State Representative Dianne Hesselbein (79th District). They and their three children reside in Middleton, Wisconsin.