

AIRLINE PILOTS SECURITY ALLIANCE

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PRESS RELEASE

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Pilots say Air Marshal Director Choice Critical to Airline Security

WASHINGTON – The Airline Pilots Security Alliance (APSA) says aviation security is at a critical juncture and the individual the Bush Administration selects to oversee the Federal Air Marshal Service (FAMS) will “make or break” the nation’s ability to protect itself from new 9/11’s.

The Administration will appoint a new FAMS Director this month to replace outgoing Director Thomas D. Quinn. Quinn was widely criticized for alienating air marshals and Federal Flight Deck Officers (FFDO) by compromising the marshals’ cover with a formal dress code, and for lobbying against a bipartisan security bill designed to improve the FFDO Program.

“The type of individual this position needs is an experienced law enforcement officer with years in the field – not a bureaucrat,” says Captain David Mackett, APSA President, and a commercial airline pilot. “The Administration has an opportunity here, to dramatically improve the safety of the flying public by appointing a frontline officer who has been in the trenches in both undercover law enforcement and aviation security operations. We are hopeful the Administration will choose a Director who will energetically work with FFDOs and air marshals to cooperatively address the urgent terror threat to commercial aviation. The wrong choice could perpetuate the bureaucracy that has hamstrung airline security in the past.”

“We must have a last line of defense against terrorists aboard our airliners,” says Captain Robert Sproc, APSA Vice President. “Every other layer of aviation security has failed repeatedly, even as Al Qaeda promises new attacks on the U.S. are being planned. We simply cannot wait any longer to give the federal officers who protect our flights the tools and leadership they need to be responsive to the security of the American people.”

APSA says it is possible to dramatically lower security costs, improve efficiency and reduce intrusive passenger searches to get passengers on their way quickly and safely by improving other elements of airline security like airborne protection.

“We could have airline security that is almost impenetrable and much more convenient to the public, for one-tenth of what we’re spending,” says Mackett. “It’s a win-win. But we’ve got to have experienced professionals leading from the front.” ###

APSA is an aviation security working group, formed by airline pilots from every major airline in the U.S., after September 11, 2001. APSA’s thousands of members work to shape public opinion and policy by educating other pilots and the general public and working with federal officials and policy makers. APSA was the core consultant on three major pieces of aviation security legislation and has briefed numerous White House, DOT, DOJ, FAA and Congressional officials.

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