



DOT urged to fully enforce bill on secondary cockpit barriers

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Thu, 2019-02-21 11:00

Two US senators have called on the Department of Transportation (DOT) to fully enforce a law designed to thwart potential hijackings aboard commercial aircraft, arguing that airlines have deliberately misinterpreted the law to avoid the new requirements.

The Saracini Aviation Act was a provision in last year's [FAA Reauthorization Bill](#) that mandated the installation of secondary cockpit barriers on all new aircraft manufactured for delivery to regularly scheduled commercial carriers operating in the US.

The secondary barriers—lightweight wire-mesh gates placed between the passenger cabin and cockpit door—would block access to the flight deck whenever the cockpit door is opened during flight.

In a joint letter to US Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, Sens. Bob Casey (D-Pennsylvania) and Pat Toomey (R-Pennsylvania) said airlines have misconstrued the law by arguing that it only applies to new “models” of aircraft that require a new type certificate.

However, Casey said on his website, “The legislation specifically applies to all new aircraft for commercial passenger air carriers in the United States, not just new types, or models, of aircraft.” Such an interpretation “falls well outside the letter of the law and the intent of Congress,” the letter stated.

“Had our goal been to change the certification requirements to apply to each type of new aircraft, the language would have specifically stated new type certificated aircraft,” the senators wrote. “Instead, the Senate and the House chose this language, which clearly expresses Congress’ requirement that physically installed secondary barriers exist on all newly manufactured aircraft delivered to part 121 passenger air carriers [not just new types, or models, of aircraft].”

The senators said the “same groups that opposed inclusion” of the provision into the FAA bill are now trying to restrict application of the law as intended by Congress, adding that lawmakers had considered these arguments during debate on the bill and rejected them. The lawmakers did not single out any non-compliant airlines by name.

“The US fleet is in need of secondary barriers, which have been shown to significantly decrease the threat of a hostile takeover of the cockpit. Claiming Congress meant to express anything other than newly manufactured aircraft is inaccurate,” they said.

In addition to the law, which only requires installation of secondary cockpit barriers on newly delivered aircraft, a group of lawmakers earlier this month introduced legislation that would [require all commercial aircraft](#) operating in the US be retrofitted with the barriers.

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