

MISGUIDED REASON #1: Guns can cause a massive depressurization in a plane.

One objection that Congressmen have given for not wanting to arm pilots is the supposed idea that a bullet hole in an airplane's hull can cause catastrophic depressurization or cause the ship to crash.

However, writer David Kopel (along with author and pilot, Captain David Petteys) notes that the risks related to the hull being punctured are greatly exaggerated. In a recent [National Review Online article](#)

dated September 16, they state, "There is only one known instance in which a bullet hole in an aircraft frame yanked objects across the plane, expanded, and sucked a person out into the sky. That was the James Bond movie *Goldfinger*

. The movie was not intended to teach real-life lessons about physics."

In a [follow-up article](#) , Dave Kopel notes that "the risk of a stray bullet creating a decompression that could cause a crash, which I'd reported to be virtually nil, is apparently even less than that. Retired Air Force General James Chambers points out that the Air Force has plenty of pressurized planes, such as AWACS, which are able to sustain penetration/damage from bullets from enemy fighter jet machine guns. The General said that the worst case would simply require a plane flying at an altitude of about 30,000 feet to hurry down to lower altitudes. If the plane were above 30,000 feet, there would probably be enough breathable air for the pilots to maintain consciousness, even without the air masks."

Aircraft engineers have likewise downplayed the ability of a few bullets to depressurize a plane.

"First of all, there already is a 'hole' in the aircraft, for regulating the cabin pressure," says Dan Todd, a licensed aircraft engineer for 20 years. "It's called the outflow valve. It modulates to maintain desired cabin pressure, in response to signals from a cabin pressure controller, which responds to inputs from a selector panel in the cockpit, all automatic when it's all working normally.

"There's also always pressurized cabin air leaking out past door seals and a few other places," Todd says. "Remember, the airplane is pressurized by a constant flow of compressed air into the cabin from the engines (via the pneumatic systems and the air conditioning systems).

"If one round, or two or three for that matter pierce the skin [of a plane], it's not necessarily catastrophic." Todd says that in such a case, "air will go whistling out the hole, and the outflow valve will close a little further to maintain the desired cabin pressure."

Go to <https://www.keepandbeararms.com/information/XclBViewItem.asp?ID=2474> to see Todd's full letter, including other points dispelling myths relating to guns and planes.

Having said all of the above, any argument against pilots carrying guns would also apply to Federal Air Marshals. But the fact is, pre-fragmented ammo can minimize the supposed risks of a bullet puncturing a plane's hull.

Pre-fragmented ammunition, such as Glaser safety slugs, expand upon impact and will usually fail to penetrate even wood doors. This kind of ammo also tends to have greater stopping power. At the same time, errant rounds are less likely to puncture surrounding walls (or airplane hulls). **MISGUIDED REASON #2: Dealing with terrorists is not the pilots' fight.**

Another objection to allowing guns in the cockpit runs like this: "This is not the pilot's fight. They should not have to worry about fighting the battles, but rather, should be concerned only with flying the plane."

For beginners, one should note this objection ignores the obvious: a pilot can't fly the plane if he's got a knife to his throat. But the objection misses the mark because no one is necessarily saying the pilots have to "lead the charge" in disarming a hijacker or terrorist. Allowing pilots to have arms is simply a common sense approach to making sure the hijacker or terrorist does not gain control of the plane.

No matter what Congress says, pilots are going to arm themselves somehow. Shouldn't they have firearms for this purpose? As a result of the September 11 skyjackings, pilots are now resorting to extreme measures to defend themselves. Brad Rohdenburg, an American Airlines captain from Meredith, NH, says he has spoken with other pilots "who have sharpened their belt buckles, screwdrivers, pens, etc., so that they might have a prayer of defending their \$30 million jets from guys with boxcutters."¹

That's pathetic. In the freest nation on earth, we have private citizens who must resort to sharpening their belt buckles to defend themselves! Congress and the FAA should stop forcing pilots to resort to such weak methods of self-defense. If not, then our nation must be prepared for more planes being used as human missiles. **MISGUIDED REASON #3: Making airplane cockpits impenetrable is enough to ensure the safety of pilots.**

One idea which supposedly relieves pilots of any need to have guns is the notion that a reinforced door will be good enough to keep bad guys out of the cockpits. Actually, this is not a bad idea, per se. But no one should think this idea is a panacea. There are too many problems with this idea to rely upon it as a "silver bullet" solution.

First, one should note that the Senate's version of the Aviation Security Act recognizes the impossibility of complete impenetrability when it calls for the "strengthening" of the doors, but not that they be made "impenetrable."

Are we to assume that on a long trip the door will NEVER be opened? That pilots will NEVER take a bathroom break? That there is no one among the flight crew who will ever have the keys or security codes to open the door?

The answers to each of these questions suggest a potential problem. Make no mistake, securing the cockpit door would be a valuable tool. But that option is quite expensive, and it will not happen overnight.

Further complicating matters, Boeing has stated that there are safety concerns related to securing the cockpit door. On September 28, the *New York Times* noted that, "The door issue is complicated because sealing the cockpit from the cabin can cause safety problems. In case of explosive decompression on a Boeing 767, a one-pound per square inch difference between the pressure in the cockpit and the cabin would put 6,000 pounds of pressure on the cockpit floor, which might rupture and damage cables needed to fly the plane, Boeing said."

Again, securing the cockpit door can be a valuable tool in the fight against terrorism -- even after weighing the pros and cons. But it hardly negates the need to allow guns in planes for self-defense. **MISGUIDED REASON #4: Only qualified sky marshals should be allowed to carry guns on planes.**

An idea which the Bush administration supports is placing sky marshals -- or Federal Air Marshals -- on commercial flights. Like the previous option, this one is not a bad idea, per se. But again, there are tremendous problems if our country hopes to rely on this solution as an answer to any potential terrorist threats.

For starters, there are too many flights and too few marshals. According to Dr. John Lott, formerly a senior research scholar at Yale University, there are currently only about three dozen marshals to cover 35,000 flights -- the number of daily flights that were occurring before the September 11 tragedy.

It's going to take some time to train the extra 34,000-plus marshals to cover all those flights. But of course, one must wonder if we really want to pay the price for manning every flight.

"Can you imagine the cost of putting marshals on every U.S. flight?" asks Dr. Chuck Baldwin in a *WorldNetDaily.com* commentary. "Allowing pilots, co-pilots, navigators, even stewardesses to carry firearms on board U.S. flights would cost taxpayers nothing and would be just as effective, if not more so."

Rebuttals To Those Who Think Pilots Should Not Be Armed - Gun Owners of America

Written by Gun Owners

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So why do some people insist that only "professionals," such as sky marshals, should be armed on planes? Dr. Baldwin offers a possible solution.

The reason the pilots' request is being denied should be obvious: Pilots are private citizens -- they do not work for the federal government. The accepted Washington mantra these days is that private citizens cannot be allowed to defend themselves -- they must be dependent upon the federal government for their security....

A true pro-freedom government would encourage personal gun possession by law-abiding citizens (adults), including pizza delivery persons, bank tellers, retail clerks, stockbrokers, and schoolteachers. Anyone qualified to carry a concealed weapon should be given liberty to do so, virtually anywhere in America.

In each of the hijacked airplanes on September 11, there were between three and five terrorists. Imagine what would have happened if 10 or 15 of the plane's passengers, along with the crew, had been carrying their own weapons. In all likelihood, the WTC towers would still be standing, thousands of victims would still be alive, our freedoms would still be intact and the federal bureaucracy would not be proliferating like ugly on a wart hog's face.²

Likewise, an article in *USA Today* (9/25/2001) reports that retired United Airlines pilot David Linsley not only favors the arming of pilots, he also believes passengers should be allowed to bring guns on board. Says Linsley: "Nobody will go into the cockpit facing three [or more] guns."

If our government were to follow the Constitution, it would follow Captain Linsley's advice. Congress should not get into the business of deciding what areas should be weapons free zones. Carrying a firearm is an individual decision. And private businesses should likewise be free to decide if their patrons can carry in their establishments.

Why shouldn't the airlines be free to decide if passengers can carry on their flights? Citizens used to be able to carry their firearms onto planes along with their other carry-on items roughly 50 years ago. Yes, some airlines might ban firearms on their flights; other airlines might allow them. Based on this, individual passengers would decide which airlines they want to fly.

The Brady Bunch crowd would, most likely, feel more comfortable on airlines that ban firearms. Pro-freedom Americans would choose to fly with an airline that allows the carrying of firearms. We'll see which airline has fewer incidents of thugs, hijackers and terrorists invading their planes.

The argument that says pilots and others can't be trusted to have a firearm in the sky is exactly similar to the argument we hear about gun owners on the ground. Gun haters NEVER think that private citizens should have guns. They always say that we should leave guns in the hands of professionals only. So why should we be surprised when they shift their argument from the ground to the sky?

Unfortunately, some advocates only favor arming pilots after they have been trained. But how much training does it take to, basically, shoot fish in a barrel? Pilots will only need to shoot those people who try to crash through the door or blow it off.

Many pilots are former military and have received training anyway. Not that "training" is absolutely necessary to defend one's life. Yes, training is a good thing, but thousands of untrained people use guns in self-defense every day.

By the way, for those legislators who will only support guns in the hands of sky marshals, they should know what the *Sierra Times* is reporting. As stated by Michael Parker in his September 27 column:

The FAA readily admits that putting an air marshal on every flight is an impossibility. Believe it or not, the federal government is now accepting applications for air marshal positions, with preference given to disabled persons. Yes, I said "disabled persons," and no, that is not a misprint. If you expect any government agency to protect you from terrorists, your faith is tragically misplaced.

MISGUIDED REASON #5: An "innocent bystander" might get shot.

Similar to the previous objection, the notion that people should not have guns because an "innocent bystander might get shot" is a common refrain one regularly hears from the Brady Bunch. In fact, anytime a state passes a new concealed carry law, the gun haters cry that innocent people are going to be gunned down in the streets by friendly fire.

Of course, those baseless predictions have never materialized. Back in 1987, when Florida legislators were deciding whether to let citizens carry guns, opponents warned that doing so would turn the Sunshine State into the Gunshine State.

It was a cute jingle, but it was way off the mark. Their predictions never came true. Florida's murder rate, which was well above the national average before the law passed, fell 39% during the next 10 years.³

Accordingly, Dr. Lott has also shown the powerful benefits of concealed carry.

In 1996, Lott published a comprehensive national study that found violent crime fell after states made it legal to carry concealed firearms. Specifically, states which passed concealed carry gun laws reduced their rate of murder by 8.5%, rape by 5%, aggravated assault by 7% and robbery by 3%.⁴

This is good news. But, back to the original question: could an innocent person get shot if a good guy on a plane tries to defend the lives of others against a bad guy? Yes, of course, it could happen. That scenario can play out even if the good guy with the gun is a sky marshal. After all, cops shoot innocent bystanders. Soldiers are killed by friendly fire.

If the government wants to make sure that no "innocent bystander" is ever killed, then it should start by disarming its own government agents, because they are not immune from firing errant shots that kill innocent people.

As far as planes are concerned, however, once it becomes well publicized that pilots are

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packing heat on planes, it becomes even less likely that such a need to wield a firearm in self-defense will ever exist. Once terrorists know that their boxcutters will be no match against bullets, they will be forced to resort to another form of terrorizing the public -- no doubt, they will look for other gun free zones (such as schools?) to apply their trade.

This is the reason that concealed carry laws have helped cut the crime rates in the jurisdictions that have enacted such laws. This is the reason that in places like Israel, where citizens live with enemies all around them, they have one of the lowest murder rates in the world. Why? Because deterrence works.

Israeli citizens are frequently armed. Their government does not look at armed citizens as a problem, but as a solution. Whenever Palestinian terrorists have tried to gun down Israelis on a street corner, they have been met with a barrage of return fire. Now as a result, terrorists usually resort to detonating bombs, which do not require the villain to dodge return fire.

Consider just one such episode in 1984, when three terrorists opened fire with machine guns and hand grenades at a busy intersection in West Jerusalem. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, "One of the attackers was killed in a hail of answering fire from the owners and customers of nearby shops." The terrorist attack was met with gunfire from Israeli citizens, leaving one terrorist dead and another wounded. No Israelis were killed!

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Had that scene occurred in America, could we be sure that no Americans would have been killed?

Dave Kopel reports what happened after that attack in Jerusalem:

The next day, the surviving terrorists were presented to the media. They explained that they had planned to machine-gun a succession of crowded areas, fleeing before the police arrived. One terrorist complained indignantly that his bosses had not told him that Israeli citizens carry guns.⁶

How ironic, the only way these terrorist cells could get their thugs to commit these crimes was to lie to them (or withhold the truth) about Israeli citizens being armed. The obvious inference is that had the terrorists known Israelis were armed, they would not have attempted to spray bullets on a crowded street corner.

Deterrence works. As Dr. John Lott says, more guns do mean less crime. And guns in planes will serve as a deterrent to terrorists and like-minded thugs, who will be dissuaded from trying to hijack a plane. This, of course, means that no innocent bystanders will probably ever get shot.

At least that's the track record of Israel's El Al airlines. After a spate of hijackings many years ago, they started arming their pilots and stewards. The result? Passengers can fly without the fear of being hijacked, and innocent bystanders aren't getting shot.

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Let's introduce guns back onto planes -- and put them in the good guys' hands. It's an idea that works.

¹ Captain Brad Rohdenburg, *The Wall Street Journal*, September 21, 2001, cited in Jeffrey Tucker, "Airplanes and Property Protection," September 27, 2001 at <http://www.mises.org/fullarticle.asp?record=792&month=36> on the Ludwig von Mises Institute website.

² Dr. Chuck Baldwin, "Arm the pilots (and everyone else)," Worldnetdaily.com , October 1, 2001.

³ In the ten years following the passage of Florida's concealed carry law in 1987, there were nearly half a million people who received permits to carry firearms. [Memo by Sandra B. Mortham, Secretary of State, Florida Department of State, *Concealed Weapons/Firearms License Statistical Report* (10/1/87-12/31/97).] FBI reports show that the homicide rate in Florida fell 39% during that 10-year period, placing it about even with the national average. [Compare Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Crime in the United States," *Uniform Crime Reports* , (1988): 7, 53; and FBI, (1998):15, 77.]

⁴ One of the authors of the University of Chicago study reported on the study's findings in John R. Lott, Jr., "More Guns, Less Violent Crime," *The Wall Street Journal* (28 August 1996). See also John R. Lott, Jr. and David B. Mustard, "Crime, Deterrence, and Right-to-Carry Concealed Handguns," University of Chicago (15 August 1996); and Lott, *More Guns, Less Crime* (1998, 2000).

⁵ Norman Kempster, "3 Terrorists Wound 48 in Jerusalem," *Los Angeles Times*, April 3, 1984.

⁶ Clayton E. Cramer and David B. Kopel, "Shall Issue": *The New Wave of Concealed Handgun Permit Laws*, Independence Institute, p. 53.
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