

Federal Flight Deck Officer Program

Established in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the Federal Flight Deck Officer (FFDO) program's mission is to help protect the aviation industry from future such attacks, with the **Arming Pilots Against Terrorism Act** taking effect in November 2002. This law authorizes the Transportation Security Agency (TSA) to deputize qualified volunteer pilots and flight crew members of passenger and cargo aircraft as law enforcement officers to defend the flight deck of aircraft against acts of criminal violence or air piracy. TSA began training flight-deck personnel to carry firearms in early 2003 and the first armed pilots were aboard commercial flights by April 2003. The FFDO program serves as a critical layer of security in the nation's National Security Program.

FFDO mission count (numbers of flights protected by FFDO qualified volunteer pilots) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 is on track to exceed 2024 numbers. FFDOs have completed more than 23 million missions since the program's inception. However, the budget for the FFDO program remains a hot topic for the stakeholders. ***Congress must fund the FFDO program properly to allow it to not only survive but grow.***

Within the appropriations process, the FFDO program received a notable increase from the House Appropriations Committee in funding for FY 2026, though the final allocation depends on the completion of the federal appropriations process. In the FY26 Department of Homeland Security appropriations bill, the House Appropriations Committee approved the ***highest-ever proposed funding for the FFDO program***, recommending \$32,307,000. This funding will go toward reducing background investigation backlogs, fully funding initial training, expanding recurrent training capacity to include the Atlanta facility, and exploring the establishment of a training program on the West Coast.

The Allied Pilots Association applauds the House Appropriations Committee and urges the Senate to properly fund this critical layer of security in the nation's Homeland Security budget. It is one of the easiest and most common-sense ways to protect the flying public from future terrorist attacks.

For questions or additional information please email GAC-Chairman@alliedpilots.org