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## ARMING PILOTS

# United Airlines planning to put stun guns in cockpits

BY DAVE CARPENTER

Associated Press

CHICAGO — In the latest steps to improve safety in the skies, United Airlines on Thursday became the first major U.S. carrier to say it will arm its pilots with stun guns.

United also said it is starting a special training program for flight attendants, aimed at both self-protection and assisting passengers.

Both measures are subject to federal government approval.

The nation's second-biggest carrier said it is prepared to start installing advanced stun guns in electronically coded lockboxes in the cockpits of its more than 500 planes, enabling pilots to fend off hijacking attempts.

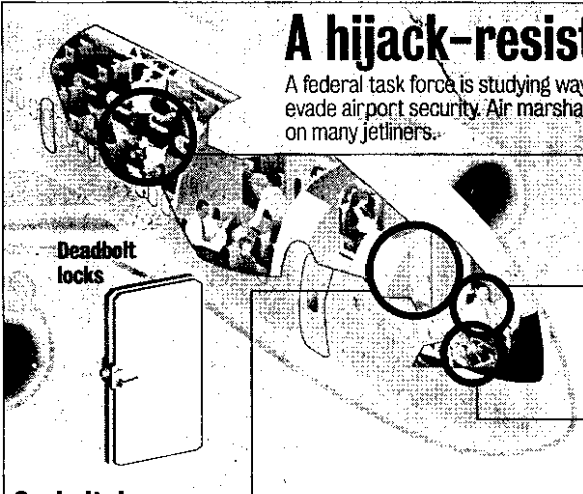
The weapons fire an electronic charge that disables an attacker for five seconds or more, allowing time for them to be restrained. Pilots will be trained in how to use the devices, called Tasers.

"United and its pilots believe Tasers are an important addition to enhanced cockpit security. Tasers will incapacitate an attacker without endangering the airplane," said Andrew Studdert, chief operating officer and executive vice president of United, based in Elk Grove Village, Ill.

New training for flight attendants will include self-defense and other methods intended to help passengers and to improve cabin safety. United declined to discuss specifics, saying that could compromise the pro-

### A hijack-resistant plane?

A federal task force is studying ways to engineer planes that would foil hijackers if they evade airport security. Air marshals and reinforced cockpit doors are already in use on many jetliners.



**Deadbolt locks**

**Cockpit door**

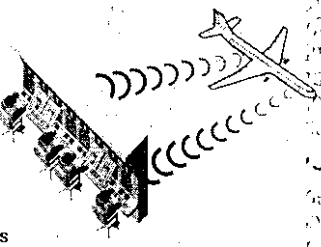
**Door originally designed** to easily break from the frame, preventing pilots from becoming trapped. They're flimsy and open with a universal key.

**Reinforced door** could withstand bullets, knives, physical intrusion and possibly an explosion. The Israeli state airline, El Al, has fortified its door and forbids pilots from leaving the cockpit.

**Stun guns in cockpits**

**Remote control**

**In case of on-board emergency**, plane could use wireless data connection as part of a system, could be remotely controlled.



**Air marshals**

**Plain-clothed law enforcement officers** were used in the 1970s to protect against hijackings; a few were still active before the Sept. 11 attacks.

**Crew training**

**New instructions:** Stress need to protect cockpit, assume hijackers could be suicidal; previous strategy was to negotiate with hijackers, safely land plane.

**Collision-avoiding navigation system**

**Current aviation philosophy:** Human pilot should be able to override plane's autopilot system.

**Possible system:** Airplane could override pilot's commands if the plane is in imminent danger of a collision.

SOURCE: U.S. Federal Aviation Commission, AP, airline industry and government sources

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gram's effectiveness.

Airlines have been shoring up security since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks — sometimes on government orders but often on their own.

Most have strengthened cockpit doors well in advance of the Department of Transportation's Dec. 31 deadline. United and others have done so with iron bars, while JetBlue Airways lined the fortified cockpit doors of its jets with

Kevlar — the material inside bulletproof vests.

Mesa Air Group, which operates America West Express and US Airways Express, said last month that its pilots would use stun guns. Several other carriers have held discussions with Taser International Inc. of Scottsdale, Ariz., the manufacturer of the stun guns.

United pilot Herb Hunter, a spokesman for the Air Line

Pilots Association, endorsed the stun-gun plan as "a good first step."

"We have supported a three-pronged approach: Keep the bad guys off the jets [through tightened security], strengthen and eventually replace the cockpit doors and put defensive systems for pilots in the cockpit," Hunter said.

"Is this a panacea? No. But it's certainly a move in the right direction, and we support it."