

# A New Look and Evolving Mission for Security

By Capt. Robert Hesselbein (Northwest), Chairman, ALPA National Security Committee

*(Capt. Duane Woerth appointed Capt. Hesselbein chairman of the ALPA National Security Committee on August 1. Here, Capt. Hesselbein provides a historical perspective on the NSC and his vision of its future value to ALPA's members.)*



ALPA's Executive Board founded the National Security Committee (NSC) in May 1970 to deal with hijacking and other flight security matters, as a direct

result of the "homesick Cuban" crisis that raged at that time. One of the many indicators of how much our airline industry has changed since then is that the two pilots named to serve on that committee flew for two legendary, but now-extinct, airlines, namely, Eastern and TWA.

From 1970 to 2001, the NSC's focus expanded to include numerous types of threats, and the Committee was the first entity to focus national attention on "air rage." The tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001, marked a new era in airline security that is, unfortunately, expected to be with us for many decades to come. Immediately after 9/11 and for many months thereafter, the NSC was challenged to help the U.S. and Canadian governments and the aviation industry develop new countermeasures to proactively confront the threats that we now face. The NSC's top priorities became the arming of Federal Flight Deck Officers, enhanced passenger screening, airborne intercepts by military aircraft, cargo security, identity verification, and defense against shoulder-launched missiles and chemical and biological threats.

In response to these increased security demands, ALPA's Executive Board approved an expansion and restructuring of the NSC in May 2003. The NSC matured, along with the structure

and efforts of many MEC Security Committees. Because MEC initiatives often paralleled those conducted at the national level, ALPA's national leaders recognized that the Association members' security needs could be more efficiently met with more changes to the organization's security structure.

Consequently, in May 2004, the Executive Board directed ALPA's President to appoint a special committee to thoroughly review the mission and structure of the NSC. As a result, the National Security Committee Structure Review Committee (NSCSRC) was empanelled and chaired by ALPA's first vice-president, Capt. Dennis Dolan.

The NSCSRC reported to the September 2004 Executive Board, recommending that the NSC structure become a tripartite organization with (1) an active committee augmented by both (2) an advisory body—made up of MEC representatives—and (3) an oversight board. The Executive Board agreed in principle and directed the NSCSRC to further refine the proposal. The Executive Board accepted and approved the final recommendation of the NSCSRC in May 2005, and the restructuring began.

Per that new policy, the NSC now consists of a chairman, vice-chairman, and four division directors, namely, information and communications, training, operations, and Canada. As an adjunct to the NSC, two independent bodies—the National Security Steering and Oversight Committee and the Security Council—have been established to serve in an oversight and advisory capacity, respectively. The restructured organization is intended to ensure efficient operations and enhance direct participation by MEC Security Chairmen/Coordinators at the unionwide level.

I am honored to lead this new structure, which, to provide the greatest

service to our members, in concert with ALPA's strategic plan, will be guided by the following principles:

- Identify, define, and advocate security improvements to protect all ALPA pilots, their passengers and cargo, and the airline industry in general.
- Encourage and incorporate strong participation by all ALPA participants, representing network, all-cargo, and regional carriers.
- Educate ALPA volunteers on the fundamental principles and processes of aviation security.
- Provide timely information to line pilots about threats and national efforts to address them.
- Deliver timely reports and analyses of current security issues written in a "pilot friendly" manner.
- Generate position papers on national security issues affecting our members and industry.
- Make efficient and effective use of ALPA communications resources.
- Advocate, in all appropriate forums, for improvements in aviation security.

As two examples of the NSC's commitment to provide service to ALPA's members, it recently sponsored the International Aviation Security Academy in Washington, D.C., with the participation of numerous federal law enforcement agencies. In mid-September, the NSC hosted its semi-annual Security Training Course in Vancouver, B.C. We encourage pilots to take advantage of these and other NSC-developed resources, which are advertised on the ALPA website.

Although the NSC restructuring effort is still under way, and much work is still to be done, we are making good progress toward meeting our goals of providing security advocacy, information, and training for ALPA's members. The pilot volunteers who make up the NSC, and ALPA staff who work with it, are dedicated to meeting the challenges that lie ahead. 🌐

