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Belge: Crew Escape from Hijacked Aircraft on the Ground

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Crew Escape from Hijacked Aircraft on the Ground

NOTE

This paper is an editorial update to and supersedes 08POS03, of the same name.

At all times during a hijack, the safety of the passengers and crew as well as the denial of the aircraft to the hijacker(s) is of paramount importance. The pilot-in-command, who is responsible for the aircraft's security and has the best overview of the situation, must have the means to react according to the level of risk and the actual situation on board. Any measures taken should enhance the ability of the pilot-in-command to assess the situation thoroughly and, if possible, bring it under control.

Therefore, IFALPA supports the provisions of ICAO Doc 8973 (Security Manual), para. 17.1.10, which state that:

“If an aircraft subject to an act of unlawful interference is parked at an airport, the authorities of the State in which the airport is situated should not take any action to terminate the unlawful interference of the aircraft without taking into account any wishes that the pilot-in-command may have been able to express and, if feasible, those of appropriate officials of the State of the Operator”

IFALPA supports this recommendation. A hijack is a life-threatening situation which forces the flight crew to make quick, appropriate decisions under strong pressure. With regards to crew actions once the aircraft is on the ground, ICAO Doc 9811 (Manual on the Implementation of the Security Provisions of Annex 6) states in paragraph 10.3.3 that

“While certain states have reservations, and legal concerns, about flight crew evacuation, it must be borne in mind that once the flight crew is off the aircraft, the aircraft becomes a standard law enforcement barricade/hostage situation. Upon balancing the various aspects of the threat

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situation of the specific incident, it may, in the judgement of the pilot-in-command, be in the overall interest of passengers, crew, and others, for the flight crew compartment crew to

escape from the aircraft. This generally places the passengers and remaining crew in a more controlled, and therefore more manageable, situation.”

IFALPA agrees that the escape of crew members from hijacked aircraft should be left to the discretion of the pilot-in-command, and that such a decision should be based upon

the principle that the safety of the passengers and crew is paramount.

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