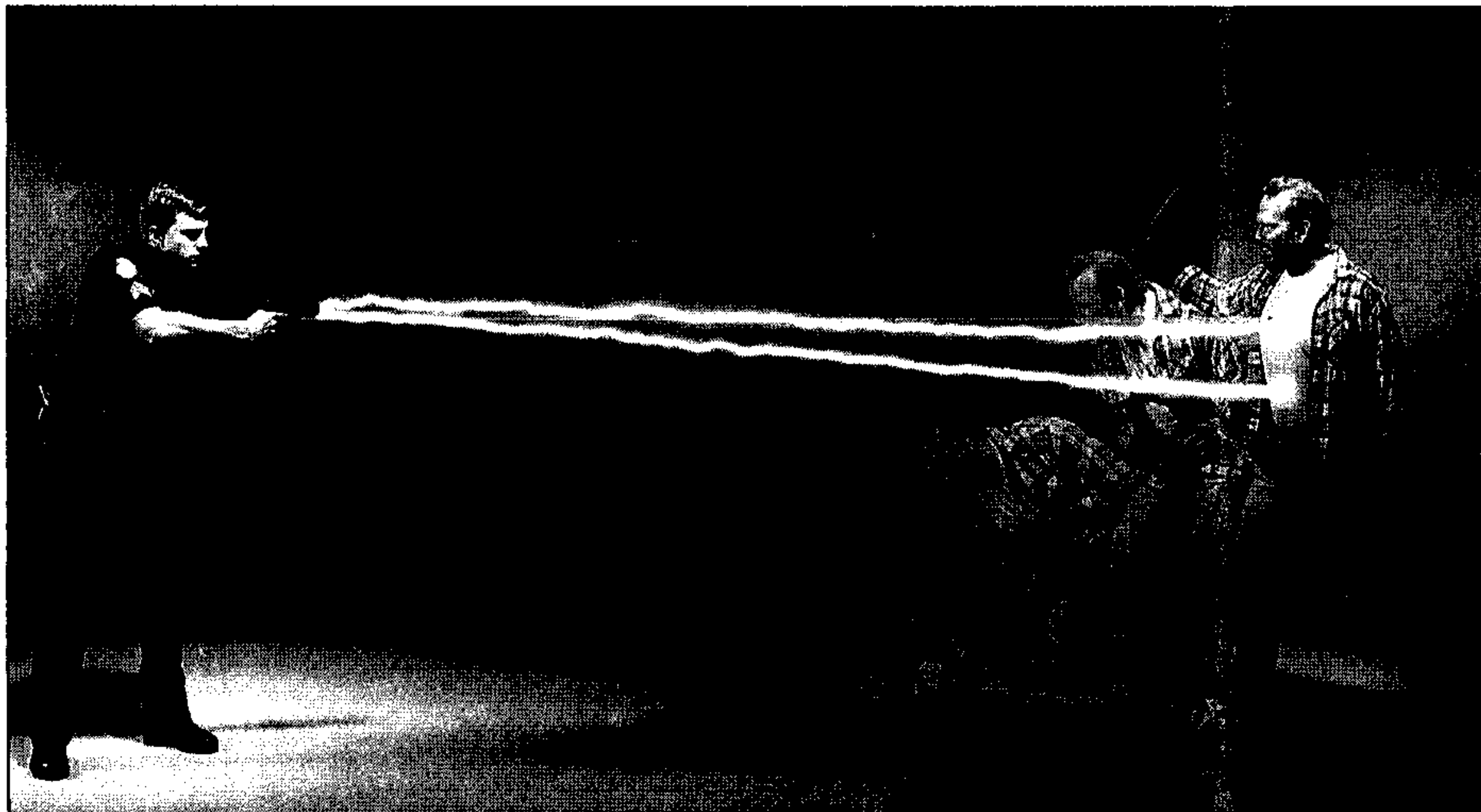


AMERICA RESPONDS

Airline cockpits add tasers



Scripps Howard News Service illustration

Sgt. Steve Hadley of the Glendale, Ariz., Police Department and an actor demonstrate the use of a M26 stun gun. White lines have been added to show the path of electric current

to two points on the assailant's body. The 50,000 volts immobilizes muscles, causing the assailant to collapse for 15 minutes.

Other carriers reinforce doors

By RICHARD POWELSON

SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE

Of all the airline security upgrades under way, one planned by some regional air carriers would give hijackers the biggest jolt.

Mesa Air said it plans to train its pilots to use stun guns, which can send 50,000 volts into an assailant from up to 15 feet away, and have one in the cockpit ready to use on every flight. The stun guns, also called tasers, can immobilize someone for 15 minutes but reportedly cause no permanent damage.

"We thought this was a way to make customers feel more secure on our flights," Mesa Air spokeswoman Benet Wilson said. Mesa Air, which also is reinforcing its cockpit doors to keep out assailants, operates in several regions under the

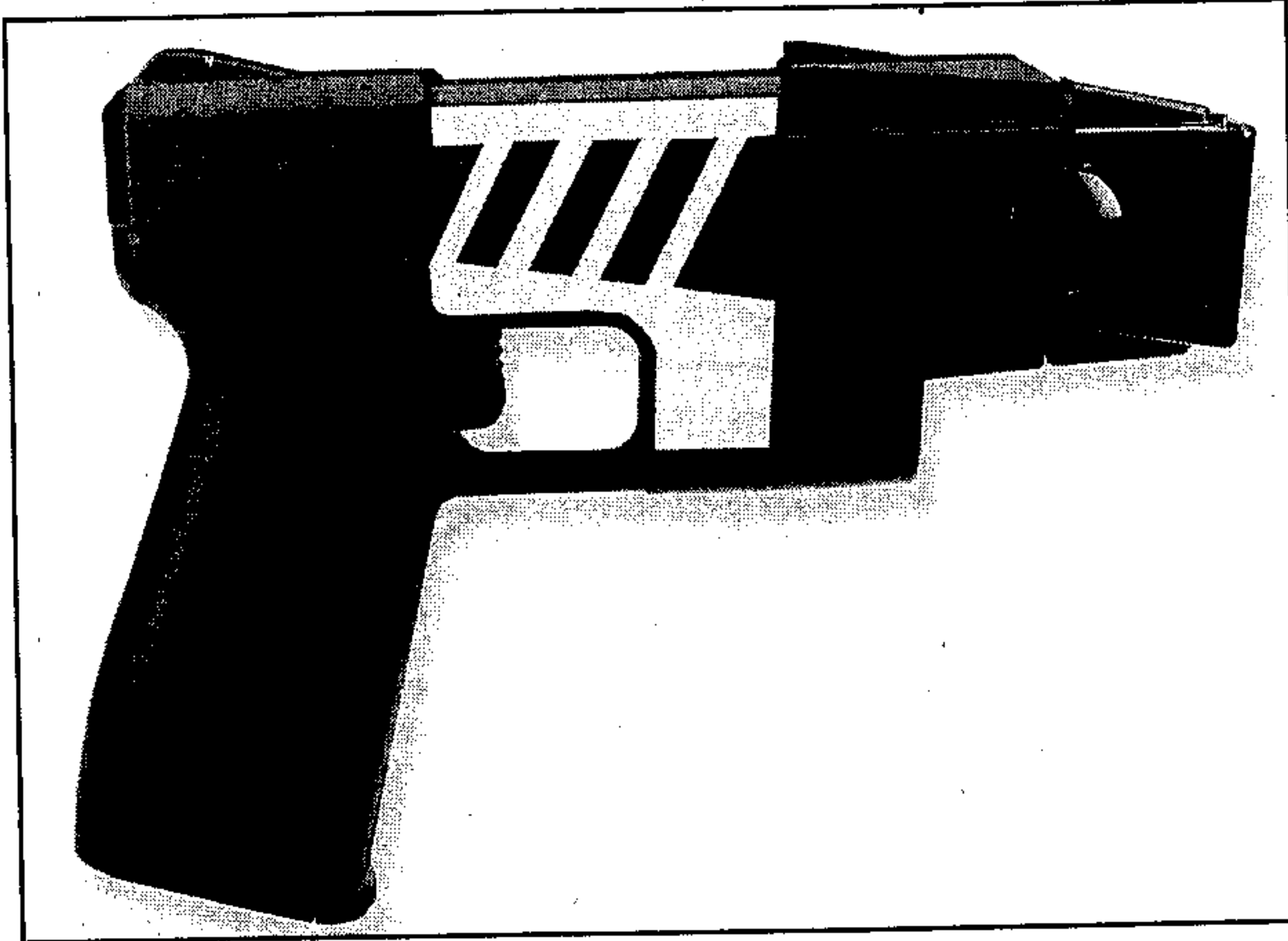
names of America West Express, US Airways Express and Mesa Airlines. Meanwhile, major air carriers report they are almost finished strengthening their cockpit doors against the kind of intrusions that occurred Sept. 11. United, Northwest and Continental said they recently finished adding either removable bars across cockpit doors or dead-bolt locks.

By early November, American, TWA, America West and US Airways expect to complete their cockpit-door upgrades, they said. Southwest Airlines will finish the job within two days, spokeswoman Linda Rutherford said. Delta and Frontier airlines said that all cockpit doors will be more secure by mid- to late November.

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Hadley uses laser sight on an Advanced Taser, made by Taser International of Scottsdale, Ariz.



This stun gun, called the Advanced Taser, or M26, is made by Taser International of Scottsdale, Ariz.

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Taser

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United and Northwest praised their employees for quick security work on cockpit doors to reassure both flight crews and customers. United, with 611 aircraft, put security bars on all of them "in just over two weeks" after the design was selected.

"The effectiveness of the cockpit

door reinforcement program and the speed with which we have deployed it is a testament" to the employees and their unions, United executive Andy Studdert said.

Mesa Air's stun-gun plan faces an obstacle, but one the company hopes to overcome.

"Federal regulations prohibit the use of any deadly or dangerous weapons on flights," and the latter category would include stun guns, said Paul Takemoto of the Federal. In the next 90 days, Mesa Air will choose where to buy its stun guns

and plan the training program, spokeswoman Wilson said. It also plans to ask the FAA for a waiver of the rule or await passage of the aviation security bill pending in Congress, which has a provision allowing non-lethal weapons like stun guns to be used by cockpit crews, she said.

"We need to do everything we can to regain the confidence of our passengers," such as adding stun guns for cockpit security, said Mesa Chairman Jonathan Ornstein

Richard Powelson can be reached at PowelsonR@shns.com