

CHAPTER 465 -- SPECIAL AIRCRAFT JURISDICTION OF THE  
UNITED STATES

Sec.

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Sec. 46501. Definitions

In this chapter --

(1) "aircraft in flight" means an aircraft from the moment all external doors are closed following boarding --

(A) through the moment when one external door is opened to allow passengers to leave the aircraft; or

(B) until, if a forced landing, competent authorities take over responsibility for the aircraft and individuals and property on the aircraft.

(2) "special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States" includes any of the following aircraft in flight:

(A) a civil aircraft of the United States.

(B) an aircraft of the armed forces of the United States.

(C) another aircraft in the United States.

(D) another aircraft outside the United States --

(i) that has its next scheduled destination or last place of departure in the United States, if the aircraft next lands in the United States;

(ii) on which an individual commits an offense (as defined in the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft) if the aircraft lands in the United States with the individual still on the aircraft; or

(iii) against which an individual commits an offense (as defined in subsection (d) or (e) of article I, section I of the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation) if the aircraft lands in the United States with the individual still on the aircraft.

(E) any other aircraft leased without crew to a lessee whose principal place of business is in the United States or, if the lessee does not have a principal place of business, whose permanent residence is in the United States.

(3) an individual commits an offense (as defined in the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft) when the individual, when on an aircraft in flight --

(A) by any form of intimidation, unlawfully seizes, exercises control of, or attempts to seize or exercise control of, the aircraft; or

(B) is an accomplice of an individual referred to in subclause (A) of this clause.

Sec. 46502. Aircraft piracy

(a) In Special Aircraft Jurisdiction. -- (1) In this subsection --

(A) "aircraft piracy" means seizing or exercising control of an aircraft in the special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States by force, violence, threat of force or violence, or any form of intimidation, and with wrongful intent.

(B) an attempt to commit aircraft piracy is in the special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States although the aircraft is not in flight at the time of the attempt if the aircraft would have been in the special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States had the aircraft piracy been completed.

(2) An individual committing or attempting to commit aircraft piracy --

(A) shall be imprisoned for at least 20 years; or

(B) if the death of another individual results from the commission or attempt, shall be put to death or imprisoned for life.

(b) Outside Special Aircraft Jurisdiction. -- (1) An individual committing an offense (as defined in the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft) on an aircraft in flight outside the special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States and later found in the United States --

(A) shall be imprisoned for at least 20 years; or

(B) if the death of another individual results from the commission or attempt, shall be put to death or imprisoned for life.

(2) This subsection applies only if the place of takeoff or landing of the aircraft on which the individual commits the offense is located outside the territory of the country of registration of the aircraft.

Sec. 46503. Death penalty sentencing procedure for aircraft piracy

(a) Government Stipulations. -- An individual convicted of violating section 46502 of this title may not be sentenced to death if the United States Government stipulates that at least one of the mitigating factors specified in subsection (c)(1) of this section exists or none of the aggravating factors specified in subsection (c)(2) of this section exists. If the Government does not stipulate, the judge presiding at the trial or accepting the guilty plea of the individual shall hold a separate hearing to decide on the punishment to be imposed.

(b) Punishment Hearings. -- (1) The hearing under this section shall be conducted --

(A) before the jury that found the defendant guilty;

(B) before a jury impaneled for the hearing when --

(i) the defendant was convicted by a guilty plea;

(ii) the defendant was convicted by a judge without a jury; or

(iii) the jury finding the defendant guilty was discharged by the judge for good cause; or

(C) before the judge, on motion of the defendant and with the approval of the judge and the Government.

(2) At the hearing, the judge shall disclose to the defendant or counsel for the defendant all material contained in any presentence report, except material the judge decides is required to be withheld to protect human life or national security. Presentence information withheld from the defendant may not be considered in deciding whether the factors specified in subsection (c) of this section exist.

(3) Information relevant to the mitigating factors specified in subsection (c)(1) of this section may be presented by the Government or the defendant without regard to the rules governing the admissibility of evidence at criminal trials. The burden of establishing the existence of a mitigating factor specified in subsection (c)(1) is on the defendant.

(4) Information relevant to the aggravating factors specified in subsection (c)(2) of this section is admissible only under rules governing the admissibility of evidence at criminal trials. The burden of establishing the existence of an aggravating factor specified in subsection (c)(2) is on the Government.

(5) The Government and the defendant may rebut information presented at the hearing. They shall be given an opportunity to present arguments on the adequacy of the information to establish the existence of the factors specified in subsection (c) of this section.

(c) Mitigating and Aggravating Factors. -- (1) The judge may not impose the death penalty on a defendant if the jury or, if there is no jury, the judge finds under this section that at the time of the violation of section 46502 of this title --

(A) the defendant was not yet 18 years of age;

(B) the capacity of the defendant to appreciate the wrongfulness of the defendant's conduct or to conform the defendant's conduct to the requirements of law was impaired significantly, but the capacity was not impaired sufficiently to be a defense to prosecution;

(C) the defendant was under unusual and substantial duress, but the duress was not sufficient to be a defense to prosecution;

(D) the defendant was a principal (as defined in section 2(a) of title 18) in a violation committed by another individual, but the participation of the defendant was relatively minor, although not sufficiently minor to be a defense to prosecution; or

(E) the defendant reasonably could not have foreseen that the conduct of the defendant in the violation would cause or create a grave risk of causing death to another individual.

(2) If none of the factors specified in paragraph (1) of this subsection exists, the judge shall impose the death penalty on the defendant if the jury or, if there is no jury, the judge finds under this section that --

(A) the death of another individual resulted from the violation after the defendant had seized or exercised control of the aircraft; or

(B) the death of another individual resulted from the violation and --

(i) the defendant has been convicted of another United States or State offense (committed before or at

the time of the violation) for which punishment of life imprisonment or death could be imposed;

(ii) the defendant has been convicted of at least 2 United States or State offenses with a penalty of more than one year of imprisonment (committed on different occasions before the time of the violation) that involved inflicting serious bodily injury on another individual;

(iii) in committing the violation, the defendant knowingly created a grave risk of death to an individual in addition to the individual whose death resulted from the violation; or

(iv) the defendant committed the violation in an especially heinous, cruel, or depraved manner.

(d) Death Penalty Requirements. -- (1) If the jury or, if there is no jury, the judge finds by a preponderance of the information that none of the mitigating factors specified in subsection (c)(1) of this section exists and that at least one of the aggravating factors specified in subsection (c)(2) of this section exists, the judge shall impose the death penalty on the defendant. If the jury or judge finds that at least one of the mitigating factors specified in subsection (c)(1) exists, or that none of the aggravating factors specified in subsection (c)(2) exists, the judge may not impose the death penalty on the defendant but shall impose another penalty provided for the defendant's violation of section 46502 of this title.

(2) The jury or, if there is no jury, the judge shall return a special verdict containing findings on whether each of the factors specified in subsection (c) of this section exists.

Sec. 46504. Interference with flight crew members and attendants

An individual on an aircraft in the special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States who, by assaulting or intimidating a flight crew member or flight attendant of the aircraft, interferes with the performance of the duties of the member or attendant or lessens the ability of the member or attendant to perform those duties, shall be fined under title 18, imprisoned for not more than 20 years, or both. However, if a dangerous weapon is used in assaulting or intimidating the member or attendant, the individual shall be imprisoned for any term of years or for life.

Sec. 46505. Carrying a weapon or explosive on an aircraft

(a) Definition. -- In this section, "loaded firearm" means a starter gun or a weapon designed or converted to expel a projectile through an explosive, that has a cartridge, a detonator, or powder in the chamber, magazine, cylinder, or clip.

(b) General Criminal Penalty. -- An individual shall be fined under title 18, imprisoned for not more than one year, or both, if the individual --

(1) when on, or attempting to get on, an aircraft in, or intended for operation in, air transportation or intrastate air transportation, has on or about the individual or the property of the individual a concealed dangerous weapon that is or would be accessible to the individual in flight;

(2) has placed, attempted to place, or attempted to

have placed a loaded firearm on that aircraft in property not accessible to passengers in flight; or

(3) has on or about the individual, or has placed, attempted to place, or attempted to have placed on that aircraft, an explosive or incendiary device.

(c) Criminal Penalty Involving Disregard for Human Life. -- An individual who willfully and without regard for the safety of human life, or with reckless disregard for the safety of human life, violates subsection (b) of this section, shall be fined under title 18, imprisoned for not more than 5 years, or both.

(d) Nonapplication. -- Subsection (b)(1) of this section does not apply to --

(1) a law enforcement officer of a State or political subdivision of a State, or an officer or employee of the United States Government, authorized to carry arms in an official capacity;

(2) another individual the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration by regulation authorizes to carry a dangerous weapon in air transportation or intrastate air transportation; or

(3) an individual transporting a weapon (except a loaded firearm) in baggage not accessible to a passenger in flight if the air carrier was informed of the presence of the weapon.

Sec. 46506. Application of certain criminal laws to acts on aircraft An individual on an aircraft in the special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States who commits an act that --

(1) if committed in the special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the United States (as defined in section 7 of title 18) would violate section 113, 114, 661, 662, 1111, 1112, 1113, or 2111 or chapter 109A of title 18, shall be fined under title 18, imprisoned under that section or chapter, or both; or

(2) if committed in the District of Columbia would violate section 9 of the Act of July 29, 1892 (D.C. Code Sec. 22-1112), shall be fined under title 18, imprisoned under section 9 of the Act, or both.

Sec. 46507. False information and threats

An individual shall be fined under title 18, imprisoned for not more than 5 years, or both, if the individual --

(1) knowing the information to be false, willfully and maliciously or with reckless disregard for the safety of human life, gives, or causes to be given, under circumstances in which the information reasonably may be believed, false information about an alleged attempt being made or to be made to do an act that would violate section 46502(a), 46504, 46505, or 46506 of this title; or

(2)(A) threatens to violate section 46502(a), 46504, 46505, or 46506 of this title, or causes a threat to violate any of those sections to be made; and

(B) has the apparent determination and will to carry out the threat.