

What's in a Name?



By Capt. John Prater, ALPA President

ALPA pilots didn't just tag the word "International" onto the end of the Association's title for nothing. Yes, it's one of the ways we



welcomed our Canadian brothers and sisters when they strengthened our union in 1997. But it's much more. Our union is the *only* international pilots' union in North America. Every ALPA pilot should know that our union represents our interests on every level—including the ever-influential global arena. No other airline pilots' union on this continent can make that claim.

While international events might seem irrelevant to us sometimes, many directly relate to our job, our work rules, and our safety. ALPA—in conjunction with the AFL-CIO International Labor Committee—keeps a close eye on the international front to protect North American pilot jobs. I recently met with three of President Barack Obama's assistant secretaries, whose responsibilities include labor and international trade, and with John Byerly, who heads the U.S. Department of State talks with foreign governments and the EU. ALPA's Canada Board president, Capt. Dan Adamus (Air Canada Jazz), with the help of ALPA members and staff, regularly meets with high-level Canadian officials. The coordination and cooperation among ALPA, IFALPA, and the European Cockpit Association on international issues provides ALPA significant power to help influence government policy.

These high-level meetings allow our union to closely monitor government-to-government negotiations that concern bilateral air services agreements between countries. Take the upcoming talks between the U.S. and Japan scheduled for July 8-10 in Tokyo. The two sides will discuss the U.S. government's request for an "Open Skies" agreement, the Japan government's concern about the number of slots held by U.S. carriers at Narita Airport, and the possibility of opening Haneda Airport to transpacific services.

These negotiations could bring more access, and more flying for our members—or they could threaten our flying by closing important trade routes. Rest assured that our interests are well represented at these discussions, because our union has a seat at all of the international tables.

Our union is active on every front to protect our jobs in the global economy, because everyone is competing on that level. One way our airlines have bridged oceans is through alliances with foreign airlines. Using the team approach provides passengers and cargo customers more destination

options, and theoretically reduces costs by sharing operations and business facilities.

Maybe you're thinking like me—at what cost to our pilots? I asked President Obama to assign the White House Task Force on Middle Class Working Families with the job of considering the potential effect of U.S.-foreign airline alliances on U.S. airline workers. I have used our positions in the AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department and the Canadian Labour Council (CLC) to ensure that ALPA pilot concerns are addressed in Congress and in Parliament.

Our union stressed that it's imperative for the U.S. government to ensure that these airline alliances—some of which sought grants of immunity from antitrust laws—do not result in outsourcing North American pilot jobs overseas.

We Are ALPA, and together, we make up the legacy that will defend and elevate our profession successfully as we face the dynamic challenges of a global economy.

By doing this, ALPA is addressing one of the initiatives that the Board of Directors set in motion at its 2008 meeting: to oppose efforts to modify foreign ownership and/or control limitations that would not benefit ALPA members. The EU, the International Air Transport Association, and entities here at home are working desperately to change U.S. and Canadian laws to allow foreign ownership and full cabotage.

We're following the strategic path that the BOD set to keep this union on track, and we're seeing some successes. In the end, however, our union is only as strong and as unified as our members, whose solidarity gives us the power to stand up to governments, investors, and companies.

We should all be keenly aware of how hard ALPA, International works with local and master executive council representatives to defend our rights, represent our best interests, and keep us safe and secure on the job—here, and around the globe. And when someone asks what makes ALPA an international organization, I hope every member of this union can tell them our story.

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