

Pay Attention to The Sentry

Sentry duty is a crucial post in the military. The soldier guarding an encamped army or the entrance to a fort is charged with detecting danger early so that there is still time to act.



While a watchman's duty includes challenging all who approach, traditionally with the familiar phrase "Halt! Who goes there?" the responsibility of sentinel also requires detecting potential danger on the horizon, even though it may appear far away.

In 1664, the Spanish built Fort Cristobal in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and the fort's sentry box, perched high over the sea, makes clear the watchman's responsibility to detect and identify potential threats from great distance and from all points on the compass.

Today, the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps require a watchman to "keep always on the alert and observe everything that takes place within sight or hearing." While technology has redefined sight and hearing, the sentinel spirit endures—detecting and identifying potential danger while there is still time to do something about it.

What has been true throughout military history, and indeed human history, also holds true for doing business in the global marketplace today: Pay attention to the sentry. As airline pilots, who is the sentry responsible for detecting potential danger? It's our union.

For example, ALPA has heeded the signs on the horizon that traditional negotiating techniques may not always be the best model to achieve contracts that advance our careers and our profession. In fact, our recent work has proved that sometimes we are better off if we look creatively at different negotiating options.

For ALPA-represented pilot groups such as AirTran-Southwest, Delta-Northwest, and United-Continental, before or during mergers we have bargained new single agreements that add significant contract value. At FedEx Express, we have implemented creative strategies that acknowledge our members' contributions to the airline's success, and ALPA pilot negotiators at Delta have enhanced Section 6 results by advancing the time line for contract completion in a way that addresses both the company's and ALPA pilots' strategic and labor relations interests.

We've also looked again at building value in nontraditional contract areas such as career progression at Piedmont, Pinnacle, and PSA. At Alaska, we've focused negotiations to ensure timely contract completion and to complement positive management-labor relations, with strong results.

In many other ways, ALPA is capitalizing on traditional approaches but also departing from precedent where it promises to achieve greater success. In May, we held our

2013 Pilot Assistance Forum as a completely stand-alone event. Traditionally part of the Association's annual Air Safety Forum, the new single-event format included panels on the latest developments in the aeromedical arena, critical incident response, HIMS, professional standards, and Canadian pilot

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assistance. The forum drew more than 200 participants from around the globe—twice the attendance of past years.

While it's essential to work together as a union to bargain contracts and advance aviation safety, security, and pilot assistance efforts that help all of us, it is equally important to ask questions about who the *real* competition is. Pay attention to the sentry.

Some of North American airlines' strongest competitors have a track record of paying attention to potential trouble on the horizon. The first ruler of Dubai recognized in the 1950s that the emirate had limited oil resources. He knew that Dubai needed to develop an economy that would thrive long after its limited oil reserves ran out.

In the decades that followed, he pursued a diversified economy with a tax-free business environment and pro-business policies. Today, oil makes up just 5 percent of Dubai's gross domestic product. Aviation makes up 28 percent, a fact that the president of Emirates Airlines attributes to Dubai's pro-aviation policy and its leaders' vision.

While Dubai's leaders paid attention to the sentinel looking for danger, we need U.S. and Canadian government leaders to heed the watchman's warning with even greater enterprise. Our national governments must get behind airline workers and our companies by advancing policy that fosters an economically strong and sustainable airline industry.

You will read in this issue's interview with Tony Tyler of the International Air Transport Association that he has made a similar call and has urged governments to recognize that aviation is a catalyst for economic growth.

While one of ALPA's most powerful and proven assets is its more than eight decades of experience with virtually every issue that affects the airline industry and the piloting profession, our union constantly reexamines how we work and pursues the new approaches that may hold the promise of greater success. We will never stop asking, "Halt, who goes there?"

Capt. Lee Moak, ALPA President