

Some Frequently Asked Questions (Pilots)

Why now? Why not when economic conditions are more favorable?

Our influence is in deep decline while management is in ascendancy. If we don't take a stand now, management will be able to replace us by the end of this decade and we will never be able to fight for ourselves.

Economic downturns are just that - downturns. This one will end and with it, we will be able to reap the benefits of our efforts. If favorable economic climates were conducive to ending the flood of labor concessions, we would have seen it in the past 30 years, but we have not. In fact, during "good" times, people are less likely to take chances with their current financial state. Would we have had the unity and sense of purpose after United pilots inked an industry leading contract in 2000? How about the next year when Delta pilots made their gains? During the late 90s, when American pilots were leading, everyone was just waiting for the next leg in the pattern bargaining paradigm. Management was plotting the next phase of governmental intrusion to reverse that pattern, and they got their opportunity in in late 2001.

Today is when we have the clarity of mind to understand exactly what the problem is. Today is the only thing we have been promised. There may not be a tomorrow when it comes to our ability to determine our own destiny.

There is always an excuse to wait until tomorrow. Tomorrow always seems like a better time. After 30 years, can you honestly say that has been the case? The past 30 years have been witness to the greatest economic expansion in world history, and we have less than nothing to show for it.

Today is the day. Now is the time. History does not wait for those who hesitate.

What if this action hurts my airline and we go out of business?

With the exception of Southwest, all airlines plead poverty as contract negotiations draw near. They have been doing so for 30 years. Management has looked to one source to keep things moving and their bonuses flowing - our pocketbooks.

No carrier has an advantage over another if the pilot costs are uniform. This is very similar to fuel costs and the costs of aircraft acquisitions, where the hedges are reduced in time and scale so as not to give any one airline an advantage in labor arbitrage.

Airlines will have to rely on old-fashioned business practices, such as marketing, vision, thrift, investment, risk management, customer loyalty, service, and most of all, TEAMWORK. Granted, this will likely cause the current crop of managers to be released by the various boards, as outsourcing, fraud, self-aggrandizement, deceit, and adverse labor relations will be largely obsolete.

Ask yourself if your airline is only operating because you are willing to be abused, disrespected, and discarded. If you believe so, your fate is already sealed. All you are gaining by not participating is two to three years of living a failed dream. At the end, you will be just that much older, that much more in debt, and that much harder to retrain. Reality is bearing down on all of us; some of us are willing to confront it on our terms.

Isn't this interfering with the free market?

What "free" market?

You need go no further than the current FAA fatigue mitigation bulwark to see how management sees the "free market." The FAA doesn't attempt to hide how much it has become the enforcement arm of the ATA. Productivity concessions are now on the brink of being codified into law, coupled with the features of government involvement listed below, there is no genuine negotiation within the industry.

Airplanes are being subsidized by foreign governments and flooding our skies, causing the barriers to entry in the industry to dissolve at the expense of foreign taxpayers, US aircraft manufacturing, and airline labor.

Government policy regarding contract negotiations is overtly favoring one side over the other (that would be management).

Bankruptcy courts are essentially tools for management to get what they can't at the bargaining table. Notice that management NEVER takes a hit in bankruptcy.

The PBGC is distributing pensions earned by pilots to people not in the airline industry.

The employees of United purchased their airline at the cost of massive concessions in the 1994 ESOP contract, only to have management declare bankruptcy and take it all away. United management now owns a large chunk of United.

Municipalities subsidize "low cost carriers" to compete with full-service airlines.

How many "free markets" have an army of unaccountable government employees and a myriad of hopelessly foolish procedures to intimidate and harass their customers as they enter the building? How would Wal Mart do if all its customers had to take off their coats and shoes, while having the entirety of their belongings rifled through by "The Retail Security Administration?" Would Starbucks survive if its customers had to get full body scans and pat downs every time they wanted a cup of coffee?

How much are airlines taxed in relation to other industries?

There has never been a "free market" in the air transport industry. International routes are assigned by the government. Foolishly thinking that we are operating a "free market" is the flaw management exploits every contract. Funny how labor always has to be competitive, but management receives their largess during times of profit or times of massive red ink. They know there is no free market.

The air transportation market is a construct of government policy. We have just as much right to influence that policy as do our executives.

It is the “can do” attitude that pilots bring to every endeavor of their lives that management exploits to keep things moving. Without this attitude, the entire industry would grind to a halt. It is also this overgrown Eagle Scout mentality that management relies upon to prevent pilot unification, as almost all pilots are extremely responsible and correspondingly conservative. Our popular media demonizes the entire concept of unionization and most pilots shrink from the association when interfacing with non-pilots.

We are sold on the false ideals of “rugged individualism” as the basis for greatness, rather than the time proven values of teamwork which is truly at the base of all greatness.

No man is an island and no man finds success outside the context of the greater team. While it is true that certain individuals are indispensable to the success of the team, and the accolades flow accordingly, that “individual” effort is only possible within the greater team. The human animal is only successful because we are capable of forming highly developed teams and the corresponding division of labor.

It is bewildering how teamwork suddenly became “socialism.” Unifying with like minded people for the purposes of finding improvement and success within the greater team is the basis of all human achievement. It is the “lone wolf” that starves.

Socialism is the intentional whipsawing of one group against another for the purposes of controlling both, and Socialists have done this for the past century as they have leapt from cause to cause, polluting perfectly good messages for the sole purposes of increasing their political power.

Organized labor was one of the first causes co-opted by the Socialists for the purposes of grabbing political power. They went on to pollute and radicalize other equally valid causes such as environmentalism, women’s rights, child abuse, animal cruelty, ethnic bigotry, and personal liberty. In every incidence, the mainstream and valid proponents of the underlying cause were purged and the overall movement was radicalized.

Just as other causes co-opted by Socialism rejected the socialist means and goals, it was organized labor that was the focus of internal dissent behind the Iron Curtain. Organized Labor had no rights in the USSR, nor any Communist state.

Somehow, through a steady diet of anti-union tirades, the airline pilot seems uncomfortable with the goals of collective bargaining but is comfortable to be whipsawed against other pilots so management can control both him and other pilots.

The pundits that traffic in “rugged individualism” have themselves amassed very intricate teams to showcase their talent, and ironically, are only in positions of such influence due to a change in the laws regarding mass communication.

“United We Stand, Divided We Fall” isn’t just a catchy phrase. It is how all of life works. It is the conceit and arrogance of key members of teams that give rise to the false notion of “rugged individualism.”

Why a minimum wage?

There is no doubt that we are all in a race to the bottom. Each one of us (except Southwest) has been asked to make due with less so we can (in theory) undercut the competition, grow, and take market share. This (in theory) will result in restoration of our pay and working conditions (at least until the next subsidized airline enters the market with apprentice labor and starts the process all over again).

Pilot wages and working conditions have been the means by which our airlines have “become competitive” over the past 30 years. Lorenzo used the destruction of labor to finance his empire, promising market share (growth) in exchange for concessions. When that didn’t materialize, he whip-sawed one group against another, and finally went through the bankruptcy courts to impose his will on an industry that had functioned well for half a century. For him, it was winner take all.

By establishing a minimum standard, financial alchemists can not look to pilot labor as the means by which they will finance their schemes. Airlines will have to be run by people interested in running a business and serving the public, rather than those interested in breaking apart airlines for their own financial gain.

Gordon Gekko has to get a real job, rather than making a living from picking our pockets and destroying the airlines.

A minimum wage also addresses one problem with our industry - the lack of a national seniority list. By establishing a minimum pay scale, pilots displaced from work due to failure of an airline are cushioned from the entirety of the blow by avoiding the food-stamp wages of new hire pilots. It doesn't address the entirety of the problem, but it does address part of it.

Why not also advocate a national seniority list?

A national seniority list (NSL) would solve many problems in our profession. The problem comes from getting from our present point to one of a mutually agreed NSL. Seniority is a relative term: you are senior relative to someone else. That someone else most likely does not share your concept of seniority, but has one of his own choosing where he is senior.

Look at ANY airline seniority list integration. Fences, DOH, relative position, surviving carrier, financial health, equipment rights...the points of disagreement are endless.

This project is about unity. Unity is essential to our purposes, and needlessly wasting energy on quibbling over how the NSL would be structured would instantly dissolve any bonds that we may share. Any pilot would look at the proposed NSL metrics and instantly decide that he is getting improperly placed, and rightfully not support OPERATION ORANGE.

In fact, The Committee regards any talk of a NSL (within the context of OPERATION ORANGE) to be highly divisive. Any such talk will be regarded (rightly or wrongly) as airline management's attempt to sow

division within our ranks. The time to discuss NSL metrics is long after our more pressing goals are met.

See [Section 5 - Labor Protective Provisions](#) in our [“Fair Treatment Of Experienced Pilots Act - Part 2”](#) for more details regarding how we are seeking to ameliorate the effects of loss of jobs due to cessation of operations of Part 121 and Part 135 carriers. Most of the features and protections of a NSL are addressed in Section 4 and Section 5 of the proposed [“Fair Treatment Of Experienced Pilots Act - Part 2”](#)

Why not lobby for repeal of “AGE 65?”

“AGE 65” was put through the Congress in December 2007 without regard for the opinion of the majority of Part 121 pilots. If the measure had been voted on by the professional pilots in the US, the measure would have been soundly defeated.

ALPA used its much vaunted “influence” in Washington to actually get it passed. The excuse was used that ALPA was told it was going to pass, so they wanted to be on “the right side” to help influence its crafting.

Last we checked, the proposal was AGE 65, and we got AGE 65. So much for ALPA’s “influence.”

Why can ALPA get unpopular laws passed that are against the bulk of the rank-and-file pilots, but not move anything that will tilt the playing surface toward pilots? How are our dues being spent in Washington? What do we have to show for thirty years of lobbying?

Like it or not, AGE 65 is here. Many of our peers have decided to stay beyond 60. While we don’t agree with that decision, we understand why it was made. Most of the pilots who choose to stay beyond 60 had their pensions wiped out by the management-government axis, and these last few years are trying to close the gap in that shortfall.

We will not oppose AGE 65 for unity purposes. We don’t agree with the policy, as we believe it is a back door to ICAO pilots flying cabotage in the

US. We view AGE 65 as a monument to ALPA's tone deafness to the membership that funds it. Remember, our collective bargaining agents are nothing more than hospice care for our careers. We do note that APA opposed the legislation, but the division between unions allowed government to pick the answer they wanted.

Isn't this illegal?

This isn't the military and we don't have a UCMJ. If you don't show for work, you are not AWOL/UA and you won't be sent to Leavenworth by a military tribunal. We are civilians and can choose to attend or not.

The First Amendment applies to all of us and we are able to write and discuss civic matters of our choosing in a peaceful manner.

The government's breaking of past strikes almost always was justified by the repression of violence, which is why there will be no mass demonstration in support of our efforts. Our "demonstration" will be done in the privacy of our own homes by very peaceful means. The government isn't going to fix bayonettes and force you into the cockpit. Pinkerton won't be patrolling your neighborhood.

What is the crime? Protesting in a peaceful manner? Saying things management and government don't like? Petitioning the government for redress of grievances? Wearing orange lanyards? Covering your book bag with orange stickers or orange duct tape?

Your responsibility is to you, your family, and your fellow pilots. If a plane is stranded at the gate in Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas, or New York, that is the problem of the airline management. If they treated you better, their airplanes would still be moving.

Doesn't the RLA prohibit this?

The RLA covers actions taken by company specific labor. The RLA is not senior to the First Amendment. This action is a grass-roots petition to the government, not an organized job action by ALPA against a specific carrier.

How do we acknowledge one another when we see ORANGE?

During the Allied invasion of Europe in June of 1944, Allied troops were dispersed among enemy troops in a very chaotic manner. German troops and Allied troops were indistinguishable, even at close range, due to the darkness and terrain features of Northern France. The means by which Allied troops were able to identify friend or foe was by issuing “clickers” for the troops to challenge each other. If a stick of Allied paratroopers happened upon another group of soldiers, the Allied troops would click on their clickers. If the challenged group of troops were friendly, they would respond with additional clicks, allowing all to know they were among friendly forces. If the challenged group didn’t identify by clicking, the challenging group would assume they had encountered hostile forces.

This was the means by which the various war departments could coalesce the widely dispersed airborne forces into well established lines.

It works the same way with us. We will have pockets of acceptance in all airlines and across all bid statuses and we need to encourage one another and show solidarity.

Rather than clickers, we will have ORANGE paraphernalia that signal that we are part of the solution. To recognize one another we can use a very simple sign.

PUT ORANGE DUCT TAPE OR OPERATION ORANGE STICKERS ON YOUR AIRPORT LUGGAGE/CREW BAGS.

Won’t our unions get slapped with a TRO and fined?

The various collective bargaining agents have nothing to do with this. No member of The Committee is involved in any union work: elected, paid or volunteer.

We do anticipate that management will snap their fingers and the

government will grab our unions as hostages to pressure us to relent. Industry friendly judges are certainly going to hear complaints and be asked to quash our First Amendment rights.

While disappointing, we understand that the management-government axis will have to exercise their “nuclear option” to attempt to stop this (and keep their bonuses flowing). Taking innocent hostages will be just one tactic they use. Reference United Airlines taking ALPA to court over the independent efforts of junior pilots burning their contractually mandated sick leave prior to their second furlough.

Ultimately, we can't structure our actions and goals to account for every innocent hostage the government may take. A judge may slap a union with a ruinous fine but that is no different than if the same judge targeted any other innocent organization with a baseless fine.

How do we know that your website has not been hacked?

We are airline pilots, not programming and code experts. We can't prevent people from violating the various wiretapping laws to corrupt our communications, but we can give a guarantee that you are receiving an uncorrupted message.

Public key cryptology enables us to verify our messages in a manner the government can not corrupt. Our key is available for download, as is the TRIAL VERSION for PGP, and are the only two things you need to verify our messages. Each key is signed by The Committee members for your verification. Any false key will not contain the signatures in the keys we release.

Our “PUBLIC” keys are exactly that - public. Please distribute it far and wide. The greater the distribution, the more difficult it is for people (the government) to corrupt our “web of trust.” This public key is how you determine that the signature made with our “SECRET” keys are genuine.

Can we join The Committee?

We do appreciate your enthusiasm and willingness to be part of the solution rather than just griping about the problem.

Due to operational security concerns, we can not accept any additional members to The Committee. This policy will prevent infiltration and disruption.

The biggest contribution you can make is to get the word out to your peers in your airline and other airlines. We all have sympathetic friends at other carriers, and by passing around the word, using the talking points, and shoring up support in the cockpit, you will be doing more than you can possibly imagine.

If you are passionate enough to wish to get involved, the most effective thing you can do is get in the faces of 20 of your pilot peers and make them choose sides. Get 20 hard commitments to the cause and ask them to do likewise. If 200 of you get 20 pilots to join, and they convince 5, that is 20,000 pilots, which well more than enough to ground the entirety of the US air transportation system.

Airline manning is so tight that a 10% disruption would be highly problematic. 20% would be catastrophic.

How often will updates be issued?

Updates will be published on an “as needed” basis. Due to operational security concerns, there will be no regular updates. RSS will be available to signal new updates.

Isn't government rightly charged with preventing work stoppages?

Government should take a longer view of the situation. By making labor unable to exert leverage at the bargaining table, they sew the seeds of

resentment. The RLA's "perpetual contract" concept is being abused by management to extend the time between negotiations. Longer contract lengths, along with the artificial delays brought about by the RLA, make it such that labor only has one chance every 7 to 10 years to revisit their working relationship with management. This gives management an enormous incentive to gain competitive advantage by abusing labor, as once implemented, it can't be revisited for almost a decade.

Eventually labor will revolt. It will revolt by seeking remedies outside the normal collective bargaining process, or the high levels of talent that pilots have brought to the industry will be lost to other industries, resulting in a revolving door of young, inexperienced pilots that have no other aspiration than making less than a common truck driver. If you liked Cogan Air-
Buffalo, you will love the entire industry in 7 years.

In each situation, the public is faced with some form of catastrophic work stoppage.

The industry is being held together by a confluence of events that will not happen again in our lifetime. The high levels of leadership and aptitude that airlines have recruited out of the top 10% of military and civil aviation over the past 3 decades are trapped by age considerations. They are too young to retire, yet too established and old to retool for another career that is well suited for their aptitudes. Many of the younger military pilots have returned to the military, and others have left passenger air service and are flying cargo. The pilots remaining are holding things together with raw professionalism, dedication, and personal pride, but they are seething under the surface.

Over the next ten years, half of them will be retired. This will be in addition to those that will have resigned.

During that time, the industry will be partially restaffed with some of the better pilots at the smaller, regional carriers. The bulk of the replacements will have to be pilots with little or no experience, indebted over \$100,000, and no other aspirations or ability to pursue a career that pays more than a waitress, garbage collector, or data entry clerk.

Additionally, if government was so concerned about the reliability of air service in the United States, it would have been much more interested in preventing the wholesale looting of the capital and wealth of the airline industry. With few exceptions, the entire industry is run by people that view airlines a greater value in disarray and fundamentally broken, than healthy. Viewing labor as the only factor in reliability is very short sighted.

Government could not have cared less as Lorenzo, Ferris, Tilton, Mullin and Carty brought their airlines to the brink of disaster, yet react with unflinching resolve as pilots demanded that management make good on their promises by threatening to withhold their labor once every few decades, in accordance with applicable law. Such interference was lacking when Lorenzo was intentionally destroying the components of Texas Air Group, yet in full force when pilots struck to determine who flew what aircraft at AMR. Such interference was the direct cause of the “sick-out” one year later - an action the government also quashed.

When we see the government take an equal interest in managerial incompetence at the top of the industry, we will entertain meaningful discussions on how our role in reliable passenger air service can be improved.

Why are we only asking that the regulations change regarding pilots? Why not the mechanics, flight attendants, and customer service agents?

We gave that much consideration and it always came back to unity. It is enough of a challenge to unite pilots across the industry with distinctions such as: various carriers, regional, mainline, domestic, international, senior, junior, military, civilian...

To put such disparate groups together for such a purpose is just begging for failure. Reaching beyond our grasp is not going to help our cause.

Nothing is precluding other airline employee groups from seeking their own redress. We also believe the general cause of organized labor and American prosperity is furthered by pilots doing what they do best - taking a

leadership role. Perhaps other people will take an interest in standing up to the insidious threat to everyone's standards of living, and reverse the decades long trend to outsource American jobs to illegal labor and overseas sweatshops.

Every social movement has a leader of some form. As Lorenzo lead the charge for financial alchemists to destroy the airline industry, we will lead the reversal of that movement. If others like what they see, they are free to follow.

Where can I donate?

Donations are appreciated but not accepted at this time.

We believe that you have been hustled enough by management's empty promises over the past years, along with the biannual promises that Washington will cut taxes, spending and be more accountable to the people. Every time something is needed from us (concessions, votes, taxes, and forfeiture of freedoms), management and government talk a good game on how things are different this time. The story ends the same way every time, with management and government getting "paid" first, only to find that things have changed and our consideration will have to wait until the present "crisis" is over.

They all do it (except Southwest). Both political parties are culpable. We have fared no better with modern Democratic administrations than with Republican administrations. Birds of a feather flock together.

For once, we would like to see results and then judge how much they are worth.

Upon the conclusion of Operation ORANGE, we will ask for voluntary donations, but not before. You can decide for yourself what the changes are worth.

Until that time we would like you to use your resources to support the effort to get out the message and create the unity needed to make this a success.

Why are we trying to change Part 135 when Part 121 is the problem?

Management has been very resourceful in the interpretation of applicable government regulations, labor contracts and history. They were able to outsource flying to “regional” carriers to the point where many of the “regional” carriers had a scope of flying greater than some of the “major” airlines. Parsing of scope language (backed by government regulators, bankruptcy proceedings and the NMB) enabled management to outsource flying to a degree that was inconceivable a generation ago.

By allowing management an exemption through Part 135 they will undoubtedly shape the regulations and their interpretation to accomplish what they presently have with the “regional” airlines, and the flying public, shareholders, and Part 121 pilots will be back in the same position we are today.

We must give management no other option but to fix what they have broken. Shareholders have nothing to show for their investments, employees have been the funding source for the viability of the industry, and the traveling public deserve better service and amenities. By allowing financial alchemists and legal sharpshooters to repeat their present folly with non-scheduled operations, we will ultimately return to the problems we face today.

Additionally, the public deserves to fly on an airplane with a well rested, stable, and competent cockpit crew, regardless of the nature of how the tickets are sold. Shadow flight schools are not much better for non-scheduled operations than for scheduled.

What if our union leaders oppose this effort?

This is the universal constant of our industry. Our pilot associations routinely elect true-blue unionists to stop the inexorable slide of the piloting career, and many of those pilots seeking those positions do so with the best

of intentions. As night follows day, those same unionists get elected and brought into the back rooms of our pilot associations where staff attorneys brief them on what they are allowed to do and prohibited from doing. They are frightened with stories of union leaders being personally responsible for any uncivil behavior on the part of union members. Couple this with the normal inducements from management and government, and it is no wonder that our metal chewing unionists quickly become declawed, neutered, malleable functionaries whose only purpose in life is to give us a dozen excuses for why we are failing to right our profession.

To put it simply: THEY WILL OPPOSE THIS.

There is going to be a career opportunity of a lifetime for the ALPA/APA officer who sells us down the river on this. Systemwide Chief Pilot? FAA Administrator? Cayman bank account? P.O.I?

This suits our purposes because we need the pilot associations to distance themselves from OPERATION ORANGE, lest industry friendly judges reach out and hold them hostage on behalf of the ATA.

This is not a union effort. This is a grassroots effort availing itself to the freedoms our nation's founders intended for us. We seek to change the law, not maneuver within its confines. As Jefferson said in *The Declaration of Independence*,

"...accordingly, all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they have become accustomed."

There will be fear grenades and the first ones will come from the pilot associations, followed by those from corporate HQ. When the government starts lobbing grenades you will know we have their attention.

Take your union leader admonitions for what they are - excuses for continued acceptance of failure. This is nothing new.

Granted, not all of our leaders are similarly afflicted, but they are in the minority. If they were not, OPERATION ORANGE would not be necessary.