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Update on the Air France Pilot Strike

Today the strike by the Air France pilots enters its fourth day over their company's desire to redirect assets to its low-cost subsidiary, Transavia. ALPA is in direct contact with Air France pilot union leaders, and is receiving regular updates. In this *True Headings* we will provide insights on the current situation and how labor unions work at Air France, review the unique work stoppage protective provisions in our PWA, and correct yet more misinformation from the individuals calling themselves the "DPA".

First, some background on French labor law, and specifically the pilot union situation at Air France. There are significant differences in labor law between the United States and France. The French Constitution guarantees freedom of association to a liberal extent, and more than one union can have bargaining rights for the same class of employees at a company. In the case of Air France, several unions represent its pilots and the number of supporters each union holds within the pilot group determines the place it has at the bargaining table.

Today, Air France employs approximately 3,700 pilots. About 75 percent of the Air France pilots belong to one of several unions, and union affiliation is not required. The largest of the unions, representing about 2,700 pilots is *Syndicat National des Pilotes de Ligne*, commonly referred to as SNPL. The other significant unions on the property are SPAF (representing approximately 300 pilots) and Alter (representing about 50). Unaffiliated and affiliated pilots can vote for collective labor agreements, and pilots can vote across union lines for the corporate board seat reserved for the pilot representative. As an example, this summer an SPAF member was elected to be the pilot's representative to the corporate board for the current term. And if you think *that* is complicated, then hang on.

In 2010 French labor law changed and the right to strike is now only granted to *individuals* under the French Constitution; unions simply do not hold that power. Earlier this month SNPL leaders *asked* their pilots to exercise that right. Approximately 80 percent of the Air France pilots individually indicated they were willing to strike. When it became clear the vast majority of pilots would support the work stoppage, SPAF and Alter then asked their members to join the strike.

All Air France pilots currently work under the same CLA (Collective Labor Agreement) *negotiated by the SNPL*, and SNPL French (F) ALPA is the umbrella organization that represents pilot groups throughout France such as AF, EasyJet, and a host of other smaller groups. Much like ALPA Int'l., SNPL F ALPA is the *only* national pilot organization in France,

but it does not negotiate labor agreements. Rather, it coordinates activity and works to assure solidarity on matters of common interest for all French pilots.

Here's what we know about the strike situation today:

- Negotiations between AF management and SNPL continued late into last evening with little progress.
- Air France continues to cancel over sixty percent of its daily flights network-wide.
- About eighty percent of the Air France pilots are continuing to honor the strike as management pilots and other flyers "time out."
- As the strike continues, the resolve of the pilots is building due to comments made by senior company officials in the press.
- Government officials are also beginning to make public statements concerning the stoppage indicating there may be an attempt at intervention.
- The strike may be costing Air France as much as €20 million per day.

On September 13 2014, the individuals calling themselves the "DPA" issued a number of false accusations directed at the Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l.:

". . . removed ALPA as the primary bargaining agent for the Air France Pilots and replaced ALPA with their own independent union."

Your union - the Air Line Pilots Association, International - does not, and never has represented Air France pilots, nor had any role in their negotiations. In point of fact, French ALPA - an organization entirely separate from ALPA - has also never represented Air France pilots in collective bargaining. Collective bargaining has always been conducted by several different independent unions who try to work together even while competing for members.

". . . allowed Delta to operate out of compliance for years now, with no penalty for non-compliance."

The production balance of EASKs allowed under the *Delta Pilot Working Agreement* is subject to a three-year rolling measurement period, followed by a one-year cure period to restore the balance. The production balance is out of compliance, and the cure period ends on March 31, 2015. Despite the very unlikelihood the Company will return to compliance within the cure period, no actual violation of our PWA occurs until the end of the cure period. The MEC has discussed both this issue, and the all-but-certain coming grievance, many times in open session.

". . . the possibility of Delta Pilots being asked to fly struck work as Atlas Air Pilots have been asked to carry AF Cargo next week."

Performing such work would violate section *1.P.8* of the *Delta Pilot Working Agreement*, and the Delta MEC has already issued a statement on the SNPL strike (see [MEC Alert 14-10](#)). The Atlas Air pilots are represented by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. It is interesting to note that the Delta Pilot Working agreement is the only PWA in North America that contains these types of struck work provisions. They were written in by the Delta MEC during our negotiations concerning the initial Air France / KLM JV discussions, were copied, and the same provisions now exist in the Air France and KLM pilot CLAs.

"ALPA is silent."

Hardly. Again, see [MEC Alert 14-10](#) for a discussion of the issues at Air France. Protecting our members' interests, and protecting our profession at home and overseas involves a lot more

than rhetoric. It involves working closely - through our exclusive membership in IFALPA - with foreign pilots to ensure that workers on both sides of the ocean aren't disadvantaged by agreements between our companies. It involves working beyond our borders to create a higher standard of safety, and working to apply those higher standards universally to achieve one level of safety. But it never involves taking advantage of the challenges facing fellow pilots and long-time friends. We would consider that approach exploitation, not solidarity, and it would achieve nothing. The Delta pilots are better than that and we will continue to do all we can to assist our friends across the pond!