

Air Transport Int'l

The Challenging Effects of Transition and Change

By Tawnya Burket
ALPA Communications
Specialist

Air Transport International (ATI) crewmembers are no strangers to transition and change, especially during 2013 when the group faced the challenges that come with a merger. Operationally, the merger with Capital Cargo International Airlines (CCIA) became final on March 8 when ATI received its single operating certificate and the final CCIA flight took off. Only days before, the joint collective bargaining agreement (JCBA) and integrated seniority list

had taken effect. By April, the 11-month merger process concluded when the ATI and CCIA crewmembers took steps to combine their single-council Master Executive Councils (MECs) by holding an election for status representatives and then MEC officers to be chosen among the three elected reps to represent the entire pilot group. That MEC dealt with many hurdles in its first year of office. "We are working to find balance as we continue to navigate through all of the changes related to the merger," says Capt. Tom Rogers, the ATI MEC chairman. The MEC lost its secretary-treasurer and professional flight engineer

(PFE) representative, Scott Olson, when he was furloughed last fall before completing his full term of office through February 2015.

During the summer and fall of 2013, the Joint Implementation Review Committee (JIRC) met with management to ensure that implementation of the JCBA was under way. The committee resolved several issues that arose as the JCBA was being implemented, including items related to junior assignments, benefits, retirement, the sick-bank conversion process, and uniforms for former Capital employees. The JIRC had authority to deal with unexpected issues for the first six months following the March 6, 2013, JCBA effective date. Once the committee was dissolved in September, the normal contract enforcement and grievance proceedings became effective.

Other challenges that arose during the merger and implementation of the new contract dealt with scheduling and training discrepancies. Transition training continues as DC-8 combis are being retired, moving the pilots into Boeing airplanes, which unfortunately means that fellow crewmembers had to say good-bye to the professional flight engineers. The flight engineer craft is being phased out at ATI and many other cargo airlines; all of the 78 PFEs once on the property were furloughed as of Jan. 1, 2014.

B-757 pilots from the domestic operation are being trained in international flight operations and differences training for the B-767.

Proving runs were completed in summer through fall for the B-757 combi. Tabletop exercises for the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans ETOPs validation runs were also successful, putting the B-757 on the DC-8 combi runs. Since the four-engine DC-8 is being replaced by a more fuel-efficient twin-engine aircraft to compete in the global marketplace, a series of validation tests were necessary to demonstrate that ATI can safely operate twin-engine airplanes in extended overwater operations.

The airline and the FAA are currently in the final stages of approving an Aviation Safety Action Program (ASAP). "This program, designed to enhance safety at ATI by providing a way for management, the pilots, and the FAA to detect and rectify safety problems is key," notes Rogers. "We have been trying for years to get ASAP on the property and are happy to see it's coming to fruition." Once approved, the MEC will be educating its members about the program.

The current ATI collective bargaining agreement becomes amendable in May 2014. The MEC is planning for the future by preparing a 2014 strategic plan and will consider the best path to seize opportunities that will most benefit the pilot group. "I look forward to building more unity within the group, creating a stronger committee structure that allows us to help and work with one another more effectively, and taking full advantage of the arsenal of ALPA resources available to us," says Rogers. 🌐

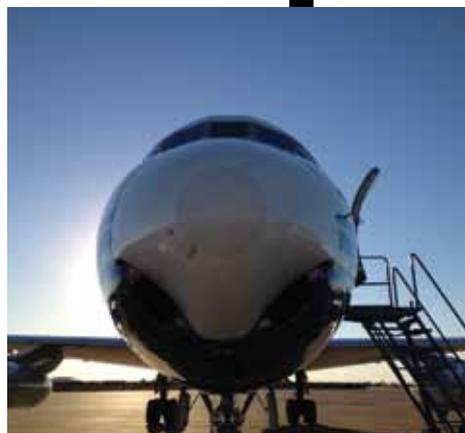


PHOTO BY CAPT. TOM ROGERS

The DC-8 bids farewell to Air Transport International crews as it retires this year.

ATI at a Glance

Crewmembers joined ALPA: November 2009

Number of crewmembers: 345 with 159 on furlough

Operations: Combi passenger, military, and cargo operations around the world

Base: Home-based

Corporate headquarters: Wilmington, Ohio

Fleet: Currently operates seven B-767 freighters and seven B-757s, four of which are freighters and three are combis (fourth combi in the certification process)