

Mesa

New Airplanes, New Contract

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As we move into 2014, Mesa is said to be one of the fastest-growing U.S. regional airlines in the industry. In 2013, all furloughed pilots were recalled, and more than 120 pilots were hired. An additional 350 pilots are expected to be hired over the next two years, as Mesa takes delivery of 30 new Embraer 175s for United Airlines. The increased number of airplanes and the opportunity Mesa has to extend its existing United Express fleet of 20 CRJ700s through 2019 are due, in large part, to the pilot group's efforts. Mesa is consistently ranked at the top for on-time performance by its code-share partners, and it's clear that they are taking notice of the pilots' efforts.

"It's a great time to be a Mesa pilot," says F/O Marcin Kolodziejczyk, chairman of the pilots' Master Executive Council (MEC). "Every day, our crews prove why Mesa should maintain its current business and win new flying opportunities. We are the reason for Mesa's success. Now it's time for our pilots to see a return on our investment."

Contract negotiations began in March 2011. The parties have reached tentative agreements on 15 of the 27 sections. Of these, 12 sections were implemented in 2012 as part of a grievance settlement. They were all current book or better and included (1) an enhanced commuter policy; (2) a provision that pilots must be provided with a written statement of charges before meeting with

the company; and (3) the establishment of a Training Review Board. These improvements, while incremental and noneconomic, went into effect immediately so the pilots didn't have to wait to take advantage of these gains until a complete new agreement was finalized.

The remaining open contract sections are mostly related to economics—scheduling, benefits, and compensation. Although progress remains steady, there's still much work to be done to attain the necessary quality-of-life improvements and achieve the pilots' goal of a competitive contract that retains and attracts professional pilots.

In addition to negotiations, the MEC has maintained its focus on contract enforcement and has fewer than 20 open grievance cases. The success of the pilots' grievance program can largely be attributed to their grievance process, under which the Grievance Committee meets regularly with management to resolve issues quickly and efficiently before a formal grievance is filed. If an issue remains unresolved, the MEC has a robust and creative program to process grievances in a timely manner—grievance settlement meetings with senior management, grievance mediation meetings with a neutral mediator and, if needed, arbitration.

A new campaign, "Contract Enforcement Begins with You!," was launched in November 2013 to remind pilots how important it is to understand and enforce their contractual rights. Many of the MEC's regular communication

tools are being used to promote these ongoing efforts, including Facebook, Twitter, e-mails, and pilot-wide calls.

In December, the MEC toured pilot bases to talk with pilots directly about contract-enforcement efforts, as well as the status of negotiations and other issues affecting the industry.

Recognizing the necessity of having a unified voice to promote the airline piloting profession on Capitol Hill and elsewhere, the MEC has set out to educate pilots about ALPA's Political Action Committee (PAC) and increase participation. In just two months, the Mesa pilots have more than tripled their PAC participation rate.

Also, to encourage the next generation of pilots to become involved in the piloting career, the MEC is working closely with ALPA's Aviation Collegiate Education (ACE) Club at Embry-Riddle University in Prescott, Ariz. (See "Cleared to Dream," December 2013, page 30.)

"If we don't stand up and fight for our future now, we won't have a future to fight for," Kolodziejczyk says. "Mesa pilots understand this and have answered our call to action. We will continue working aggressively to protect and advance the careers of our pilots and remain prepared to address any challenge that may be ahead." 🌐



Pictured left to right are F/O Marcin Kolodziejczyk, Capt. Kenneth Mayfield, F/O Ahriel Greenfield, and F/O Jacob Clymo.

MAG at a Glance

Pilots joined ALPA: 1987

Number of pilots:
Approximately 800

Operations: Mesa Air Group includes go! and Mesa Airlines, and operates as United Express and US Airways Express under contractual agreements and independently as go! in Hawaii. Serves 74 cities, 32 states, Canada, and Mexico with 370 daily departures

Bases: Charlotte, N.C.; Chicago, Ill.; Honolulu, Hawaii; Phoenix, Ariz.; and Washington, D.C.

Headquarters: Phoenix, Ariz.

Fleet: 72 airplanes, including CRJ200s, CRJ700s, and CRJ900s; plus 30 EMB-175s over the next two years