

It's been a turbulent year for Trans States pilots with enough ups and downs to cause even the hardest flyer some airsickness. And an even bumpier ride is projected for 2010.

To sum it up: During 2008 and 2009, Trans States lost all its American codeshare flying, which resulted in the removal of

10 aircraft and the furlough of dozens

of pilots. Curiously, Trans States Holdings (TSH) then announced in October 2009 a letter of intent to purchase 100 Mitsubishi aircraft for delivery in 2014. Whether TSA pilots will fly any of those aircraft remains to be seen as the aircraft could also be placed at TSH's additional wholly owned carrier, GoJet Airlines. And, unfortunately, TSA pilots continue to be furloughed. To date, because of a reduction in fleet from 52 aircraft to 30, 145 TSA pilots are on furlough.

It doesn't end there. The pilots and management have not reached tentative agreements on any open sections of the contract since May 2008. The battle between TSA pilots and management to negotiate a new contract has been ongoing since February 2006, and many sections remain open.

"I believe our Negotiating Committee, as well as the Master Executive Council, has been very clear about wanting an industry-average contract with satisfactory job protections for Trans States pilots. Unfortunately, making progress to that end has been arduous and overly time-consuming," says Capt. Jason Ruszin, the MEC chairman.

During contract negotiations in March 2009, management offered a substandard, short-term "bridge" agreement that would have postponed negotiations for 18 months. The MEC rejected management's offer as it lacked any elements of job protection and did not implement any of the tentatively agreed-to sections of the contract. Tired of management's reticence to come to the table and participate in meaningful dialogue, the MEC conducted a strike authorization vote. Eighty-two percent of the eligible TSA pilots voted, and 95 percent voted to authorize a legal cessation of services in the event an impasse is reached.

Despite another union official's wrongful termination in July and a substantial increase in suspensions since the end of last year, ALPA has successfully settled numerous outstanding grievances, including those associated with training pay, vacation accrual, health insurance, temporary duty assignments, away-from-domicile reserve assignments, and ASAP.

It's evident that despite the pitfalls, TSA pilots continue to forge ahead and stay active in union activities. Pilot leaders have played a key role in ALPA's Fee-For-Departure Task Force, attending quarterly United Codeshare Committee meetings, helping develop a FOQA program at TSA, and creating a Safety Review Subcommittee under the Central Air Safety Committee to address operational concerns with management.

The MEC also initiated an educational campaign this past summer that has included informing pilots of the TSA/GoJet issue; a Strategic Preparedness and Strike Committee (SPSC) "Night Out" program designed to encourage pilots to meet with their MEC, negotiators, and SPSC leaders; conducting all-pilot conference calls; and publishing the *Negotiating News*. The MEC also met in Memphis, Tenn., to develop and pass a job preservation mission statement to address the potential threat of losing flying to GoJet and/or other United Express carriers.

On Nov. 17, 2009, the TSA MEC met with the National Mediation Board to discuss management's failure to negotiate in good faith and the pilots' frustration at failing to reach an agreement after nearly 4 years of negotiating. On December 2, ALPA requested a proffer of arbitration in the hopes of motivating management to reach an agreement.

"The pilots hope that this request for a proffer will introduce new energy at the negotiating table, which will ultimately result in a new labor agreement," says Ruszin.

As a result of that request, the TSA SPSC is gearing up for any eventualities and is in the final stages of developing a strike action plan.

"We're optimistic that 2010 will bring major advancement—either at the table or on the picket line," Ruszin concludes. ☺

Trans States

TSA Pilots Weather the Storm of 2009

By Kimberly Seitz, ALPA Senior Communications Specialist



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TSA at a Glance

Pilots Joined ALPA: 1993
Signed First ALPA Contract: 1994
Number of Pilots: 445
Operations: More than 300 daily flights to 46 cities, serving more than 3.4 million passengers annually while flying as United Express and US Airways
Pilot Domiciles: St. Louis, Mo.; Richmond, Va.; Washington Dulles
Headquarters: St. Louis, Mo.
Fleet: 30 EMB-145s