

Regional Pilots: Join ALPA's Fight To Reject NAI's Scheme



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While Endeavor Air pilots are enduring challenges at home from our

bankruptcy contract, an ominous new international danger threatens both the jobs that we have now and the jobs we may aspire to have in the future.

That menace is Norwegian Air International's (NAI) scheme to dodge national laws and international agreements, allowing it to compete unfairly in the global marketplace. In response, ALPA's president, Capt. Lee Moak, and airline pilots from across Europe and the United States traveled to Oslo, Norway, in February to demonstrate solidarity, publicly express concerns over NAI, and form joint strategies to confront this imminent hazard. Given the danger to U.S. regional pilots' jobs and the contribution that we can make to countering the threat, Capt. Moak invited me to join the Oslo meeting, an event that was a powerful showing of universal opposition among international airline labor groups to the NAI plan.

Don't get me wrong, this is not an attack on Norway or Norwegians. While in Norway, we met and worked closely with Norwegian pilots, including pilots from Norwegian Air Shuttle—the airline whose parent company established NAI as a nonunion alter ego. They are seeking our help in this international battle, which ultimately affects all of our careers.

In reality, there's very little about Norwegian Air International—apart from the name—that is actually Norwegian. Yes, NAI's parent company is based in Norway, but that is where the national ties end. NAI applied for and recently received an air operator's certificate from Ireland. That certificate clears the way for NAI to operate its long-haul routes as an Irish airline, even though NAI has no plans to fly to or transit that country. Further distancing the company from its apparent homeland, NAI's pilots will be based in Thailand and will work through a Singapore employment company under individual contracts, avoiding Norway's employment laws.

Given the poor pay and stagnation in our own regional industry, it is understandable that some U.S. regional pilots have taken their skills and experience to work exactly this type of contract job. It's important to remember, however, that a contract job is not the foundation of a career. Contract jobs often fail to recognize seniority and longevity, adequately address health care and retirement, or offer any long-term security. The proliferation of foreign-contract jobs, under the NAI scheme or any other business model, will compromise U.S. regional pilots' careers and the careers of all U.S. pilots.

Now NAI has applied to the U.S. Department of Transportation for a foreign air carrier permit, which would allow it to fly long-haul service to the United States and compete with U.S. airlines for international passengers' business. If successful, NAI would operate its flights to and from the United States with a

powerful economic advantage over U.S. airlines like Delta, whose passengers Endeavor Air safely transports every day. In fact, the entire U.S. regional industry is built to feed U.S. mainline carriers' global networks. If the mainline carriers shrink or fail, it stands to reason there would be repercussions for their regional partners.

While NAI endangers U.S. regional pilots' jobs today, it's also a threat to our careers tomorrow. We are on the precipice of an unprecedented period of hiring at mainline carriers, job opportunities many regional pilots want and have been waiting for. However, were the DOT to approve a foreign air carrier permit, top-tier international widebody flying would be drastically undermined by the NAI scheme. If U.S. airlines no longer fly widebodies internationally, or even if the flights are significantly reduced, the opportunities for mainline careers will dwindle.

If there is a silver lining, it is that U.S. regional pilots have an opportunity to join in this fight. We have expertise gained through our experiences with holding companies, scope provisions, alter-ego airlines, and subpar benefits. NAI is in essence the same thing, but on a much larger scale.

As regional pilots, we can and must engage in ALPA's effort to oppose NAI. Whether it's contributing to ALPA-PAC, becoming an ALPA district advocate, or signing the #denyNAI petition and joining more than 20,000 others in opposing the scheme, regional pilots' actions matter to the future of our industry.

Norway seems far away, but it's very clear that U.S. regional pilots have a huge stake in what's going on there. 🇺🇸