Five Minutes Earlier

"Never let your airplane take you to a place your brain didn't get to five minutes earlier," goes the adage among airline pilots. Though details of time and distance may vary depending on what a pilot is flying, this sentiment holds true not only for airplanes, but—as we learned when an unmanned aircraft was found on the White House lawn—it now also applies equally to unmanned aircraft system (UAS) operators.

ALPA recognizes the keen interest in UAS for recreation, their value in some commercial applications, and the importance of U.S. leadership in developing new technologies. As I wrote recently in an opinion piece published in *USA Today,* ALPA is not against UAS aircraft; we are for their safe integration into the U.S. national airspace system.

Regardless of whether used for hobby or business, ALPA's core position is that if these aircraft could end up in our airspace, either deliberately or inadvertently, they need to meet the same safety and security standards as other airspace users do. If the UAS is not intended to be operated in the same airspace as airliners, then those restrictions must be permanently programmed into the UAS aircraft.

The FAA is in the process of developing regulations for operating small UAS aircraft weighing less than 55 pounds. Our union's representatives and staff have been deeply involved in the FAA's activities for some time.

On February 15, the FAA released a set of proposed regulations that would apply to small UAS. We are pleased that the FAA has issued the proposed rules, which is an important step, but serious questions remain unanswered. Among our greatest concerns about UAS is a "lost link" scenario in which the aircraft is no longer receiving the signals that the operator transmits, which could result in the aircraft flying where it shouldn't or a worse scenario.

Another issue is making certain that airline pilots can see any UAS operating in the airspace on their cockpit displays. UAS must be visible on air traffic controllers' displays, too. And the UAS itself, if it has the capability to find itself in our airspace, must be equipped with active collision-avoidance technology.

Longer term, integrating large UAS aircraft into the national airspace is an even bigger concern for our Association. For that reason, ALPA maintains that large UAS aircraft must meet the same design, equipage, and certification standards as airliners. The pilots who fly them must also satisfy the same training and qualification standards as airline pilots.

FAA's new set of proposed regulations for UAS are a step in the right direction, but more comprehensive safety and technology standards must be established before airline pilots find them in or around our airspace. ALPA's representatives and staff will continue to work with the FAA and other industry stakeholders to put safety first as UAS are integrated into the U.S. national airspace system.

And speaking of airline pilots' commitment to thinking minutes and miles ahead of their current location, ALPA is working harder than ever to bring this long-sighted view to pilots' careers. As Capt. Paul Ryder (ExpressJet), chairman of ALPA's Fee-for-Departure Committee, and Capt. Spencer Rowe (Envoy Air), national coordinator of ALPA's Furloughed Pilots Support Program, write in "Landing Your Dream Job" (see page 20), our Board of Directors has put a strong priority on building strategies for ALPA pilots' career development and progression.

Our union recognizes that many members are focused on establishing long-term careers at their current airline, while others are seeking opportunities for advancement beyond the airlines for which they work today. ALPA is doing more to give our members who fly for regional airlines access to hiring departments at mainline airlines while at the same time helping them pursue opportunities at their current employer.

In every way possible, ALPA is helping our members make the most of their careers, including our continuous efforts in the global arena. You've likely heard the news reports about how we are seeking to defend and restore fairness to our Open Skies agreements. Specifically, we are now reviewing information that confirms significant subsidies to three Middle East airlines that undermine the principles of Open Skies and give these carriers an unfair and unlawful advantage in the global marketplace.

Stay tuned for more on this subject in next month's issue and in future ALPA communications that demonstrate whether it's five minutes, five hundred miles, or five decades, ALPA pilots are always thinking ahead.

Capt. Tim Canoll, ALPA President