



## Editorial



**Cpt. M. Chalk**  
ECA President

**“Is that safety or industrial?”**

It is always a mistake to make an industrial point backed up with a safety argument. This is a clear principle behind all of the positions ECA takes. But however hard we seek to separate the two areas of our work, there are always occasions when they uncomfortably co-exist.

Next week ECA will host a press event with our cousins from the USA, ALPA. We will jointly make a clear argument about jobs: Appropriate industrial relations structures must be included in the package of legislation or agreements which provide for economic liberalisation. If they are not, then we risk the loss of the competitive edge which made Europe and the USA the most economically successful continents and risk reintroducing the industrial turmoil associated with the establishment of those rights. Our rich history clearly tells us that workers will not stand by and see their jobs downgraded and their work outsourced to countries with cheaper labour markets without a fight.

But there is another effect of not supporting independent professional representation in key workforces such as flight crew, and that is the loss of their enormously important contribution to aviation safety. IFALPA and IATA are the only permanent observers to ICAO, and their contributions are much greater than the word ‘observer’ implies. ECA dedicates the majority of its effort and resources to supporting EASA (and previously the JAA) rulemaking tasks, supplying experts and ‘front line’ experience to ensure the goal of an ever safer industry. I do not believe it is a coincidence that the two continents with the lowest aviation accident rates are the two continents with the most active professional pilot associations.

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## New Alitalia Management “Experiment” with Iconic European Airline

Following political interference and poor management over a significant period of time, the Italian National Flag carrier Alitalia, was recently driven to the brink of bankruptcy. The Italian Government decided it must sell its near 50% stake. Following expressions of interest from other reputable European Airlines in acquiring this once great icon of European aviation, more political interference meant that Alitalia was instead ‘restructured’ and then acquired by a mixed bag of Italian investors, collectively called Compagnia Aerea Italiana SpA (CAI).

Most members of the CAI consortium have airline experience only as a passenger; the one exception being a small domestic start up (1995) airline; Air One. The Italian Government had ensured that the involvement of either the Air France or Lufthansa Groups was rejected.

Last month, Associazione Nazionale Piloti Aviazione Commerciale (ANPAC), the largest Italian Professional Pilots’ Association and a member of ECA, called a press conference to highlight some of their concerns for the way this new owner is seeking to manage the staff and assets of Alitalia. ECA supported this event with a speech from the ECA President, Captain Martin Chalk (which can be found on our website) and the involvement of the ECA Secretary General, Philip von Schöppenthau.

In the speech, Captain Chalk highlighted the partnerships which have throughout the history of civil aviation been the foundation of the high levels of flight safety achieved. Despite operating at temperatures of -60°C, speeds of more than 1000km/h and altitudes of more than 11,000m – flying is still the safest way to travel. This is no accident (pardon the pun), but rather the result of partnerships of experts. A partnership:

- between IFALPA (pilots), IATA (airlines) and NAAs (authorities) at ICAO (global) level;
- between ECA (pilots), Airline Associations and the EU Institutions at European level;
- between professional pilot associations, airlines and authorities at National level;
- between airline management and pilot association representatives at company level.

The new Alitalia/CAI management has

chosen to throw away this partnership approach. It is disregarding decades of joint learning and embarking on a potentially risky experiment. Rather than embracing the flight crew as integral to the strength of the safety chain, the last line of defence against tragedy, CAI is arrogantly ignoring them. Rather than engaging with flight crew representatives to deliver the painful changes needed to restore this iconic European airline to greatness, CAI is actively working *against* them.



Alitalia CAI is also experimenting with the number of flight crew employed per aircraft. If press reports are to be believed, Alitalia CAI management is intending to reduce crewing levels in a network airline to significantly below the best that the low fares model delivers; a model that is very different from the network model and requires fewer crews per aircraft. When combined with the reported management bullying of employees, this will cause unbearable pressures in the system, compromising safety and leading to miserable delays for Alitalia passengers.

Airlines have complex structures, using complex aircraft, airports and many interdependent staff groups. It is sad but, Alitalia CAI management is not yet displaying the understanding and competence necessary to deliver a successful airline, based on mature partnerships with its key employee groups.

The Italian regulator should watch this ‘experiment’ very carefully, to ensure it does not lead to tragedy. The Alitalia CAI management should quickly integrate the AF Group expertise as part of the recently agreed minority stake in the new company. Crucially, the new Alitalia Management should invite ANPAC Alitalia Pilot Representatives to immediately sit round a table, work on a new relationship and strive together to deliver a return to greatness for Alitalia. ■

So if professional pilot associations are undermined, both safety and industrial abilities are undermined:

- The ability to support and improve the industry's fantastic safety record, to address our members' safety concerns is undermined – a loss not only to professional pilots, but to passengers and all others in the industry, too.
- The ability to support good personnel management methods, representing our members' industrial concerns; and the consequent loss of effective change management and social cohesiveness is also undermined.

These are two separate and distinctive arguments – we will never mix the industrial and safety concerns – but nonetheless they stem from the same source: the concern that social regulation is lagging behind economic liberalisation and the whole industry will be poorer because of it. ■



Special webpage on EU-US and ECA Press Conference: <http://www.eurocockpit.be>.

## Next Meetings

**16-17 June:** ECA Long-Term Review Group, Amsterdam, NL

**17 June:** Social Dialogue Plenary Meeting, Brussels, BE

**17-18 June:** EU-Australia Negotiations, Brussels, BE

**21-23 June:** IFALPA ADO Committee, Lisbon, PT

**22-23 June:** EU-US Labour Forum, Brussels, BE

**23 June:** EASA Conference: Locally Approved, Globally Accepted—A Regulatory Approach to Harmonisation and Flexibility, Cologne, DE

**24-26 June:** IFALPA Safety School, Madrid, ES

**24 June:** EU-US Joint Committee, Brussels, BE

**24-25 June:** ECA Conference, Brussels, BE

**25-26 June:** EU-US 2nd Stage Negotiations, Brussels, BE

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The **European Cockpit Association** is the association of Flight Crew Unions from European States. Based in Brussels, ECA has 36 Member Associations, representing over **38.200** pilots from 36 countries. For more information: [www.eurocockpit.be](http://www.eurocockpit.be).

## Trans-Atlantic Market: Pilots Expect a Re-Balance of their Bargaining Rights

**The week of the 22-27 June, the European Commission will host the EU-US air transport negotiations that will include a two-day "Labour Forum", a Joint Committee meeting and two-day negotiations of the stage 2 EU-US air transport agreement.**

The first stage agreement, implemented one year ago, encapsulates a provision called 'Joint Committee' to monitor its appropriate implementation. This provision set up the rules of a mechanism that allows both parties to call for a meeting when they notice an inappropriate implementation of the air service agreement. In this context, the EU and the US can raise problems that affect the workforce and particularly the mobile staff that is the most affected category of workers.

The European Cockpit Association together with US ALPA have identified that the industrial relations on the trans-Atlantic market have been weakened as a consequence of the EU-US agreement – and this to the detriment of air crew. Therefore, efficient measures are needed to rebalance this situation; otherwise none of the Pilots' Association will be in a position to support any further negotiations on a stage 2 agreement.

To identify and assess these prob-

lems, the European Commission organised a Labour Forum in December last year, involving all major stakeholders, including ECA and US ALPA. A second similar event will be held this June and will focus on the potential solutions to rebalance this undesirable situation.

ECA and US ALPA require that mobile workers across the Atlantic are able to collectively negotiate and agree their Collective Labour Agreements, and they have the practical ability to enforce them. Pilots managed by a single management should be able to be represented by a single Union, whether or not the Company bases its crew in two or more countries across the Atlantic. If employees do not defend their bargaining rights, the implications include the end of Pilots' Unions with the loss of all the expertise that these highly skilled and professional workers provide. The outcome of the June Labour Forum will shape the future ECA and US ALPA position on the EU-US stage 2 agreement. ■

## Safety in Helicopter Operations

**Helicopter operations have a higher accident rate than fixed-wing. To understand why, one has to understand the differences in operations.**

The benefit with helicopters is their ability to hover, take off and land with no infrastructure. Therefore, there are a variety of helicopter operations with the resultant variety of safety issues. There is no "single fix" to helicopter safety.

Helicopter operations can be divided into three categories:

- A to B passenger operations. These are similar to the equivalent fixed-wing operations, with similar safety issues and their solutions. With smaller passenger operations, the pilot also handles the passengers, with no ground staff or cabin crew support and often passengers sit next to the pilot. However, when the pilot is under pressure, this situation is sub-optimal. To avoid eroding safety margins, better operational control and support is needed.

- Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS) and Search and Rescue (SAR) operations have no schedule and flights are usually to a place with no infrastructure. Controlled Flight into Terrain (CFIT) and loss of control due to degraded visual conditions are the main risks. The changes necessary to improve safety levels may be the same for fixed-wing, but this is not always the case. A solution would be to better target training towards specific risk to HEMS and SAR operations. One example might be that dangerous goods training, which is mandatory but rarely a problem in these

operations, could be replaced by training obstacle avoidance or something more relevant to the operational risks.

- The third category is aerial-work. The main safety issue is the pressure to complete the task. In this case, pilot input to regulations for the setting of standards would be a major improvement to aerial-work safety levels.

Helicopter safety regulation also suffers from a lack of data. Small helicopters are not equipped with FDR or CVR. Light weight, low cost CVR/FDRs would be beneficial to understand the chain of events, as helicopter accidents seldom have the impact forces or post crash fires of fixed wing accidents. The heritage of standards and operational procedures for fixed wing operations highlights the lack of specific rules for helicopter operations.

Do we want the helicopters rules to be a copy of the equivalent fixed wing rules? Whilst we operate in the same air and we all agree that there is a need for some common standards we also need helicopter-specific regulations in order to operate to a level playing field standard in civil aviation.

Poor helicopter accident statistics is often due to the lack of understanding of how helicopters operate. Pilots from all types of helicopter operations need to have more influence on the regulators. This is the main challenge of the pilot helicopter community today. ■