

Hotel Updates



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Chairman, Crew Accommodations Committee*

I want to start off by thanking the committee members who continue to serve our pilot group: Tim Anderson (DCA), Lew Brown (PHL International), Bob Barich and Chris Minor (CLT), J.H. "Smitty" Smith (BWI), and John Geehan and Steve Guttman (PIT). These pilots have sacrificed days off to travel to different cities for hotel inspections and to follow up on issues submitted to the committee via OF-310 forms and e-mail. These guys have made my job easier as chairman. With the way things are progressing, we are also going to be looking to add more members to the committee. We especially need committee members in PHL who fly domestic, BOS, and LGA. If you are interested in joining the committee please get in touch with me as well as your local reps. Adding another member in DCA would also be helpful.

I also want to thank those of you who have taken the time to fill out forms, or who have dropped us an e-mail concerning hotels or transportation companies. We continue to receive quite a bit of feedback from the pilots in written form, and I want that to continue and even increase. I also receive comments on my articles, and I hope that continues as well.

One of our committee's goals is to make it easier to communicate your thoughts about hotels, overnight locations, crew rooms (or lack thereof), and how the transportation com-

panies perform. One way we hope to improve this is through the MEC's website in the Pilot Only section and the Crew Accommodations Committee web page. Our webmasters have set up a preliminary page, and we are working to find a day for training so committee members can learn to administer the page. At that time, we will be able to post more timely information in one easy-to-find location. We will continue to answer all written communications that you send to us. Although we get backed up sometimes, a backlog of forms is better than an absence of forms.

I received a message concerning my November article, which may have been confusing to some readers. While I believe that management does not pay enough attention to the OF-310 forms, it is NOT a waste of time to fill them out. This documentation strengthens our case when a hotel needs to be changed or retained. When we can reference 20, 30 or more complaints about a hotel, and the problems remain unresolved, it makes it more difficult for management to ignore the problem. I keep every form that has been submitted. I still have forms from many hotels we no longer use and cities we no longer serve. They are a great reference tool. We are also able to review the service history of a hotel or transportation contract. This information helps us to make changes when necessary. So, please use the forms. Carry a few in your flight

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bag. They are not that heavy, and you'll be able to fill one out while an incident is fresh in your mind. I thought we had collection boxes in each base, but have come to find out that is not the case. By the next article, I hope to have that changed and will report where each box is in each base.

Next, I want to thank those of you who were contacted by the Wilson Center Poll and ex-

pressed an interest in serving on this committee. We need help in a few bases. I have the list and will be contacting a number of you in an effort to fill committee vacancies. I will retain the list, so those of you who may not be contacted can be called when future vacancies open up.

Since the last time I wrote an article, I have attended two hotel chairmen meetings. The

Crew Meal Grievance

The MEC took action at its December 13-14 special meeting on the Company's failure to comply with Section 5(I), Crew Meals, of our Contract.

The Company has not updated or corrected the appropriate computer programs to distribute crew meals as specified in our Contract. The Contract requires that the Company provide an appropriate crew meal for each on-duty period scheduled in excess of six hours and which does not have a scheduled ground time between flight segments of at least 60 minutes. Breakfast-type pilot meals must be boarded on flights that depart regularly catered stations between 0100-0700 local, excluding continuous on duty pairings and the initial flight within a trip pairing departing a pilot's domicile. At non-catered airports these breakfast meals must be provided either at the layover hotel or at airport.

If your pairing does not contain a contractually required scheduled crew meal or you do not receive a crew meal as per the Contract, you can call the following numbers to order the crew meal: During regular business hours Monday – Friday, between 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., call Resource Planning at Dialnet 412-747-3201. During other hours and on the weekend call Hub Tracking at Dialnet 412-472-2570.

MEC Resolution AI 00-193 Crew Meal Grievance

WHEREAS the contract between US Airways and ALPA is quite clear on when a crew meal is issued, and

WHEREAS the current program used to insert crew meals is not working properly, and

WHEREAS ALPA has asked management to devote the necessary resources to rewrite the program to follow the contract, and

WHEREAS there has been no progress made to get this computer program problem corrected, and

WHEREAS this is another example of management violating our Contract,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the MEC directs the MEC Grievance Chairman to file a grievance on the Crew Meal issue, and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the MEC directs the Communications Committee to communicate via code a phone and *US AIRWAVES* that all pilots should be aware of the crew meal responsibilities in Section 5(I) and include the telephone numbers to be called for ordering crew meals.

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at our quarterly meeting held on November 8, but there's more about that later in the article.

In early October, I also attended the National Hotel Chairman's meeting in Atlanta hosted by Delta. One of the most interesting items discussed in this meeting was an increase in hotel transportation safety. All participants agreed to recommend that we all push for seat belts and luggage restraints in all vans holding under 32 passengers. It was felt that it would be safer in the larger buses that are sometimes used to transport crews than in the smaller vans. We also thought it could be difficult getting seat belts installed in those vehicles holding over 32 passengers. What your committee brought back to our management and what we recommend to you is this:

- 1) On vans smaller than 32 passengers, we recommend the use of seat belts by all crewmembers. If none are provided, please let us know so that we may talk with the transportation provider to try to

get them installed. If it is a contracted transportation company, we will inform them if they don't want to install seat belts in the vans for our use, we will fight for a new transportation company that does have seat belts. There are places where local laws do not require the installation of seat belts, but we will still encourage the transportation provider to take the extra step and install them anyway. My goal is to have seat belts available to all our crewmembers by February.

- 2) If a hotel wants to overload the van, I would not recommend riding in it. The standard contract with a contracted transportation provider states that there will be a seat for each passenger. I have asked our management to contact their legal department to add that clause to the standard contract with a hotel that

Disapproval List

ERI—This hotel is either number two or three on the list to be replaced. One hotel is used for all overnights.

LAX (all hotels)—Would like to see a full review of this city. There already should be a marked decrease in the use of the Ramada Hotel in Culver City, which is not acceptable for any layover.

Watch List

ABE long—An inspection is being done, and we are awaiting word from the inspector on what was found. We need to locate a hotel in a decent area. I know other airlines are also having a very hard time with this city.

CHS long—Although no complaints this month, it is still a very poor location for a long overnight, and the contract should be coming up this spring.

BNA long—This is new to the list. Again, this is another poor location for a long overnight. No complaints this month, but we realize that this city needs to be inspected. We're looking at ways to get other hotels interested in a contract.

The total form count for the past three months was 293. Of those, 15 were related to crew meals, 15 were positive comments (we do stay in some hotels people like), seven were on old hotels, and one was a general comment. We have already taken action on the two cities receiving the most complaints: DEN transportation and the DAY long hotel. Both came in with six reports. The ORD short hotel was taken off the Watch List, as the hotel has addressed the transportation problems. Since the renovations at the DEN long hotel appear to have been completed, we have removed this hotel from the list as well.

provides transportation. If transportation can't be provided within the 20 minutes of the request, you can secure alternate transportation. To quote our contract, Section 5(E):

At points other than the pilot's domicile, where the company's scheduled or prearranged transportation is not available within twenty (20) minutes after such is requested by the pilot, the Company will provide alternate transportation. It is understood that scheduled prearranged or alternate transportation may be a crew car; in that event the pilot will be expected to utilize such. On overnights scheduled for less than ten and one-half (10 1/2) hours, transportation shall be available within ten (10) minutes and the twenty-minute wait set forth above shall not apply.

- 3) If a transportation provider is stacking up luggage with no restraints above the seat that is behind you, think twice before riding in the van. This happens mainly when a hotel is trying to use a mini van to transport our crews. This is another area where we are going to attempt to get the hotel to change the size of the van, or we will look for another hotel or transportation company. We are not supposed to move an airplane with luggage blocking doors and aisles— why should we be expected to ride in a van that blocks the door or aisle?

Again, this is what your committee recommends for your safety. You alone are the one who has to decide if your safety is being jeopardized.

As I had stated earlier, your committee held a meeting on the November 7 and 8. We also had a quarterly meeting with management and the AFA on November 8. One topic management wanted to discuss was the voluntary room cancellation program as it related to OIJ claims by crewmembers. I had discussed this before with the Retirement and Insurance Committee about what position ALPA feels we need to take, and the effect that canceling a room has on OIJ claims. What we had been told in the past was what our management passed across the table, which was approved by Legal and Labor Relations at US Airways. Here is the interoffice correspondence in its entirety:

Many times we have discussed the belief

that the lack of a policy statement, pertaining to the affect the act of canceling a scheduled room has on a crewmember obtaining OIJ compensation, negatively impacts the number of rooms cancelled by our crew. It was our belief if there was some policy released, it would dispel false beliefs and the number of rooms that are canceled, when the crewmember does not intend to use it, would go up. The following language was drafted to address this issue. Please review this and we can discuss the best way to get this language in front of the crewmembers.

"While the Company encourages you to use the hotel room that is scheduled for you when you overnight, if you elect not to use the scheduled room, we ask that you cancel the room in an effort to reduce operating costs. The mere fact that an employee did or did not cancel a hotel room will not determine whether a claim for OIJ will be granted. Rather, claims for OIJ coverage are investigated to determine how and why an injury occurred and whether the injury occurred while the employee was in the course of his or her employment. Please keep this in mind the next time that you are considering not using the room that is scheduled for you. Thanks you for your efforts in assisting the company in reducing its operating costs."

This is what I had told you before about room cancellations affecting an OIJ claim, but now here is something from our management in writing.

Also at the meeting, we talked about the completion of the problem list of ten cities. The list was submitted last November and action on the cities was very slow at first. We finally completed the list and moved the last crews from these problem hotels for November. This was a great start, but it's still only a start.

We are developing another list of problem cities to take action on. I am willing to give a hotel or transportation provider a chance to fix problems, but when the problems keep occurring, I don't think there is any real intention of fixing them. That is why it is important for crewmembers to continue to fill out the OF-310 forms. Not only can they alert us to problems, they are also able to be used as progress reports on areas we are trying to resolve. This is especially true from month to month, since it might take two weeks before the committee receives and acts on the report. Many of you

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are now including your e-mail address on the form, and that is helping speed the response to you. One thing I ask, though, is to please take the time to write more carefully and as legibly as possible so that we can get the proper address.

As for the new problem city list, the committee is developing the list from the OF-310 forms that are submitted and from the Disapproval List, which is highlighted in each of my *US AIRWAVES* articles. Our goal, when a hotel or transportation provider makes it to the Disapproval List, is to be able to take action on it within three months. That has been very hard to do recently because of how short staffed the department is for our management. I hope they will start to use the resources available to them—namely, your committee. We are on the road quite a bit and are familiar with many cities. Given enough notice, we are able to pick trips from the A/I list to perform inspections, review areas, and talk with hotels that are having problems meeting the needs of our crews.

The last of these problem cities were taken care of in November. In CHA, we have moved out of the Ho Jo's and into a Hampton Inn near the mall. In reviewing the CHA area, the full service hotels available were not well located and/or were in poor condition, much like the Ho Jo's. Given the fact that we would much rather rely on being able to walk to dinner and entertainment, we felt the Hampton was the best choice, even though it is a limited service hotel. However, there are local restaurants that will deliver to the hotel.

Another change was in FAY. We have left the Holiday Inn and went back to the Holiday Inn Bordeaux. Some of you may remember this hotel, since we used it before moving to the Holiday Inn. With some of the market conditions changing, this hotel became interested in our business again. We were able to keep a full service hotel with amenities within an easy walk. There are three strip malls with restaurants and movies within easy walking distance. There is also an indoor mall that is about a five-minute drive that the hotel will take you to when the van is not making an airport run. The hotel is much closer to the airport—about a five-minute drive. Also, we are supposed to be housed in the corporate tower rooms.

Another change that should have taken place by the time you read this is a new transportation company in Denver. After behaving for a month or two after all the problems we had this sum-

mer, Bel-Air has reverted to its old ways. As soon as our management can get a contract finalized with a new company, it will take effect. We will not be waiting for the beginning of a new month so watch for a CBS crew message. I hope the change will occur way before you read this.

The transportation to the short EWR hotel is a very positive change. Any crew arriving before 23:15 will be picked up at the terminal by TBT Transportation and taken to the Ramada. Crews arriving after 23:15 will still be picked up by the Ramada at the terminal, as we have been doing for the past few months. This means you don't have to use the monorail system to get to your overnight. By hiring a van, we have been able to cut the travel time to the short hotel back to an acceptable time instead of the hour it was taking before.

Other new hotels to the system include the new service to Aruba and daily service to St. Maarten, which started on November 12. Because of the delay in finalizing where we would be staying, I had something sent to the briefing rooms in PHL before the start of service. For those of you who are interested or have not yet had the trip, here is what was decided:

In Aruba, we will be using the Holiday Inn Sun Spree Resort. The hotel is located in the heart of the high-rise hotels, located along a very nice stretch of beach. The biggest surprise of the visit is the cost to call back to the U.S. The government owns the phone company in Aruba, and they don't recognize toll free numbers. The Holiday Inn advises us the cost for direct dial to the states will range from \$5 to \$15 for the first three minutes and about \$5 for each additional minute. If you dial an 800 number, it should go through, but the charge will be the same as if you didn't use the 800 number. The best way is to avoid these kinds of charges is to get an AT&T international calling card. The rates are lower, but they're not what we are used to. Other companies might also have a better rate, but it seems AT&T is the best known. There are blue phones around the island, and the Holiday Inn has one in the lobby. These phones are discounted phones, but many times there is quite a line for the phone. My best advice is to have home call you until we can figure out something else. The same goes for St. Maarten on the phone charges, though they're not as high as Aruba's.

In Aruba, the Holiday Inn is offering a 15 percent discount on all food and beverage in all

the outlets and on room service and up to 10 free local calls per day. The spa at the hotel has agreed to a 15 percent discount on their services. Hertz and National rental cars are also located at the hotel. A cab ride to town is about \$9 each way. The cabs do not have meters, so be sure to ask the rate before getting in. The transportation to and from the hotel is handled by KTS. If you want to bring someone along in the van it will cost \$10. I'm not happy with this charge, but when you're less than a week away from needing the service, you don't have as much time as you would like to negotiate everything. This charge seems to be to protect the cab drivers from losing fares.

The Holiday Inn also has a workout room, casino, and nightclub. I walked on the beach side at night between the Holiday Inn and other hotels along the strip. It seemed safe the nights that I was there, and security was present at most hotel entrances from the beach. The other hotels in the area have casinos restaurants and nightclubs, too.

In St. Maarten, we will be using the Divi Bay Beach Resort for the overnights. The resort is on a peninsula and fairly self-contained, much like our hotel in St. Croix. It is located a little over a mile from town and the walk is not

recommended, especially at night. We will have a shuttle set up to make one round-trip from the hotel for each crew. If everyone cannot agree on times, a cab ride is \$5 for the first two folks and \$3 for everyone over the first two. The hotel has two restaurants to choose from, and a 20 percent discount will be offered in the restaurant. Rental cars are available at the hotel and \$25 will get you a four-passenger car for the day. The hotel also has a workout room. As of this writing, the transportation company had not been selected.

Now, on to changes made in December. The transportation company in Denver was finally changed in mid-December. This change took longer than anticipated. During the quarterly meeting with management in early November, we were under the impression that the change would happen before Thanksgiving. It didn't, and thankfully crews kept reporting problems that the transportation company could not explain away. This is a very good example of how the OF-310 forms can be very helpful in documenting an ongoing problem.

Also in mid-December, we left the Holiday Inn in downtown Louisville. We are now using the Holiday Inn South for short overnights. This hotel is five minutes from the airport and

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not near any flight path. As everyone knows, this is very important in SDF because of the UPS hub. The long overnight hotel is out of the city. We made that choice for because: 1) Many complaints about the Holiday Inn in town also noted a dislike of the downtown area. 2) The hotels we could find in town willing to house us wouldn't keep our crews during special events, e.g., the Kentucky Derby and Thunder Over Louisville. For these two reasons, we felt that the Holiday Inn in Hurstborne would be a better choice for long overnights. This hotel is located about 12 minutes from the airport and has a number of restaurants within an easy walk. In addition, the hotel will drive the crews to the same mall the Downtown Holiday Inn has been shuttling us to. The Hurstborne Holiday Inn has been housing Delta flight attendants, so there should not be a learning curve when we arrive.

Another change took effect on January 1 in Dayton. Our long overnights are finally out of the Ramada Hotel and into the Doubletree in town. We used this hotel before it was a Doubletree. When referencing old OF-310 forms on this hotel, we noted that many changes have taken place. First, and most notably, the hotel has a new owner. Second, a complete renovation of the hotel has been completed since we last used it. Third, the new ownership yielded new management. This management team has worked with airlines in other hotels and seems to have a good service record. Northwest is at the hotel now and reports no problems. Delta had used the hotel and could not recall any problems with it either. It seems that they moved for financial reasons, but I'm not 100 percent sure.

In one of my recent articles, I had asked for feedback on where the pilots would like to stay on our return to Amsterdam this spring. I received around ten replies, and all except one wanted a return to the Dorint in The Hague. In our early survey of the hotels in Amsterdam that would be willing to take our crews, none would guarantee no-waiting for rooms at check-in. This is a very big issue for any international crewmember. The possibility of shortening the drive time to the hotel, only to wait for a room for an hour or two, didn't seem worth going to downtown Amsterdam. There also would have been some relocation during busy times. The Dorint promised the same service they delivered when we used them the last time. Therefore, we will return to the Dorint when service

to Amsterdam resumes in April. You will again have the free trolley passes to head to the beach or into The Hague. The area around the hotel has not changed much, with food stores and shops behind the hotel and a block or two away.

Finally, the Dorint Hotel in Wiesbaden is now open, and the Pittsburgh and Philadelphia crews should both be using this hotel. If, when you read this, the PHL crew has not moved, it will happen soon. We gave the Crowne Plaza the 45-day notice required by the contract because of continuing problems with room waits and relocations. We were planning to make the move when the contract expired in May. However, because of the ongoing problems and the ability of the Dorint Hotel Wiesbaden to be able to house both crews, we decided to move the PHL crew early. The CLT crews will remain where they are.

What's next on the committee's schedule? Currently, there are inspections in progress for the long PHL and ABE overnights. Coming up are trips to Brussels for our new service, MSY to review options, and ITH, ERI, PNS, and LAX. While many more cities demand our attention, these are the highest priorities on your committee's list at the moment. I am sure that management will also want to add a few to the list.

On the crew meal and the crew room front, there has been very little progress. I have asked the MEC to take some action, and they passed a resolution on these issues in December and directed a grievance be filed on the crew meal issue (see resolution included with article). I also received some calls from the Dining and Cabin Service department relating to the lack of hot meals and the choices not being what we had approved at the last menu presentation. We have been playing phone tag, but I hope to resolve these problems in short order.

That is about it for the beginning of the New Year. I hope everyone had a nice holiday season. Please continue to fill out the OF-310 forms (I've included one at the end of this article) and come see us on our web page.

Thanks and have a good overnight!



