

## *Not One Job, Not One Nickel*



*Chris Beebe  
MEC Chairman*

On July 3, after a weekend of various media outlets reporting that the United/US Airways proposed deal may not fly, US Airways and United released a joint press statement that said the two companies “have confirmed that they are in discussions regarding the possibility of terminating the proposed merger between the two companies prior to the August 1 termination date.” I’m writing this article a week later, waiting for some of the dust to settle and working to get real answers from management, with the help of the media and local and national politicians.

I am pleased that the very public pressure from US Airways’ labor unions, along with help from politicians concerned about the possible loss of their constituents’ jobs, forced Mr. Wolf and Mr. Gangwal to show some of their cards. On July 10, US Airways issued a press release saying that they have no intention to, and will not, recommend a breakup of US Airways to its Board of Directors on July 18.

This is a victory for our pilot group, for all of the employees of US Airways, and for our customers. But it didn’t come about suddenly—we have been walking the halls of Congress, talking to the media to get our message across, and meeting with other US Airways labor leaders. It’s not coincidental that ALPA, government officials and TV stations are carrying the same message.

Bill Pollock, MEC Vice Chairman, and Bill Turbett, Legislative Affairs Committee Chairman, have been working for months to gain support from government leaders and aligning our interests with theirs.

A merger termination and possible breakup of US Airways was a hot media topic, especially in areas like CLT, PHL, and PIT. The press,

radio, and TV coverage we received through the efforts of MEC Communications Committee Chairman Roy Freundlich and the MEC Communications staff was invaluable, and our message was amplified by the other labor leaders.

For my part, I have spearheaded the effort to create a labor coalition, with members of ALPA, the AFA, TWU, CWA, and IAM, which has been meeting for over a year. During these meetings, we’ve shared information, discussed strategy, and reinforced our commitment to provide the employees we represent with the career protections we deserve.

The consistency of our message in these three areas brought us to where we are now, and proves that we need to be thinking strategically, so as each challenge is presented, we can use the relationships we’ve built. This way, we can choose our options, instead of options being thrust upon us. This is where the rubber meets the road. This is where we work to save our careers from the uncertainty of the economy and industry, and from those who are involved in our company, but with only their shareholders in mind.

Although senior management says that they will not recommend fragmentation to the Board, this in no way diminishes what we feel the Company owes us in growth and commitment to running the airline as a stand-alone carrier. I have been telling management this for over a year. When the other US Airways labor leaders and I met with Gangwal on July 6 to air our concerns, we told him that he has ignored the airline and its employees, and hammered home the fact that every labor group on this property has made concessions to make this airline profitable. I told Gangwal, “We’re not giving up any pilots, and we’re not giving up any money.”

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Senior management has to make the commitment to this airline real by using the plan they originally devised three years ago. The employees of this airline have given Mr. Wolf and Mr. Gangwal the tools they needed to turn this airline into a world-class carrier of choice. Now we expect them to use these tools they’ve been granted, aggressively pursue their plans, and competitively manage this airline.

In the past three years, US Airways labor union employees have given this airline concessions in order to cut costs and secure our future, in exchange for the airline’s pledge to implement a five-point plan aimed at growing the business. Parts of this plan were started, then abandoned—or not even started at all. It’s time for Mr. Wolf and Mr. Gangwal to run our airline as a stand-alone carrier or step aside.

At the time this magazine went to print, United and US Airways had just agreed to give the DOJ the 21-day notice needed to make a decision on the merger. I’m not holding my breath at this news, though. I am very interested, however, in the alternatives the US Airways Board of Direc-

tors will be considering at a July 18 meeting now that a merger seems unlikely. Even with assurances from management not to recommend a break up, I am still cautious. By the time you read this article, the Board will have met and discussed alternatives to a merger. Although I don’t know what their plans will be at this time, I do know what we have to continue doing to provide all US Airways pilots with the best possible job opportunities.

Your MEC and I are taking every opportunity to provide all US Airways pilots with the protections that they deserve. Every chance I get, I reinforce to management (and anyone else who is interested in the future of US Airways) what our job expectations are, and the commitment that this pilot group and all other employees at US Airways have earned.

Looking at the big picture, I realize that to get to where we want to be in the future, additional strategic thinking is needed so that the MEC can weigh each option, and from there, provide direction.

We now need to refocus on job security. There are opportunities available for us in current negotiations with the Company, and there are also future opportunities depending on ALPA’s needs and the Company’s needs. The parity process is working, so let’s focus on our immediate needs: protecting every pilot from the top of the list to the bottom, while maintaining the career and quality of work expectations. I also believe that we should strive to get job protections that extend beyond the term of our contract. One of the things this past year has taught us is that if we have the opportunity, we should acquire tighter, more favorable job protections than what we presently have.

We should also start thinking about governance. Control can be gained by having a seat on the Board of Directors, along with veto power to put a stop to plans that would not be in the best interests of the pilots.

Until that day, we’ll keep working, using the most effective means possible to ensure that this pilot group is protected. We’re not giving anything away.

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