



family support

NEWSLETTER

www.balpa.org

Background to the Dispute

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British Airways is like any big business in that it needs to grow to ensure it remains able to compete on a global level.

Unfortunately the company wants a new and separate pilot workforce for its plans to grow in Europe, despite the fact our pilots have the right to live and work across the EEA.

The company plans to operate services between mainland Europe and the US. Until very recently this type of operation had not been possible. The Open Skies treaty between the EU and US changed that and BA want to compete with the European Airlines in their own back yard.

BALPA welcomes such ambitions and have supported the concept of taking the BA brand to the European markets. As professional pilots we form an integral part of BA's brand and its well earned reputation. The opportunity to extend our reach is a genuinely exciting one.

Regrettably BA views these opportunities differently.

The company sees this as an opportunity to marginalise their current pilots and will embark on a thinly veiled attempt to undermine our terms and condition by outsourcing the flying that BA pilots should undertake. They will do this by setting up an airline called OpenSkies.

This dispute isn't about BALPA defending outdated practices and

historically high pay. We have offered BA the ability to employ pilots into the new operation at market rate and with local terms and conditions.

All we ask is that the pilots they recruit form part of our master seniority list.

So why is seniority so important?

BALPA talks to pilot associations all around the world. What BA proposes to do, keeping the pilots in the new airline separate from the main group, is a well worn path.

The new airline grows quickly and does so from a lower cost base. New aircraft orders and routes migrate to the new airline and the parent company sees no growth. Eventually the terms and conditions of the new airline force down those in the parent company.

Having the new pilots as part of the master seniority list ensures the community works together to maintain



the terms and conditions of the parent group. It ensures the new airline can grow and the terms of that group can improve as the business starts to prosper. It also ensures there is open access to career opportunities for both groups.

For that reason BALPA has taken a robust stance on the issue of seniority numbers in the new airline.

BA Plane means a BA Pilot.

BALPA however is only a collection of individuals joined together for their mutual benefit and protection. Every one of our members must unite and join us in taking this stance and defending this belief.

As an individual you may be unconcerned about this risk or believe you are unaffected by the company's strategy. Every aspect of our working lives could be under threat if we do not win this dispute.

Experience of pilots across the world spells out the severity of this situation. We ask you to help us ensure that we do not suffer the fate of so many of our colleagues around the world.

What will happen next?

On January 15th BALPA and British Airways were unable to agree an acceptable outcome to this matter. This was the last stage of the dispute resolution process.

The BA Company Council, comprising elected representatives from the BA pilot community decided on January 17th to issue a ballot for industrial action. At about the time that the vote was being taken BA38 from Beijing was carrying out its emergency landing at Heathrow.

It was therefore entirely appropriate that the BACC delayed the meeting with BA until Monday of this week. We hoped that a weekend of reflection on the seriousness of industrial action might move BA's position. Unfortunately those who run our company remain unwilling

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to move and therefore the company have now been notified of our intention to ballot for strike action.

BALPA members will receive the ballot asking them if they are willing to take part in a strike action. The strike is over amendments to our agreements that would result in OpenSkies pilots being made part of our master seniority list.

Efforts will continue during this time to change BA's position and prevent the need to take this action.

We will also be talking to various stakeholders such as the city and other shareholders to try and move BA from its position.

During the ballot period the BACC has asked the Wilson Centre for public research to undertake polling work on our behalf to fully understand our members' views on their support for this likely action.

The ballot will be open for sufficient time for all pilots to vote, taking into account being away on leave or long trips.

The BACC will send out a full briefing package detailing the legal and contractual position of taking Industrial action to enable members to make an informed decision to support BALPA's position.

Once the ballot result is known BALPA will give British Airways a minimum of 7 days notice of any industrial action that is to be undertaken.

It is not appropriate to say at this stage what form any action might take but we will take into account the views of our members when making this decision.

A difficult decision for all of us?

The BACC recognise that considering industrial action is against the nature of many of our members.

The elected representatives of the pilots normally work in partnership with the company to find mutually acceptable solutions to problems and that is why we rarely find ourselves in this position. The last strike ballot

issued by the pilots union was in 1996 and we haven't taken industrial action since 1980.

Perhaps this approach has emboldened British Airways? There can be no other reason for the inexplicable decisions they have taken up to now.

BACC Chairman, Dave Smith has written to all BA pilots highlighting the two paths that exist for us through this disagreement. One leads us back to an environment of mutual co-operation and respect. The other leads us into an era where the pilots' relationship with the company changes for the worst. Regrettably BA seems intent on forcing us down the latter path.

What is absolutely clear is that delivering a strong vote in a strike ballot will not be enough to move BA from their position. It will be necessary to actually participate in strike action perhaps of a prolonged nature.

BALPA have explored every possible resolution to this matter. BA have delivered their final position. There is no room for compromise on this occasion. We cannot afford to trust the vague assurances BA have given. So, with sombre recognition of the significance of the decision, we ask for the wholehearted support of all BALPA members and their families.

What should we do?

Its second nature for most flight crew to plan ahead. By knowing what is likely to happen we can all be better prepared. We have sent you this particular communications program so that you can share it with your families and loved ones and we can all understand the significance of these issues and how BALPA will endeavour to solve them.

Industrial action is a period of uncertainty for all involved. We commit to keep both the BALPA member and your family informed of the progress of any dispute and in return we would ask you to help us by:

■ Planning ahead

Be prepared now both by understanding the issues and considering the financial implications of embarking on strike action.

■ Share your concerns with us

We would like to address these in future updates. If you are asking a question you are unlikely to be alone. You can contact a BALPA representative at any time not only as a BALPA member but also a family member. Send an email to openskiesdispute@balpa.org and a rep will be in touch with you straight away. Alternatively please call BALPA directly. The email addresses and phone numbers are included on this newsletter.

■ Become Involved

If the situation does escalate into dispute we will involve family members in every way we can. The events that we will plan will include families. Come along and support them and the BALPA member in your family.

None of us wants to end up in a dispute with our employer. As the Pilots union we are committed to doing everything we can to avoid this but we will take strong action to defend the interests of our members.

Please do everything you can to help us win this dispute.