



# TAMC Nuts & Bolts

Teamsters Aviation Mechanics Coalition Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 3

## Hoffa Storms Houston in Support of Continental Mechanics, Fleet Service Workers



**T**eamsters General President James P. Hoffa got a first-hand look at an exposed aircraft in a C-check while visiting mechanics and related workers at Continental's hub in Houston in July.

Walking through the disassembled airplane, Hoffa saw just how vulnerable an airplane in C-check can be and why it is imperative aircraft maintenance jobs do not get outsourced to overseas facilities.

"We've got to keep good jobs here in America. The Teamsters Union believes in airline safety," Hoffa said. "We are working hard to fight outsourcing so jobs like heavy check maintenance stay in the hands of qualified, professional, Teamster-represented mechanics."

The Teamsters Airline Division, under the direction of Capt. David Bourne, is currently lobbying Congress to pass a moratorium on foreign outsourcing—one of many actions the Teamsters are currently taking to protect the flying public and keep jobs in America.

"We're not going to stop until the flying public is safe," Bourne said. "That's why it is imperative Teamsters mechanics utilize the Teamsters Outsourcing Defect Report and continue to contact their representatives about important airline safety legislation."

*Hoffa Storms Houston continued on page 2*

## Letter of Introduction

By Russ Leighton, Aviation Safety Representative, Teamsters Airline Division



**A**fter 20 years of working in the airline industry, and as an aviation safety volunteer, I have accepted the position of Aviation Safety Representative for the Teamsters Airline Division. General President Jim Hoffa mandated the Director of the Airline Division, Capt. David Bourne, to rebuild the division into an

industry-leading trade union for airline employees. Capt. Bourne's vision places safety in its rightful place—at the top.

With that mission in mind, an Aviation Safety Steering Committee has been created to assess the immediate needs of the Airline Division membership and to set long-term goals. The initial immediate action items that were identified include Go-Team Training, Go-Team Kits and emergency response plans. Keeping our current budget in mind, our plan is to develop a two-day Go-Team training course that can be taken directly to the members, enabling as many as possible to become qualified to assist in NTSB investigations. We also plan to create and stage a division-wide Go-Kit that will be available to all members. As we go through these processes, we will be developing and refining an emergency response plan template that can be adopted and modified as necessary for individual groups within the division.

These immediate action items are just the beginning of our goal to increase the role of safety within the Airline Division. As I travel around to train members, I will also be meeting with management, the FAA, OSHA and other entities we work with. These meetings are designed to create a working relationship between all parties who have connections with safety.

Our ultimate goal is to use these relationships to help create real voluntary reporting, auditing, data collecting/sharing and other programs to use in the implementation of safety management systems. While doing so, we will in effect create our own Teamsters Airline Division safety management systems which will be used as safeguards to keep our industry as safe as possible for employees and the flying public.

I look forward to working with you in this new, exciting endeavor.

## Hoffa Storms Houston *continued from page 1*

### Rallying the Troops

After touring Continental's facilities, Hoffa kicked off a rally and press conference where he delivered message of hope, strength and commitment to Continental mechanics and fleet service workers. The company's ramp agents are trying to gain union representation for the first time and Continental mechanics are currently in contract negotiations with the company. The ramp agents will have separate bargaining and a separate contract from the mechanics.

As Hoffa pointed out, the two work groups cannot be successful without each other.

"Power comes from numbers and that's what these campaigns are all out. Continental's mechanics and fleet service workers must join forces," Hoffa said. "This is not only going to be a Continental hub, this is going to be a Teamsters hub."

Hoffa also called on Continental to end its anti-union behavior toward its fleet service workers and reward its mechanics for their hard work and loyalty.

The 3,700 Continental mechanics who are currently involved in ongoing negotiations with the company made concessions in 2005 to help the airline survive the financial challenges it was experience at the time. Those concessions remain in place today.

Hoffa believes it is long past time to amend these concessions and reward the aviation technicians for the skill and dedication with a strong contract that will end the concessions.

"The concessions our workers made in 2005 were key to Continental successfully navigating through a difficult time," Hoffa said. "These aviation technicians did their part. Now it is time for the company to show the same loyalty."

# Visit to Central American MRO Proves Safety is Still a Concern

By Chris Moore, TAMC Chair

Southwest Airlines recently invited me and several colleagues to tour the Aeroman facility in El Salvador. Southwest Airlines invited representatives from the labor unions that represent its employees so that we could review the facility prior to the commencement of the new maintenance services contract between Southwest and Aeroman. During the Southwest Airlines mechanic negotiations, the Teamsters pointed out that the labor organization representing Southwest's mechanics was allowing four lines of heavy-check overhaul maintenance to go offshore. The fact that four such check lines will eventually go to Aeroman was discussed openly while the team was in El Salvador. This is a substantial amount of highly skilled, safety and security-sensitive work that is being outsourced – all in a misguided corporate belief that whatever cost savings it achieves will far outweigh any potential safety and security threats that may affect the airline, its customers and the public as a whole.

Although my colleagues from the other labor unions declined Southwest's invitation to tour the Aeroman facility, I accepted on behalf of the Teamsters. In accepting the invitation, and recognizing at the time that the trip had been planned for quite some time in advance, I understood that Southwest—and perhaps even Aeroman—was trying to change my mind about the serious safety, quality and performance concerns that I have with respect to the foreign outsourcing of aircraft maintenance. I accepted the invitation with the understanding that I would use my independ-

ent judgment regarding the Aeroman operations, and that I would not be influenced by any "dog-and-pony" show that Southwest or Aeroman may have planned.

As you know, one of the Teamsters' major concerns regarding the foreign outsourcing of aircraft maintenance is that the work is being done in facilities located in developing nations where safety and quality standards are lax and inadequately enforced. Aeroman's facility definitely fits this description.

Since no other union representatives attended, I toured the Aeroaman facility with the Southwest Airlines management team over the course of two days. We spent approximately 12 hours at the facility. We were given a tour of the facility that allowed us to walk through an aircraft that was in work, although no one was working it at the time it was completely gutted. Throughout the tour of the facility, we were escorted by a member of Aeroman. This made it difficult to approach the workers to ask them questions about their working conditions and to obtain their perspectives.

The only security I saw was at the gate coming in to the facility where we traded our ID for a visitor badge. This entry point appears to be exclusive to Aeroman as TACA has a facility in the same area. I saw no security that was dedicated to the Aeroman facility. The airport is surrounded by a perimeter fence of chain link with barbed wire and/or razor wire topping it. It is, from the looks of it, rather dated. I could only see the fence in areas that I toured and along the highway. It does not appear to be patrolled.

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## Central American MRO

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My overall impression of the operation is that Aeroman is a large “line maintenance” operation and not an overhaul facility. If you walk the floor at UAL SFO you will understand what a true MRO should look like. Aeroman claims to have machining, sheet metal fabrication, and composite repair capability, but what they actually have is only very limited capability in these areas. For instance, the machine shop I was shown had only two milling machines, a lathe and the odd saw here and there. The sheet metal shop consisted of about 10 bending, rolling and shearing machines located on the mezzanine between two tail docks in one of the hangars, essentially on the floor. The composite repair area is much the same.

The workers at the facility are mostly young and in their early 20s, which means that the high experience and skill level we have in the U.S. is not even closely mirrored in El Salvador. According to Aeroman representatives who accompanied us during our tour, the workers are being trained at a local university in aircraft repair. Aeroman maintenance representatives told me that background checks and random drug tests are done on the workers; however, I have no way of verifying that information. I can tell you that the mechanics I approached on the floor did not speak English.

While touring the facility, the Drug Enforcement Administration and local police did a narcotics and explosives K-9 sweep of the plane. Southwest officials advised this will happen with all of their aircraft prior to those planes returning to the United States. Again, as is the case with representations that were made regarding background and drug testing, I have no way of verifying the accuracy of this statement. It is significant to note that Aeroman claims that Southwest Airlines is first of their customers to request such searches and tests. (It should be noted that at the time of my visit, US Airways had four aircraft in vari-

ous stages of overhaul and Jet Blue had one.) Even if this is true, Aeroman’s comment underscores and validates the Teamsters’ argument that maintenance work outsourced to foreign countries raises serious safety concerns because the work is not subject to the same stringent safety and security standards that apply in the United States.

Officials at the facility tried hard to convince me that they recognize our safety and security concerns about foreign outsourcing of aircraft maintenance and that they are heeding some of our suggestions. However, after touring the Aeroman facility,



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Republic of El Salvador

**Capital City:**

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**Area:**

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**Population:**

6700000

**Time Zone:**

UTC:-6

**Languages:**

English & Spanish

**Currency:**

US Dollar

the outsourcing aircraft maintenance work to foreign repair stations still leaves me with a queasy feeling in my stomach, especially when it comes to the experience and training foreign workers have and the inability of foreign governments such as the Salvadorian government to protect even themselves from infiltration by outside sources. Until all safety standards are the same around the world and Congress passes a moratorium on foreign outsourcing, we will continue this fight!

# Teamsters Hail Court Decision on Frontier Airlines



The Teamsters applauded a decision by the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York that strikes down a bankruptcy court ruling that erroneously voided Denver-based Frontier Airlines' collective bargaining agreements with the union.

Yesterday's decision also sends the case back to the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for further review.

"This is a resounding victory," said Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa. "The U.S. District Court recognized that company rushed to the courthouse without bargaining in good faith with the Teamsters."

According to the decision, the bankruptcy court applied improper standards by considering proposals and supporting disclosures after the hearing had begun to consider Frontier Airlines'

proposal to reject the collective bargaining agreements. The bankruptcy court's decision allowed Frontier Airlines to implement a 14 percent cut in wages.

"We are extremely pleased with the decision," said Capt. David Bourne, Director of the Teamsters Airline Division. "Companies should not run to court in hopes a judge will do the negotiating for them."

The Teamsters Union has refused to agree to Frontier's demand that it have the unlimited right to permanently outsource its heavy-check maintenance. Frontier then sought to reject the Teamster contracts.

"We are excited about this decision. It is extremely important that the Teamsters never wavered from this fight," said Matthew Fazakas, President of Local 961 in Denver. "We will never agree to the outsourcing of work to foreign countries."

## Teamsters Fight to Keep Jobs

In conjunction with pilot's union, the Teamsters Airline Division fought the purchase of Frontier by Southwest Airlines. Upon the purchase of Frontier, Southwest had planned to liquidate the company and eliminate all jobs. In the battle of Frontier, however, Republic Air Holdings came out as the highest bidder—a result that Fazakas is pleased with.

"The Teamsters are very pleased that Republic Air Holdings was a successful bidder," Fazakas said. "It is anticipated that the Frontier Airlines exit from bankruptcy court will be completed by mid October and Republic Air Holdings will own 100 percent of Frontier Airlines."

Teamsters represent flight attendants and pilots at Republic.



## We all Bleed Grease GSEs and AMTs are One and the Same

By Eric Harger, GSE, IAD

There is a side to many airports that few venture. On the other side of the tracks, down past where the weeds grow high and the rabbits run, strange men can be seen at all hours, hammering and welding, uttering profanities at stubborn bolts, slaving over hot diesels and often disguised in thick coats of grease. Occasionally mistaken for cavemen or Bigfoot, we are the

Ground Support Equipment (GSE) mechanics that make the airport move. We work hard to keep the ground equipment moving.

Okay, so that might be over the top. The point is there is at least a slight prejudice, real or perceived, that GSE mechanics are almost as good as Aircraft Technicians. Some might say the differences come down to shades of gray, but little things add up

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## Bleed Grease *continued from page 4*

and they do get noticed over time. For example, United Airlines holds a company picnic for aircraft mechanics and Congress passed a resolution honoring National Aircraft Technician Day, but GSE mechanics are left out of such recognition. Aren't we mechanics too? Even our own labor unions sometimes hold these feelings. At one point AMFA told GSE mechanics that we are important and valuable, yet the association quietly petitioned the rest of organized labor to strip us out of the mechanics and related class and craft.

While there may be a few unintended slights, and plenty of unprintable jokes, about how many GSE mechanics it takes to screw in a light bulb, the point is we are all mechanics: aircraft, ground equipment and building and maintenance. We are all airline mechanics, we are all Teamster mechanics. Do we not all bleed grease? The basic issues that affect our jobs and our families' quality of life are one and the same.

Take outsourcing, for example. Outsourcing isn't just jobs and money out of our pockets, but as dedicated professionals, we see first-hand the lie that subcontracting is a long term business model. As GSE mechanics, we are just as appalled at the recklessness at which safety flies out the window in the race to the bottom as are the rest of you.

Teamster airline mechanics have a great page on the Teamster website for reporting outsourcing defects, but that report is for aircraft mechanics only. A page for GSE mechanics is just as critical. We have just as many incidents of defects to report and, most importantly, our customer's lives—some of who are

AMTs—depend on the quality of work that is or is not put into every piece of ground equipment. Think about it next time a 150,000-pound pushback is edging up to your hand on the bar or you're 40 feet up on a lift in a lovely breeze. Were those brakes overhauled correctly? Is that lift cylinder going to blow and spoil your day?

Of course there are procedural and analytical differences in the way we fix and rebuild.

We operate under different regulatory authorities. While AMTs had to invest in their tickets, GSE mechanics have enormous investments in their toolboxes. But we all turn nuts and bolts. With economic turmoil and massive layoffs, many airline maintenance employees are working with more of those from other side of the tarmac now than ever before. Working this closely with one another gives us insight into each others' jobs and similarities are found where before there might have been misconception. Above all, we are all are facing rough negotiations ahead, unrelenting corporate pressure to bare-bone costs and the shared uncertainty of the future of our jobs and our lives.

Solidarity is the one thing we do have going for us. We are all in this together. Our future, our better path, lies in our strengths and there is nothing stronger than strength in numbers. And it isn't just about mechanics (GSE, AMT or others) at United Airlines; it's about employees at all airlines from mechanics to flight attendants to fleet service workers. Because it's the future we're looking at, we've got to trust and believe in each other and our union. At the end of the day, we are all in this together.

# New Webpage Helps TAMC Members Stay Connected

## Airline Division Members Have Access to New Website

Members of the TAMC now have a new way to stay connected and informed, thanks to a new web page devoted specifically to issues that affect Teamster airline mechanics, [teamsterair.org/tamc](http://teamsterair.org/tamc).

The page, which gives TAMC members access to steering committee contact information, newsletters and videos, is part of a new website created for the Teamsters Airline Division.

"The Teamsters Airline Division represents more airline mechanics than any other union in North American. Because of this and our ongoing efforts to organize even more mechanics, we

wanted to know how we could better suit the needs of our members," said TAMC chair Chris Moore. "We decided creating a new, easy-to-use, interactive webpage was a good way to do that."

Creators of the website included input from airline division members and directors about what should be included on the site. Aside from a web page devoted to airline mechanics, [Teamsterair.org](http://Teamsterair.org) also features industry news, organizing campaign updates, downloads, contracts and online forums which all airline division members can use to communicate with each other as well as the division.

## Stay Connected *continued from page 5*

Other featured pages on the site include legislative action, safety and aviation news.

“The web site is the most recent development in our ongoing efforts to stay close to our airline members as we pursue our priorities: the protection and expansion of American jobs, the safety and security of the flying public and the restoration or replacement of airline industry employees’ pensions,” said Teamsters Airline Division Director David Bourne.

The new site went live Monday, July 13.

**Airline Division**  
about the division • aviation news • on the hill • safety • tamc • forum • contact us

**A Message from Airline Division Director Capt. David Bourne**

The Airline Division has three overriding objectives for the new Administration and the new Congress and they are the protection and expansion of American jobs, the safety and security of the flying public and last but not far from least the restoration/replacement of airline industry employee's pensions.

We are very well aware of the difficult economic environment that faces the American Commercial Airline industry. The current recession which has started may be very severe and it may well last a year to eighteen months.

[Read more](#)

**Featured News**

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**Teamsters Head James P. Hoffa To Support Continental Airlines Workers In Cleveland**

Teamsters General President James P. Hoffa will be in Brook Park on Friday to show support for hundreds of Continental Airlines' fleet-service workers seeking union representation.

[Read more...](#)

**FAA Says Airlines Are No Longer Its 'Customers'**

Responding to criticism that his agency has become too cozy with companies it regulates, the new head of the Federal Aviation Administration said Thursday the FAA will stop calling airlines "customers," as he announced steps to ensure air carriers comply with safety orders.

[Read more...](#)

**Amerijet To Install Toilets On Its Planes**

Amerijet agreed to install toilets on its cargo planes as part of settling a three-week strike by the Fort Lauderdale company's pilots, according to a union press release.

**The Week in Review**  
News from the Teamsters Airline Division

**IBT Airline Division Dashboard**  
For additional news on Airline Division carriers and the airline industry, visit our constantly updated dashboard.

**Sign up to receive the TAMC newsletter**

By providing us with your contact information the TAMC will be able to e-mail you our newsletter, the TAMC Nuts and Bolts. We will also alert you to any urgent industry news and give you opportunities to participate in actions that support the goals of the Coalition.

Name:

Email Address:

Phone:

Address:

## TAMC Steering Committee Contact Information

The TAMC Steering Committee Members are here for you. Contact a steering committee member to share your thoughts, concerns or ideas for newsletter articles. Be sure to check out TAMC Steering Committee Member bios in the next edition of the TAMC newsletter.

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