

美國民航飛行員短缺

在很長的一段時間裡，輿論一直在探討有關美國民航飛行員短缺的議題。但這種短缺的情況是真的嗎？且讓我們來進一步查證。

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美國民航飛行員短缺是真的嗎？

美國「聯邦航空總署」(Federal Aviation Administration, 後文簡稱 FAA) 所頒發的「民航飛行員證照」(Airline Transport Pilot, ATP), 係一位民航飛行員可以獲得的最高級別認證。該認證適用於飛行員, 就像博士學位適用於科學家一樣。2021 年, 美國 FAA 僅頒發了 4,928 張「民航飛行員證照」, 不到民航業者計畫在該年預估聘用飛行員的一半數量。

美國聯合航空公司(後文簡稱聯航)的執行長 Scott Kirby 說:「民航業者面對飛行員短缺是個事實, 大多數的航空公司因為沒有足夠的飛行員可聘用, 所以根本就無法滿足我們的營運計畫, 而且至少在未來的五年內都是這樣。」



聯航是最近第一家與其飛行員工會, 也就是國際「民航飛行員協會」(Air Line Pilots Association, 後文簡稱 ALPA) 達成協議的美國主要航空公司。聯航的 Scott Kirby 執行長在 LinkedIn 社群網路上貼文稱:「聯航是唯一的一家主要航空公司, 在 COVID-19 疫情流行期間, 順利與我們的飛行員工會達成協議。毫無疑問的是, 目前我們是第一家獲得協議的航空公司, 在與新進飛行員的合約簽訂上, 原則上已站在一個領先的地位。」

由於民航飛行員短缺的情況, 航空公司很難讓飛機保持正常營運, 許多航空公司宣布刪減夏季的班表, 以避免造成飛行員過度勞累的風險。最近的情況是, Alaska、JetBlue、American, 以及 Southwest 等航空公司, 已經宣布刪減其夏季的班表。

經檢視, Alaska 航空公司的夏季航班刪減了 12%, JetBlue 航空公司則刪減了 10%。另因民航飛行員的培訓計畫延滯, American 與 Southwest 航空公司的報告宣稱, 分別刪減了 6% 與 5% 的航班營運能量。

Alaska 航空公司的執行長 Ben Minicucci 說:「飛行員被困在飛行學校的校舍裡。原因是, 我們正在降低一些航班營運的風險,



Alaska是宣布刪減夏季班表的多家美國航空公司之一。
照片提供：Lukas Souza/Simple Flying

好讓訓練我們飛行員的學校，有一點喘息的空間。」

飛行員短缺是航空公司的問題根源嗎？

ALPA 否認在美國有民航飛行員短缺的情況。該民航飛行員協會聲稱，係因航空公司的管理不當，才會造成航班的刪減和營運的問題，至於取消的航班，也是為了美化民航業者的財務績效。

ALPA 主席 Joseph DePete 機長，在 2022 年 5 月初寫了一封信，要求其他航空公司「停止傳播錯誤的訊息」。他明確指出，美國聯邦的行政救濟計畫，係針對民航業者提供總額 630 億美元的疏困預算；旨在確保航空公司能做好準備，俾在航空旅遊的商機增加時，可以符合航班的營運需求。

Joseph DePete 機長說：「當隸屬美國的航空公司，獲得 630 億美元的疏困預算時，全美國納稅人因 COVID-19 疫情流行，針對航空公司所提供的救濟金具有優勢，也鼓勵了民航業者的員工與補償其損失，這不是其他商業機構所能比照辦理的。誠如您所理解的，在疫情流行最嚴重的時候，我們共同努力以確保民航業者能夠存活下來，並且有能

力滿足國家關鍵性的航空運輸需求。ALPA 準備與任何有誠意者合作，共同努力以協助我們的民航業者，安然度過這個充滿挑戰的時期。然而，我們不會允許某些航空公司的執行長，試圖利用當前的情境，轉移他們對疫情救濟管理不當的注意力；同時他們也積極進行遊說，意圖降低飛行員的資格和培訓需求。」

儘管 ALPA 最近同意聯航對飛行員的新合約，但 DePete 機長非常清楚表達他的觀點，並補充說：「我可以向你保證，ALPA 絕對不會讓步 — 我們將指出，每一個有關民航飛行員供需的虛假言論案例：試圖分散和欺騙飛行大眾和國會議員。我們要讓大家知道，航空公司對行政救濟的管理不當，以確保我們的民航業者；我們不僅能在疫情流行中倖存下來，而且一旦航空的營運需求復甦時，我們已站穩腳步、準備開始茁壯成長。」

由於 COVID-19 疫情流行，許多民航飛行員採取了提前退休的人生規劃，增加了航空公司對新進飛行員的需求，因而加速其培訓和僱用計畫。也有許多機長，離開區域性的航空公司，轉往洲際航線的主要航空公司，這無疑的會給區域性航空公司的正常營運帶來壓力。目前對機長的要求更加嚴格，他們需要 2,500 小時的飛行時間，才可能獲得機長的職務；至於副駕駛，只需要 1,500 小時的飛行時間，即可成為合格的副駕駛。

飛行員只要提前 2 周告知航空公司，就可以完成離職程序，而航空公司則大約需要 6 個月的時間，才能完成認證一位新機長；至於一位副駕駛的認證程序，只需要大約 4 個月的時間。除了飛行員離職之外，數量有



ALPA堅信的是，美國並沒有民航飛行員短缺的情況。
照片提供：Lukas Souza/Simple Flying

限的飛行、或是模擬機教官，也可能會導致相當大的問題。

Republic 航空公司最近為了日益嚴重的飛行員短缺問題，努力尋求切實可行的解決方案，並且向美國「運輸部」(Department of Transportation, DOT) 申請，減少其訓練飛行員所需的最低飛行時數。該航空公司申請減少其自訓飛行員 50% 飛行時數。這家區域性航空公司，擁有一所飛行學校，並聲稱其培訓需求與軍事基地的培訓需求相當。

最近申請美國簽證的外國飛行員大幅增加。AG 移民簽證集團的律師 Ana Barbara Schaffert 表示，美國民航飛行員的供需正在迅速增長中，為經驗豐富的外國飛行員創造了就業機會。Ana Barbara Schaffert 律師說：「雖然美國遭遇到民航飛行員嚴重短缺的問題，但在世界其他地區，民航飛行員卻失業了。」

根據路透社最近的一篇報導，Schaffert 律師已經收到超過 8,000 份的諮詢申請，並且有超過 2,000 份的外國飛行員簡歷，正在進行美國的求職分類程序。這個法律程序的數量，幾乎是她在 COVID-19 疫情流行前的兩倍。Breeze、SkyWest，以及 CaminAir 等航空公司，目前都在澳洲積極招募民航飛行員。澳洲飛行員可以獲得美國的特殊職業簽證，並且其飛行的相關證明，在美國也能同樣獲得認可。✈️

譯自 *Simple Flying*，2022 年 5 月 23 日



聯航是一家唯一擁有飛行學校的美國主要航空公司 — 聯合航空學院(United Aviate Academy)。
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The US Pilot Shortage: Everything You Need To Know

Is there really a pilot shortage in the US?

Lukas Souza

There has been an ongoing conversation about a pilot shortage in the United States for quite some time. But is this shortage real? Let's have a look.

Is the pilot shortage real?

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issues ATPs, Airline Transport Pilot certificates, the highest level of certification a pilot can receive. The certification is for pilots, what a Ph.D. is for scientists. In 2021, the FAA only issued 4,928 ATPs, less than half the estimated number of pilots that the industry plans to hire this year.

"The pilot shortage for the industry is real, and most airlines are simply not going to be able to realize their capacity plans because there simply aren't enough pilots, at least not

for the next five-plus years." - Scott Kirby, CEO, United Airlines

United recently became the first major United States airline to reach an agreement on a new contract with its pilots' labor union, the Air Line Pilots Association, International. United CEO Scott Kirby posted on LinkedIn, "United Airlines was the only airline to work with our pilots union to reach an agreement during COVID. It's not surprising that we are now the first airline to get an Agreement in Principle for an industry leading new pilot contract."

Airlines are having difficulty keeping aircraft in service because of the shortage of pilots, with many announcing reductions to summer schedules to keep their pilots from being overworked. Recently, Alaska, JetBlue, American, and Southwest announced cutbacks in their summer schedules.

Alaska reduced its summer flying by 12% and JetBlue by 10%. Having reported pilot training backlogs, American and Southwest announced a reduction in capacity of six and five percent, respectively.



"Pilots were stuck in the school house. So we're de-risking the operation a little bit to give our pilots schoolhouse just a little bit of breathing room as we train them." - Ben Minicucci, CEO, Alaska Airlines.

Is the pilot shortage the root of airlines' issues?

The ALPA has denied a shortage of pilots in the United States. The union claims that operational issues and schedule cuts result from mismanagement on the airlines' part, canceling flights to improve financial results.

ALPA president, Captain Joseph DePete, wrote a letter earlier this month asking other airlines to 'stop the spread of misinformation. He states that the federal relief packages provided to airlines, amounting to \$63 billion, were to ensure that airlines were prepared to meet an increase in air travel demand when it arose.

"With the \$63 billion in relief that U.S. airlines received, U.S. taxpayers gave your members an advantage that no other business sector received during the pandemic and responded to the sacrifice and advocacy of airline workers. As you well know, we worked together during the worst of the pandemic to ensure the aviation industry would survive and be positioned to meet the critical air transportation needs of our nation. ALPA is prepared to collaborate with anyone who comes to the table, in good faith, and work together to help our industry navigate



Alaska is one of multiple US airlines which announced reductions to summer schedules. Photo: Lukas Souza | Simple Flying

this challenging period. However, we will not allow airline CEOs who seek to exploit this current moment to divert attention away from their mismanagement of the pandemic relief, while lobbying to weaken critical lifesaving pilot qualification and training requirements."- Captain Joseph DePete.

Although the ALPA recently agreed on a new contract for United Airlines pilots, Captain DePete makes his point very clear and adds, "I can assure you that ALPA will give no ground—and we will call out every instance of false rhetoric about pilot supply for what it is: an attempt to distract and deceive the flying public and members of Congress about the airlines' mismanagement of the government bailout provided to ensure our industry would not only survive the pandemic but be ready to thrive once the recovery we are seeing today took hold."

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many pilots took early retirement packages, further accelerating the need for new pilots to be trained and hired by airlines. There have



The ALPA strongly believes that there is no airline pilot shortage in the United States. Photo: Lukas Souza | Simple Flying

been many captains leaving regional airlines to go to mainline carriers, which no doubt puts a strain on regional carriers' operations. There are more stringent requirements for captains, who need 2,500 flight hours to reach the status of captain, whereas first officers only need 1,500 flight hours to become first officers.

Pilots can leave airlines with two-week notices, while it takes airlines about six months to certify a new captain. The process of certifying first officers takes just about four months. In addition to pilots leaving, a limited number of flight instructors or simulators can also cause quite an issue.

Republic Airways has recently sought practical solutions to the growing pilot shortage problem and requested that the Department of Transportation (DOT) reduce the minimum number of flight hours required for its pilots. The airline asked that the reduction be 50% for its pilots trained in-house. The regional carrier has a flight school and claims its training requirements

are on par with military-based training.

There has been a recent surge of foreign pilots applying for United States visas. Ana Barbara Schaffert, an attorney at AG Immigration Group, stated that the supply and demand for pilots in the United States are rapidly growing apart, creating opportunities for highly experienced foreign pilots. "While the US has a major shortage, in the rest of the world pilots are out of jobs." - Ana Barbara Schaffert, attorney, AG Immigration Group.



United Airlines is the only major US airline to own a flight school, the United Aviate Academy. Photo: Lukas Souza | Simple Flying

According to a recent Reuters report, Schaffert has received more than 8,000 consultation requests and has over 2,000 resumes to sort through from foreign pilots seeking employment in the United States. This number is nearly double what she was receiving pre-pandemic. Breeze Airways, SkyWest Airlines, and CommutAir have all been actively recruiting pilots from Australia. Australian pilots can obtain special occupations visas in the United States, and Australian certifications are recognized in the US. ✈️

From Simple Flying, 23 May 2022