

The Teamsters claim they can stop the outsourcing of aircraft maintenance. But, where were the Teamsters when United held the big party to celebrate its 100th aircraft to undergo a heavy maintenance check at the Ameco maintenance repair hanger in Beijing, China?

This celebration took place in May 2011, well over a year ago. How many more heavy checks has the Teamsters allowed outsourced since then?



The Teamsters held a press conference in Tulsa on February 16. During this event, their representatives were asked whether the IBT had permitted “C” Checks and other heavy overhaul functions to be outsourced in its contract with United Airlines. The Teamsters denied they had done so which was not an accurate statement. In order to correct the record on this matter, we will review the history of the foreign outsourcing provisions in the United Mechanic and Related Agreement.

In 2003, after United declared bankruptcy and facing the threat of abrogation of its contract, the IAM agreed to ease the restrictions on outsourcing in its Mechanic and Related Agreement with United. The concessional contract allowed unrestricted outsourcing of heavy maintenance visits while retaining a 20 percent cap on outsourcing of all remaining maintenance work as measured by the sum of the Maintenance Operations Division’s gross annual budget, excluding the cost of heavy maintenance visits.

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The IAM also retained its existing prohibition against outsourcing of regularly scheduled heavy maintenance overseas. Shortly after reaching this agreement, the IAM was decertified as the representative of mechanic and related at United and replaced by the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association, which had strongly criticized the IAM's concessions on outsourcing.

In 2005 United negotiated a second round of concessions for its mechanics, this time with AMFA. In addition to major wage and benefit concessions, AMFA also agreed to continue to allow outsourcing of heavy maintenance visits "without restriction" except that the three C check lines of work "currently performed by Company employees in house at the San Francisco Maintenance Center will not be outsourced." However, AMFA also agreed to lift the IAM's restriction against performance of regularly scheduled heavy maintenance in non U.S. locations and allowed the Company's 777 and 747 fleets to be outsourced to foreign repair facilities.

Despite the severity of these concessions, AMFA stated that its members had no choice but to accept them. "It's a sad situation that we have to bear the brunt of mismanagement," said O.V. Delle Femine, the AMFA's National Director. "We had to accept it or let the judge do it. This was the lesser of two evils."

In 2008 AMFA was decertified at United and replaced by the Teamsters. In 2011 the Teamsters, after the Company had been out of bankruptcy for several years, negotiated a new agreement. The Teamsters agreed to allow the Company to continue to have the unrestricted right to outsource heavy maintenance visits. However, the Teamsters also agreed not only to continue to allow the 777 and 747 fleets to be maintained at non U.S. locations, but expanded that authorization to include "current and future aircraft operating exclusively " on routes outside the U.S.

When American Airlines filed for relief from its Mechanic and Related contract with the TWU it made a major issue of the fact that it operated under far more restrictions with respect to outsourcing, particularly outsourcing of heavy maintenance, than its competitors. The Company exploited this point for all it's worth in front of the court and in bargaining and, in the end secured relief on this issue. Our bankruptcy agreement permits outsourcing of heavy checks, including to foreign facilities, but even in bankruptcy allows for far less outsourcing than any of AA's competitors. We have two organizations that are campaigning in Tulsa to replace the TWU and are arguing that they can deal with outsourcing and the threat of overseas maintenance more effectively than we can. The simple fact is that every mechanic contract either of these organizations have ever signed, in or out of bankruptcy, permits far more outsourcing than we permit, even operating under a bankruptcy contract. If you want to fight outsourcing you need to stick with the TWU.