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SOUTHWEST AIRLINES PILOTS' ASSOCIATION

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SWAPA Condemns DOT Approval of Norwegian Foreign Air Carrier Permit

Pilots of Southwest Airlines call on President-elect Trump to intervene, reverse decision

DALLAS – The Southwest Airlines Pilots' Association (SWAPA) strongly condemn the short-sighted, under-cover-of-darkness decision by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to approve a foreign air carrier permit to Norwegian Air International (NAI). This anti-worker decision runs afoul of the very rules that the Obama Administration itself negotiated and championed only six years ago.

“By approving NAI’s application despite it being in direct violation of Article 17 *bis* of the EU-US Open Skies Agreement, the Obama Administration has unilaterally undermined every trade agreement the U.S. has ever signed – including the Open Skies agreements we have with more than 100 countries across the globe,” said SWAPA President, Captain Jon Weaks. “In the process, President Obama and Secretary Foxx have turned their backs on the tens of thousands of American workers employed in the aviation industry.”

“To be clear, this decision gives a single foreign carrier an advantage unavailable to a single one of its competitors – including those in the U.S.,” explained Captain Weaks. “Norwegian Air International will possess an unparalleled advantage over U.S. carriers if allowed to proceed with its Flag of Convenience scheme. This reckless decision sets a dangerous precedent in aviation and further underscores the unwillingness to ensure a level playing field for American workers when executing trade agreements that have been a hallmark of the Obama Administration.”

The decision comes on the heels of the American people electing a new president who has vowed to stand up for American workers and negotiate from a position of strength. Just as he did with the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Indiana Carrier plant, the men and women of SWAPA call upon President-elect Trump to intervene in the NAI decision and undo yet another trade blunder by President Obama.

Weaks continued, “SWAPA is committed to protecting the careers of SWAPA pilots and will oppose any trade agreement that places U.S. workers at a disadvantage to foreign competitors. I urge the President-elect to weigh-in on this evening’s ill-advised decision and reverse the approval of NAI’s application. President Obama has yet again proven that he is unwilling to enforce trade agreements and protect U.S. workers, and SWAPA hopes that President-elect Trump will seize the opportunity to undo another Obama mistake.”

Norwegian Air Shuttle (NAS), NAI's parent company, currently flies to the U.S. using Norwegian crews, operating under Norway's labor and social laws. NAS could expand its current operation to meet its growth plans but instead chooses to evade Norwegian labor and social laws and establish an Irish-based subsidiary. This scheme is in direct violation of Article 17 *bis* of the U.S.-EU Open Skies agreement.

Finally, Captain Weaks noted that "the NAI subsidiary and its use of contract workers hired by a foreign staffing agency also poses potential serious safety risks. Crewmembers working under employment contracts with no direct line of communication to airline management often lack the ability to highlight potential safety or operational issues. Clear and open communication between frontline operators and airline management is critical to running a safe and efficient airline."

SWAPA condemns the DOT decision and calls upon President-elect Trump to preserve a fair and level playing field for U.S. workers by denying NAI the Foreign Carrier Permit unjustly awarded by President Obama.

Located in Dallas, Texas, the Southwest Airlines Pilots' Association (SWAPA) is a non-profit employee organization representing the more than 8,400 pilots of Southwest Airlines. SWAPA works to provide a secure and rewarding career for Southwest pilots and their families through negotiating contracts, defending contractual rights and actively promoting professionalism and safety. For more information on the Southwest Airlines Pilots' Association, visit www.swapa.org.