

I was an Air Force U-2 pilot and American Airlines came to my base and others to recruit pilots, including the commander of Air Force One. American recruited us because they needed **our skills** to make their business work — without professional aviators, there is no airline.

I have the **lives of hundreds of people in my hands every day** and I have responsibility for a \$20+ million asset, flown at all hours of the day and night, in all weather conditions into some of the most demanding airports in the world. I have more life and death responsibility every day than any surgeon. Professional pilots are in short supply worldwide — we cannot be outsourced or easily replaced.

The pilots voted down American Airlines' last contract offer because it was an insulting attack on our profession. We will not cut our own throats to cover for management's failures over the past decade.

I am a retired Air Force colonel; I have an MBA and have run four international companies. I understand leadership and business and airlines require extremely competent leadership. We need our company to be run by leaders who manage, not managers who took a class on leadership.

My fellow aviators and I gave back **more than a billion dollars in annual concessions** in order to prevent American Airlines from filing bankruptcy in 2003. Instead of investing that money into the airline's future, management chose to extract millions of dollars in bonuses for themselves and then use bankruptcy to steal our retirement and attempt to destroy our profession.

Our contract, dissolved by management in September, was the framework for the conduct of our daily flight operations. Without a contract, we now must operate without a safety net when it comes to company and Federal Aviation Administration rules. Management can fire a pilot without recourse and the FAA can suspend our license — if that happens, a pilot is immediately unemployed.

American Airlines' pilots are proud professionals who are saddened by where management has taken our once great airline. Despite the attacks on our profession, our livelihood, our reputation and our colleagues, we will continue to transport and protect our precious passengers, because that is what professional pilots do. But we won't be bullied.

I want nothing more than to do my job, with the respect I have earned and for the pay and benefits that were promised to me.

— Captain Robert Gaylord, *American Airlines pilot for more than 24 years* 

