

Flight Plan for Victory at Lockheed Martin

From the Wright Brothers' first flight at Kitty Hawk to piloting a space shuttle through a safe journey in space, America has always had a special bond with aviation and respect for all those who take to the air.

A big part of America's heritage in aviation is the willingness to meet unexpected challenges and persevere through difficult times. That spirit came through loud and clear with a group of more than 800 Automated Flight Service Station (AFSS) Specialists at Lockheed Martin who provide weather, flight plan, search-and-rescue and other support services for America's general aviation pilots. The AFSS Specialists

are a highly-skilled group of professionals who are a key part of America's general aviation network.

After a one-vote loss in an election to join the Machinists union in 2008, the AFSS Specialists came back to win the next election in 2009. "During the first campaign, Lockheed Martin divided experienced specialists and new-hires and took credit for a pay increase that was really the result of Service Contract rules," said Hugh Ramsey, an AFSS Specialist in the Ashburn, VA, facility who was active in the two-year organizing campaign. "We fell short by just one vote. But we held together and won the next

time. Now we are looking forward to negotiating and ratifying our first contract."

The AFSS Specialists looked to the Machinists union after Lockheed Martin took over flight services from the federal government in 2006. Part of the Bush administration's relentless pursuit of privatizing the federal government, the Lockheed deal was the largest non-defense Service Contract Act (SCA) award in federal government history.

The SCA provides rules and regulations, including labor rules, for companies who provide services to the federal government, and it allows workers who are represented by a union



Bill Burkle, Page One Photography

From left, AFSS Specialists Krystal Huck, Christopher Byers, James Foster, Matt Szabaga, Frances Velazquez, Jennings Stambaugh and Jonathan Herman are part of a nationwide network of dedicated professionals who helped win a two-year campaign for IAM representation. AFSS Specialists provide critical services to the general aviation community.

to negotiate for better wages, benefits and rules of employment than non-union SCA workers.

IAM Experience

AFSS Specialists decided they needed the benefits of professional representation to ensure that Lockheed Martin would continue the level of service that general aviation pilots had come to expect from AFSS facilities, and help AFSS Specialists receive fair pay, benefits and treatment under the Service Contract Act.

“AFSS Specialists were concerned because Lockheed started consolidating Flight Service facilities and seemed intent on running the Flight Service system more like a call center than an important service to the general aviation community,” said Organizing Department Grand Lodge Representative Steve Hantzis. “The IAM was a natural fit because we already represent 15,000 employees at Lockheed Martin facilities, who do everything from launching satellites to making the world’s most advanced fighter aircraft. And, we are a leader in negotiating agreements under the Service Contract Act.”

After the narrow loss in the first election, Lockheed Martin ramped up an aggressive anti-union campaign that made the AFSS Specialists even more determined. A unique “Notice to Employees” (NOTEM)



Members of the AFSS Specialists negotiating committee, from left, Jonathan Herman, Arthur Butler, Paul Shephard, David Walz, and Mark O’Connell, practice a simulated bargaining session with IAM’s Winpisinger Education Center Director Chris Wagoner, right, to prepare for upcoming contract negotiations with Lockheed Martin.

newsletter, issue fliers and a dedicated area on the IAM website, www.goiam.org, kept workers informed about the organizing campaign and about the benefits of voting for the IAM. AFSS Specialists work in three main hubs and twelve sites in the continental United States and Hawaii.

Ready to Bargain

Right after the successful vote, AFSS Specialists wasted no time in getting down to the business of negotiating a first contract with Lockheed Martin. They elected their own representatives for the bargaining committee to assist in negotiations with Lockheed. Those representatives attended a Negotiation Preparation class at the IAM’s William W. Winpisinger Education and Technology Center in Placid Harbor, MD.

The unique class trains

negotiating committees in all aspects of contract bargaining, including conducting member surveys on bargaining issues, how to calculate the cost of contract proposals, how to prepare for negotiations and ending with a mock bargaining session with instructors playing the role of Lockheed negotiators.

“The Negotiation Preparation class lets the AFSS Negotiating Committee get valuable experience before we sit down at the table with Lockheed Martin,” said IAM Aerospace Coordinator John Crowdis, who will be leading AFSS negotiations. “It gives us a tremendous advantage when contract negotiations begin. The IAM already has more than 35 contracts at 46 Lockheed Martin locations. We will be using all of our experience and expertise to get the best possible agreement for our new AFSS members.”