



Atlas Air Worldwide Holdings, Inc.
2000 Westchester Avenue
Purchase, New York 10577-2543

February 17, 2015

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Anthony Foxx
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Penny S. Pritzker
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretaries Kerry, Foxx and Pritzker:

We are aware of the recent activity by several interested parties requesting the retrenchment of the deep-rooted and demonstrably successful U.S. “Open Skies” aviation policy. Atlas Air Worldwide Holdings, Inc. (“AAWW”) wishes to go on record in opposition to that request and in strong support of continuing the policy.

Through its wholly owned U.S. air carrier subsidiary, Atlas Air, Inc., and its majority owned U.S. air carrier subsidiary, Polar Air Cargo Worldwide, Inc., AAWW is the third largest U.S. all-cargo operator and the world’s largest operator of Boeing 747 freighter aircraft. In 2014, Atlas and Polar operated more than 28,000 flights to/from 432 airports in 123 countries.

These operations form a truly global flight network linking multiple international markets. By combining highly individualized traffic flows, both between the U.S. and foreign points and between points in separate countries, Atlas and Polar are able to sustain efficient and financially profitable operations. These were made possible by the strong U.S. commitment to Open Skies, which has enabled Atlas and Polar to use “5th freedom” rights to carry freight from one foreign country to another, sometimes without even a flight connection to the United States (“7th freedom” rights).

The Open Skies policy has framed U.S. aviation negotiating efforts by Democratic and Republican administrations alike for almost 25 years. As the Department of State has explained:

Open Skies agreements have vastly expanded international passenger and cargo flights to and from the United States, promoting increased travel and trade, enhancing productivity, and spurring high-quality job opportunities and economic growth. Open Skies agreements do this by eliminating government interference in the commercial decisions of air carriers about routes, capacity, and pricing, freeing carriers to provide more affordable, convenient, and efficient air service for consumers.

Through the energies of negotiators in your agencies, the United States to date has secured a total of 114 Open Skies agreements, with resulting benefits on virtually a global basis. Indeed, the relentless efforts of the United States to make Open Skies or, failing that, a liberal aviation environment the worldwide norm has prompted several major trading partners with historically conservative aviation policies to open their own markets to U.S. carriers. That has benefitted some of the same parties now criticizing Open Skies.

In addition, Open Skies continues to provide significant derivative benefits to consumers and the United States economy through added travel and shipping opportunities, increased economic activity and higher U.S. employment – in other words, broader U.S. economic and political interests.

We urge the U.S. government to honor the Open Skies agreements it has negotiated with virtually every country in the world, not try to bypass or renegotiate them selectively. Nor would it be appropriate for the United States to submit to the desires of a few parties at the expense of the broader national interest.

Very truly yours,


William J. Flynn
President and Chief Executive Officer