

Pilot shortage looming: United Airlines CEO

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Dhaka: United Airlines' CEO Scott Kirby is foreseeing a pilot shortage emerging, as the military is not producing pilots at the rate they used to earlier. It has been described as a long-term structural problem at many airlines that the recent worldwide travel plunge has pointed out.

As a result, airlines like United are having to change the way they recruit and train their pilots.

This year, short-staffed airlines are beginning to experience some real-life consequences. Last year, [United Airlines](#) was warning it would need to let some 16,000 employees go, including nearly 3,000 pilots. But, with domestic flying almost recovered in the United States, airlines are once again looking to hire more pilots.

In April, they began rehiring pilots. First off the blocks were 300 new pilot positions offered to prospective United pilots who had conditional offers or start dates delayed in 2020.

In the same month, United Airlines said it planned to train 5,000 pilots by 2030. Those pilots will be trained in-house at their own pilot training school. United said it would spend over USD 1 billion on scholarships to break the traditional white male pilot mold.

Traditionally, airlines everywhere have recruited pilots from Air Forces. They lose their expensively trained and highly skilled pilots to better-paid jobs in the commercial airline sector.

However, “The military produces far fewer pilots today than they did in the Vietnam and Cold War era,” claimed Kirby. “It’s hard to become a commercial pilot on your own if you are not going through the military.”

Therefore, “Down the road, there is probably going to be a pilot shortage here in the United States,” said Kirby on June 21 in a statement.

“Given the current outlook for the future of United, we continue to move closer to full frontline staffing levels to support our operation,” United Airlines said in a statement.

With July knocking at the door, United Airlines is adding more than 400 flights a day to its schedules. The airline expects to operate at 80 percent of its summer 2019 capacity, it added.

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