

# **The Power of Aviation Unions in South America: The ITF LATAM Union Network**

Saturday 7 July 2018, by [CONROW Teresa](#), [FELLER Dina](#) (Date first published: 1 October 2017).

## **Abstract**

The success of South American unions in improving wages and conditions for workers in the region's largest and arguably most anti-union airline multinational company provides us with significant lessons about how to build union power. The international network of LATAM unions includes pilots, cabin crew, ground staff and mechanics from 11 countries in 33 unions and six union federations, supported by the global federation of transport unions, the ITF. Two very different case studies, one from Peru and one from Argentina demonstrate that when the unions put long term resources into building their base, workers can withstand the firing of union leaders, monetary bribes to leave the union, threats to relocate their jobs and other forms of repression and win significant improvements in wages and conditions. These two case studies draw on in-depth interviews and field research as well as a power resources approach to analyse how these workers organised and secured major wins in seemingly impossible circumstances. Unions can be more successful utilising a sustainable approach to campaigning and organising that emphasizes a deep commitment to democratic union structures and strong relationships of trust between workers who are committed to class struggle. Without a strong base, employers can strike back against workers and destroy union organisation. With a strong base, workers and unions can more successfully utilise all the various forms of power available to them, including strategic campaigns that widen support for the dispute and address company vulnerabilities.

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United Aviation Workers Land a Victory by Dina Feller and Teresa Conrow

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**Dina Feller and Teresa Conrow**

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