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Pilot shortage hits home

For the past six months, [Shanghai Airlines](#) has been forced to look outside Chinese borders in order to get its freight airplanes off the ground on time--that's right, *laowai* are stepping into a cockpit near you. Eight foreigners from the US, Norway, Venezuela and the Philippines now fly the friendly skies for our city's favorite airline, a sign that a nation-wide shortage of Chinese pilots has finally come home to roost.



[CRIEnglish.com](#) offers this explanation:

In recent years, the scale of Shanghai Airlines fleet keeps expanding at a rate of 30% every year. The company added 9 new planes in 2004 and 7 last year, and its fleet is now composed of 42 planes. Such fast-growing transportation force forms a sharp contrast with the periodic lag of pilot nurture. According to a director of Shanghai Airlines, it will take at least 8 to 10 years and several million yuan to train a green hand to a qualified plane commander. These 8 to 10 years is precisely the golden season of rapid growth for domestic airline companies, hence introducing foreign pilots becomes a natural choice.

Ahhh, the golden season of rapid economic growth. Those words are music to our ears. Funny how the golden season for rapid economic growth coincides almost exactly with the golden season for irreversible negative environmental impact. We digress.

[Shanghai Daily](#) adds a few interesting tidbits of information:

Chinese regulations require foreign pilots pass exams on the country's local aviation regulations before qualifying and joining domestic airlines.

Foreign pilots are also encouraged to fly non-international flights. Their crew must have a Chinese co-pilot, who is responsible for keeping flight information confidential.

Thankfully, Chinese co-pilots will be on-hand to keep all of the confidential goings-on aboard Shanghai Airlines' cargo flights just that: confidential. Shanghaiist doesn't foresee ourselves getting to test out Shanghai Airlines' new pilots any time soon--we can't really afford it. For domestic flights that don't put such a dent in the wallet (at the expense of comfort and convenience), make ours China Eastern.

Photo from [flickr](#).

By [Jeff Jorve](#) in [Arts/Entertainment](#), [News](#) on March 12, 2006 3:13 PM [0 Comments](#) [0 Likes](#)

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