



A Member of



Leeward Islands Airline Pilots Association

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PRESS RELEASE

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LIALPA SAYS SHORTAGE OF CREW, POOR WORKING CONDITIONS, AND INCOMPETENT MANAGEMENT LEADS TO FLIGHT DELAYS AND CANCELLATIONS

(St John's, Antigua) The Leeward Islands Airline Pilots Association (LIALPA) has noted the public comments of Chairman of the Shareholder Governments, Prime Minister Dr Ralph Gonsalves in the October 19th 2016 Edition of the Barbados Today Newspaper. Dr Gonsalves is quoted as saying: "We have too many cancellations caused by illness of flight crew....we have too many bouts of illness which results in cancellations." We have also noted that those statements come a mere two (2) weeks after Antigua's Observer Newspaper issued a Retraction of Statements purportedly made by LIAT's Acting CEO Julie Reifer-Jones in its October 8th 2016 Edition, where Mrs. Reifer-Jones allegedly said: "On record we have enough cabin crew to fly LIAT's schedule. We have a high level of reported sickness from crew."

LIALPA strongly refutes the statements made by PM Gonsalves and by Acting CEO Reifer-Jones as erroneous and totally false. First of all, the action of the Acting CEO to have the Newspaper retract the Article is because she knows without a doubt that her statements were dishonest.

Here are the facts: **LIAT is woefully short of adequate crew to properly execute LIAT's current flight schedule.** Over the last two (2) years, LIAT has not employed a single pilot, even though thirty-one (31) pilots have left the company either because of retirement or resignation. Nineteen (19) of those who have left were trained to fly the newly acquired ATR type aircraft. Management sat on their hands while this mass attrition of ATR pilots occurred, and did nothing to rectify the situation, and this resulted in the company losing all of the monies it invested in the training of these pilots. To be specific, the cost of training an ATR Pilot is approximately EC\$100,000 per pilot, therefore this amounts to a total of EC\$1.9 million dollars of training investment that has been lost. Is this as a result of poor management? Now, after suffering such losses, and as the winter schedule is prepared, Management in a last minute panic is employing additional crew, but this is already too late, as it takes at least 3-4 months for a new pilot to train before they can actually fly with passengers. **So any new crew members employed will not be able to fly during the upcoming hectic Xmas/New Year Season. Again, those upcoming delays and cancellations are to be laid squarely and solely at the feet of management.**

The incompetence of LIAT's Management is exposed even further, as they continue to schedule flights even though they are aware that there is no crew available for the scheduled flight, and it would inevitably be cancelled. **This then leads to Management asking the skeletal remaining Crew to double their workload, and to work at maximum time with minimum rest. This is not a feasible model and it is just a matter of time before this operation model breaks down and flight cancellations increase even further.** Flight cancellations are also occurring because LIAT has no Reserve Coverage on a daily basis and so a single pilot in a single island has to cover the operational model throughout the network. This is ludicrous and represents poor planning and incompetent management.

LIALPA wants to categorically state that there is no abnormal sickness occurring among crew members. Presently, if a single pilot gets the flu and cannot fly, the sickness of that one (1) pilot can cause several flights to be cancelled. **What effectively run Airline pleads on a regular basis with Pilots, to work on their off days and personal vacation days?**

After several months of being silent, and trying our utmost to go above and beyond the call of duty, we are now bringing to the attention of the traveling public that some Pilots have fallen ill due to due to extremely high and unbearable cockpit temperatures, and also in part, due to the usage of chemicals/ pesticides to address an existing roach infestation in cockpits and passenger cabins.

LIAT recorded a profit in the first half of this year, and Management has yet to recognize that this would not have been achieved if the Pilots did not make the sacrifice of working 10-11 hours per day, and without the company scheduling meal breaks.

The Barbados Today article also mentioned that LIAT is expected in the final four months of the year to project a loss of EC\$9.2 million. **This was totally avoidable and we lay the blame for this squarely at the feet of Management.** LIAT lost millions of dollars when it sold its Dash 8 airplanes. When there was a hangar fire in Antigua, records of the airplanes were destroyed and were not backed up. Therefore, **the airplanes were depreciated and sold under value because even though LIAT spent millions of dollars putting in new (replacement) parts in the airplanes, they could not prove that the parts were new, nor could they prove how much flying time (usage) the airplanes did, all due to reckless negligence in basic record keeping. No one has been held accountable to date.**

On the matter of the projected millions of dollars in losses for LIAT, the travelling public needs to ask LIAT's management two (2) simple questions: **1) Has the removal of flights from certain profitable routes led to these projected losses? 2) Are the projected losses due to political interference in the Airline's Destination and Flight Schedule Planning?**

LIALPA as always continues to reassure the travelling public, that we are committed and dedicated to serving you at the highest professional levels. We want to avoid flight delays and especially cancellations, but we simply cannot do so, due to a shortage of crew, poor working conditions and an incompetent management team.

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