



PRESS RELEASE

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SWAPA Comments on State of Operational Emergency

(DALLAS) — Today, Captain Jon Weaks, president of the Southwest Airlines Pilots Association, issued a communication to the nearly 10,000 pilots represented by the association. In his communication he provided additional context and perspective on the self-described “State of Operational Emergency” declared by the airline. In his communication, Captain Weaks reaffirmed the safety of the airline, the confidence the pilot union has in AMFA mechanics to keep our aircraft in airworthy condition, and the joint commitment by SWAPA Pilots and AMFA mechanics to always protect the passengers. SWAPA Pilots are responsible for flying safely from point A to point B or not at all.

To follow are excerpts from that communication:

“The last few weeks have highlighted how poorly upper management at Southwest Airlines is performing, how it truly views labor, how ineffective its communication and execution of our daily operation are, and how everyone at OUR airline should be concerned.

Last week, Southwest declared a State of Operational Emergency (SOE), a veiled attempt designed to intimidate our mechanics that has instead caused unnecessary fear and safety concerns in our passengers and the flying public. When the nation saw Southwest blaming an employee group wedded to the safety of our aircraft for our maintenance issues, the questions and concerns intensified. What followed this declaration is perhaps the most egregious display by management of tribalizing and scapegoating our employees in the history of our Company.

AMFA has been vocal about not having enough parts being on hand, and at times had no choice but to legally use or “rob” parts from other aircraft in order to meet operational demands. What should be obvious to upper management is that, by failing to stock enough parts, relying on borrowing parts from other aircraft and banking on just-in-time inventory, the Company is in no way helping, but only furthering, delays.”

On the evening of February 22, Southwest Chief Legal Counsel, Mr. Mark Shaw, sent a letter to AMFA leadership alleging “unlawful concerted action” by our mechanics. Mr. Shaw cites no evidence of this supposed unlawful action. His only “fact” was that his “data analysis confirms that naturally-occurring maintenance or other events could not statistically produce these extremely high Unscheduled Aircraft Downtime (UAD) hours over the course of the past week.” What is glaringly missing from Mr. Shaw’s accusation is the fact that the Company has not stated that there has been any invalid, false, or fabricated safety write ups. Never.

“Mr. Shaw speaks from both sides of his mouth. He claims that “safety is paramount at Southwest and we fully respect each mechanic’s right and obligation to identify legitimate safety issues.” But does he? On the one hand, management wants our mechanics to make the right call, but on the other hand, they are upset that our mechanics are trying to do the right thing while under the microscope by the FAA. The cognitive dissonance is deafening!

The Company avoids the glaring fact that Southwest is still under increased FAA and DOT scrutiny with several ongoing investigations including Performance Weight and Balance (PWB), training issues, Flight 1380, Flight 3472, the FAA's Certificate Management Office (CMO) for Southwest being investigated by the DOT's Inspector General, etc. In an investigation report from the FAA in 2017, which is now public, the FAA said, "There seems to be a lack of an environment of trust, effective communication, and the willingness for employees to share mistakes, concerns, or failures without the fear of threats or reprisal. This ultimately leads to a degraded level of safety that the Safety Management System (SMS) is trying to maintain at the highest possible level."

We have seen first-hand poor leadership abound in the conflicting communications between the COO and CEO. While Mr. Van de Ven was busy throwing our mechanics under the bus for the Company's failings, on February 22, Mr. Kelly was busy praising them. In an update to employees, he wrote, "Our Mechanics are extraordinary. I am proud of them, and they have been especially heroic in getting aircraft returned to service over the last two weeks. They deserve all of our thanks." Which one is it? Our mechanics cannot be simultaneously engaged in an illegal job action while also heroically getting aircraft returned to service over the last two weeks.

Today, Southwest Airlines outsources 80 percent of all aircraft maintenance. So how does our outsourcing compare to that of our competition? Compared to Southwest Airlines' 80 percent outsourcing rate, United outsources 51 percent of its aircraft maintenance, Alaska outsources 49 percent, Delta outsources 43 percent, and American outsources only 33 percent. Spirit and Allegiant outsource approximately 20 percent, but their numbers may be skewed due to the fact that they lease most of their aircraft. And, all this is accomplished on top of already having the lowest mechanic to aircraft ratio in the industry. Southwest Airlines maintains a 3.3 AMTs to aircraft ratio. UAL, AA, and DL maintain a 12.0, 11.2, and 7.2 AMTs to aircraft ratio, respectively. The next closest to SWA is Alaska who still maintains a 4.3 ratio (due to Alaska's Line Mx Only- Mx program).

If management is touting outsourcing maintenance as a critical element of future success, they should release data showing the maintenance reliability rates for each vendor compared to the reliability rates of our mechanics. These reliability rates should include how much work was initially done incorrectly, and how much work had to be re-done once the aircraft was put back into service. This data should be published for past work and work in the future.

Let me be clear, our aircraft are safe, and a large part of that is because the men and women of AMFA continue to do their jobs in the face of increasing pressure, intimidation and scrutiny from Southwest management. They have our eternal gratitude for a job well done. SWAPA Pilots serve as the final line of defense and will never fly an aircraft unless it is safe to do so. Our families and friends fly on our aircraft, in addition to our valued passengers. We will protect them and the public at large and continue to always look for ways to improve safety. Their lives, our Company's future and our livelihoods depend on it.

A to B safely or not at all."

To see the full communication, please click on the [link](#).

About SWAPA

Located in Dallas, Texas, the Southwest Airlines Pilots Association (SWAPA) is a non-profit employee organization and the sole bargaining unit for the more than 9,600 pilots of Southwest Airlines. SWAPA, now in its 40th year, works to provide a secure and rewarding career for Southwest pilots and their families through negotiating contracts, defending contractual rights, and actively promoting professionalism and safety. For more information on the Southwest Airlines Pilots Association, visit www.swapa.org.

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