

Boeing sends 'contract pilots' to Qatar and LAN as 787 outsourcing takes new turn



SEATTLE – The saga of 787 outsourcing at The Boeing Company turned a new chapter today as the aerospace giant moved forward with plans to send non-Boeing temporary pilots to provide flight crew training. For more than 50 years, Boeing flight crew training has only been provided by full-time, experienced Boeing pilots.

According to an internal Boeing announcement, flight crews at Qatar Airways and LAN Airlines are scheduled to be the first Boeing customers to receive flight crew training from temporary, contract pilots. The temporary pilots have little of the advanced training required to become, and maintain qualification as, a full-time Boeing pilot, according to the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA), IFPTE Local 2001, which represents the full-time pilots who belong to the Airplane Manufacturing Pilots Association (AMPA). In some cases, the temp pilots have less than one hour at the controls of the 787, according to the union.

“This means these ‘instructor pilots’ are ‘training’ Qatar and LAN pilots who have orders of magnitude more actual flight time and experience in the 787 than they do,” said Ray Goforth, executive director of SPEEA. “Full-time Boeing instructor pilots are available to support Qatar and LAN, but Boeing is choosing to risk its reputation and stick these customers with minimally qualified contract pilots in order to save a few nickels.”

In August, AMPA pilots unanimously voted ‘No Confidence’ in management at Boeing Training & Flight Services in an effort to raise attention and alert airplane customers to the scheme to substitute temp pilots for the genuine Boeing pilots customers paid for.

Launch customer All Nippon Airways (ANA), along with Japan Airlines, Ethiopian Airlines, and Air India have, thus far, received flight training from full-time Boeing pilots.

“The humiliation for LAN and Qatar in having these temp pilots pawned off on them is startling,” said Goforth. “Did Boeing even tell these customers that they’re not worth being served by genuine Boeing training pilots?”

Unlike Boeing instructor pilots, the contract pilots did not participate in the flight test and certification program of the 787.

Pilot training for airline customers is part of the complete line assist and flight training package Boeing includes with the purchase of a new commercial airplane.

“When Boeing customers buy a 787, they expect experienced flight and training instructors,” said Goforth. “They don’t expect Boeing to give them a temp flight instructor who has little, if any, actual experience flying the aircraft they are training others to fly.”

A local of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), SPEEA represents 26,560 aerospace professionals at Boeing, Spirit AeroSystems in Kansas, and Triumph Composite Systems, Inc., in Spokane, Wash.

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