

# Two pilots face inquiry for refusing to fly on short-rest

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KARACHI - A senior Pilot of Boeing 777 and his first officer are being penalised by PIA management for refusing to fly on short rest, the pilots have been given notice for doing so under the most controversial Removal from Service Ordinance 2000, The Nation learnt from sources.

According to sources the accused Pilot Capt Murad Arbab and First Officer S Jamal operated PK-701; from Islamabad to Manchester on April 21, 2009, with a total duty of approximately 10 hours. After landing at Manchester they were required a rest period of approximately 20 hours as per PIA's own

Air Safety Manual.

"At the Manchester Airport they were advised by a junior traffic officer to travel supernumerary by British Airways flight to London departing approximately 12 noon day (with a rest of only 16 hour) and then continue same day operating PK-788 London to Karachi," said the source.

He added that total duty of the crew would have exceeded the CAA limits as prescribed in ANO 91-0012 Flight Duty Time Limitations which is maximum planned flight duty of 12 hours. Therefore, they had to refuse such an order by a traffic Officer as it would have jeopardised the safety of the passengers.

Both the senior Pilots have been

given a notice for inquiry under a controversial Removal from Service Ord. 2000.

Pakistan Airline Pilots' Association (PALPA) has expressed dismay over the charge sheeting by PIA administration of senior members of its community and demanded the airline to adhere to Air travel safety and practices being followed globally and surprisingly being in PIA's own flight safety manual also.

Sources informed that pilots have appealed to the PIA management to cooperate with the pilots in salvaging whatever prestige the national carrier still has. Pilots are the wealth of the airline and they should not be targeted on issues of

air safety.

Sources said that pilots are not immune from accountability. If they violate the rules or deviate from their duty, they should be disciplined according to the laid down rules. However, the administration should not deviate from transparent procedures. Bypassing rules under normal investigations clearly gave impression of prejudice and bring bad name.

Sources said that after the initial enquiry into the incident another enquiry committee comprising Khalid Iftikhar, Senior General Manager Marketing and Muhammad Shoab, Secretary PIA, who are both members of the administration was formed and this

clearly indicates that management is bent upon making these pilots an example for others so that the safety violations are not pointed out. In past such enquiries were always assigned to the senior pilots who are well aware of the settled principles and Air Navigation Order. Pilots do not expect fair enquiry from members of the administration.

Sources said the General Manager Planning & Scheduling, Capt Haroon Abdullah had previously sought explanation regarding the same allegations from the pilots vide letter GMCP&S/P-38212/09 dated 12.05.2009 and they had submitted their explanations dated 26.05.2009. The pilots were not been

given the copies of the decision taken by Capt Abdullah for the reasons best known to him. The new Enquiry Committee has also not provided any copy to the pilots that could help them in defending their positions.

Sources said that pilots feel that the Enquiry being conducted by this Enquiry Committee is actually a follow up of the enquiry conducted by Capt Abdullah and as such not an independent enquiry and contrary to the statutory provisions of section 5 of the Removal from Service (Special Powers) Ordinance 2000 which only provides for one enquiry. It is a well settled position of law that on the basis of fact finding enquiry only disciplinary proceed-

ings can be started but no punishment can be awarded.

Sources said that pilots have asked the Ministry of Defence to take notice of the administration's illegal inquiries and ensure not to overstretch the pilots to a limit where a minor error due to fatigue could result in fatal accident.

When the PIA management was contacted, an official commented that the issue is under review of the committee. If the pilots accused prove to be guilty, they will have to face the enquiry and every possible action.

PIA will go by the book in order to proceed in the enquiry. The pilots have been asked to submit their clarifications.