



AIRCRAFT MECHANICS FRATERNAL ASSOCIATION

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February 26, 2018

Mr. Michael G. Van de Ven
Chief Operating Officer
Southwest Airlines Co.
2702 Love Field Drive
Dallas, TX 75235

Sent via E-mail: Mike.VanDeVen@wnco.com

Re: Respect and Safety

Dear Mr. Van de Ven:

The recent vote of no confidence taken and issued by the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association (“AMFA”) has absolutely nothing to do with ongoing collective bargaining. It was you, and not AMFA, that attempted to connect safety with contract negotiations. The truth is there exists a serious concern regarding the degradation of safety within Southwest’s maintenance program as determined by the Federal Aviation Administration (“FAA”). The truth is sometimes difficult to digest and accept. In addition, the view from the top that you enjoy as Chief Operating Officer may be breathtaking, but the distance from the high perch which you sit upon to day-to-day operations has obviously blurred your perception of reality.

In your recent letter you alleged that AMFA “crossed the line by publicly calling into question ... [Southwest’s] focus on safety.” However, all AMFA has done was to pull the curtain back and reveal a dirty and undeniable truth. That truth – as determined by the FAA is evidenced by the following from the FAA’s recent investigation into one of the many AIR21 Whistleblower complaints filed by Southwest AMTs:

The environment at Southwest Airlines; specifically lack of communication, lack of training (AHM program, SA-M 1057 use), perception that airworthiness findings will result in disciplinary actions for all involved to include mid-level managers, if not addressed **will impact the value of quality having a direct effect on the status of aircraft airworthiness.** ...

The motivation behind management questioning AMTs and Inspectors when they discover anything outside the scope of a maintenance task and the subsequent use of formal fact-finding meetings which management utilizes to formally document an inquiry into airworthiness discrepancies, appears as a tool used to influence a relaxing of standards, to look the other way, or to gain a degree of approval through a leniency of standards. **The result of this pattern is a capitulation of airworthiness and a culture of fear and retribution.**

Federal Aviation Administration, *ACTION: Report of Investigation of Whistleblower Complaint Number WB17582, Southwest Airlines, Inc.* at pp. 54-55 (emphasis added).

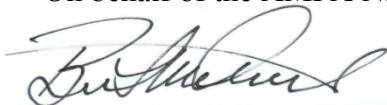
You proclaimed in your February 23 letter that you could not “overstate [your] disappointment that [Southwest’s] commitment to safety would be deceitfully used as a leveraging point for contract negotiations.” Mr. Van de Ven, with all due respect, you would be derelict in your duties as a Chief Operating Officer were you to continue with the ostrich-like head-in-the-sand approach to the serious problems that exist within our maintenance program and culture.

The unfortunate culture of fear and retribution, which was found to exist within our maintenance program by the FAA is what led to our recent vote of no confidence in the man in charge of maintenance at Southwest. Without revealing this truth, there would be no way to remediate what is a truly deplorable situation – a situation described by the FAA as “a capitulation of airworthiness and a culture of fear and retribution. Fear and retribution are the antithesis of the “culture of respect” that you cite in your letter. This degradation of our once-great culture begins at the top.

AMFA looks forward to resumption of collective bargaining in March. In fact, with this letter, we formally invite you to attend your first negotiation session with our group. We want nothing more than to reach a tentative agreement that rewards our members for their productivity and efficiency – not to mention more than five years without a pay raise. However, if you were to attend your first session with our group, you would learn that the Southwest negotiating committee continues to demand massive changes to our Scope clause, thereby significantly increasing the outsourcing of our historic work as a piece to any proposed deal.

We understand you may have felt obligated to come to the defense of Mr. Nitschke; however, please know we did not take our unanimous vote of no confidence in him lightly. We cannot and will not stand idly by as a culture of fear and retribution, as identified by the FAA, continues within our maintenance department. You stated in your letter that you would “not tolerate” “attacking one of our employees.” If you are sincere in that regard, we implore you to investigate the system-wide “attack” on our members that has resulted in what the FAA described as “a capitulation of airworthiness and a culture of fear and retribution.”

On behalf of the AMFA National Executive Council,



Bret Oestreich
National Director