

Lufthansa Cancels More Flights as Travel Chaos Grips German airports



Berlin, November 24 (RHC)-- Germany's largest airline, Lufthansa, has announced plans for the cancellation of more than 800 short- and medium-haul flights, as a labor union decides to extend a strike by the carrier's pilots to a third day.

Lufthansa said Thursday that 830 flights would be scrapped on Friday, a decision which would affect some 100,000 passengers.

The company said long-haul flights would mostly continue as planned while flights run by the airline's other branches like Eurowings, Swiss and Austrian Airlines would not be affected. The cancellations come in the wake of a strike by Lufthansa's pilots, which began late Wednesday.

The Cockpit, a union representing the pilots, has been at odds with Lufthansa, saying the airline should bow to a wage rise demand of 3.66 percent and should implement it retroactively for the past five and a half years. It says the flagship German carrier has posted billions in profits over the past years while maintaining a wage freeze policy, which the union says has cost the pilots dearly.

Lufthansa has offered much less as a rise, arguing that meeting the demands of the union is actually

impossible. Lufthansa rejects the claims of making significant profits out of the freeze and the inflation, saying its overarching policy has been to reduce costs amid increasing competition in the industry.

“With a demand of 20 percent wage increases we cannot make Lufthansa fit for the future,” said Harry Hohmeister, a Lufthansa board member, adding that the company lost about 20 million euros (\$21 million) in the first two days of strike as customers were making fewer bookings.

The Cockpit, which represents 5,400 Lufthansa pilots, has already staged 13 strikes over the past two years. The industrial actions cost Lufthansa 222 million euros in 2014, roughly 21 million euros per day.

Minor strikes have been staged in Lufthansa’s lower-cost carriers, with cabin crew unions demanding better pays and improved working conditions. One such walkout by budget airline Eurowings on Tuesday canceled around 60 flights from two German airports. However, the German carrier managed to reach a general deal with the unions representing ground staff and cabin crew.

Lufthansa says the pilot strike that began on Wednesday has grounded a total of 2,618 flights this week and affected 315,000 passengers. The airline said re-booking would be free of charge for the affected passengers.

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