

Podcast Transcription

Fly by Night: Captain Dave Chase, November 2020

Captain Chris Lee My guest today is Captain Dave Chase, MEC Chairman. Thanks for coming, Dave.

Captain Dave Chase How are you doing, Chris?

Captain Chris Lee You recently put out a comm to the pilots to inform them of the MEC invoking Section 5.B.4.b of the CBA. Talk to the pilots about what that section is and what that process entails.

Captain Dave Chase OK, happy to. That's similar to a grievance, but it's related to Lodging and Rest Facilities. So Section [5.B](#) is Lodging and Rest Facilities and when you get down to [5.B.4.b](#) you start talking about how we address problems and concerns with layover facilities and whether or not they meet the quality and standards that we expect in the collective bargaining agreement. Clearly, the hotel and Guangzhou is not meeting that. I think the Company has put out some pretty clear FCIFs on how they feel about it as well in their attempts to change the hotel. But we believe they've had enough time after we met with them through the Trip Services Committee as the collective bargaining agreement specifies. We didn't feel like they were taking action in a timely manner and given the extreme nature of some of the reports and the difficulties in getting proper food and rest, we felt it was important to elevate to the Vice President of Flight Ops. So we sent that letter over yesterday and like we do any time we grieve or send a letter over, we notify the pilots.

Captain Chris Lee And we've received many PDRs from pilots on this issue.

Captain Dave Chase They're excruciating to read, what some of these people are putting up with. All of us know that flying night or international, that you don't necessarily eat or sleep like on a standard schedule. It can be pretty difficult to talk about the exact conditions that professional pilots are being asked to endure to serve our customers in this way.

Captain Chris Lee So how does the timeline work for a letter like this?

Captain Dave Chase Well, I encourage all the pilots to go read the exact section of the contract, but essentially, we send over the letter and the Vice President of Flight Operations and the MEC Chairman meet within a reasonable time period. And then after the meeting, he has 15 business days to render a response. Clearly, we don't believe that time frame matches up to the severity of the situation. I don't think people wrote this collective bargaining agreement envisioning some of the circumstances the pilots are facing right now. However, that's what the collective bargaining agreement does specify. We haven't even received an official response yet from management. that they've received the letter.

Captain Chris Lee Well, let's talk about what we're asking the Company to do.

Captain Dave Chase We're asking them to do precisely what they've indicated previously that they're trying to do, which is to find a suitable layover facility. In the absence of that, we're asking them to cease layovers. We've seen it earlier this year when they ceased all

layovers in mainland China for a time. It's possible to operate the system that way and it's our belief that in the absence of a suitable layover facility, there should not be a layover. We know this is a difficult time of year to be taking those kinds of actions, but we don't think safety, security and the collective bargaining agreement take a backseat to the time of year and the importance that places on our customers and our business.

Captain Chris Lee When do you expect to receive an answer from the Company on your letter?

Captain Dave Chase Well, I don't know when they're going to reply that they've seen it, but we are seeing pilots submitting our pilot data reports with copies of their Insite answers with acknowledgment that the layover facility is unacceptable. So we certainly expect action regardless of whether or not we receive an immediate answer.

Captain Chris Lee All of this seems to be happening during a really important time of the year.

Captain Dave Chase Absolutely. We're all FedEx pilots. We understand the importance of peak for us and our customers. But in a way, this is happening in an entirely different scenario, one we haven't seen, not just from a global pandemic perspective, but even as we've seen from corporate communications. This is peak on top of peak. Our pilots have been dealing with COVID since January. We've seen these hotel lockdown conditions, isolation's, the coronavirus testing, quarantines in the field, lockdown, difficulty getting food, and it's not letting up. And as a matter of fact, the toll of the month over month layover conditions is additive. I see it in the frustration of our pilots and the difficulties they are facing. We tend to live our lives, bid pack to bid pack, trip to trip, you review your flight, you get to your next layover. We all have our routines and the things we're used to doing. And what we're seeing now is pilots going on the road for sometimes weeks at a time and not stepping outside except for to fly an airplane. We have pilots in hotel standby, whose one in seven, is in the exact same hotel room they were locked down in on their hotel standby days. And these types of effects need to be mitigated. They need to be communicated by management on the types of things you can do to deal with it, how to pack for trips, what to expect, how they're going to help you. And we're not seeing any of those types of communications. We're seeing thank you's and attaboys, but we're not seeing the real acknowledgment that additional steps need to be taken to mitigate the effects of being locked in a hotel room all around the world for days and days at a time. We definitely need to move on to that. So this is an important time of year. But I'd also focus everybody on yeah, as soon as peaks over, though, we're going to be asked to continue this in the pandemic, moving the very vaccine that we're not even sure we'll be able to take due to its emergency use authorization. But we're going to be asked to move this vaccine all around the world in a continued peak. I think it's something we need to consider that we're starting to hear things about the light at the end of the tunnel, but we're not there yet and we have months to go. And that's why it's important the Company steps up, communicates and takes real steps to mitigate the effects of being locked in a room, eating room service for days at a time, not exercising for days at a time, and then stuff, all your life back home or maybe your kids aren't going to college or their online schooling. Your wife might have lost a job. Your husband might have lost a job. So there's real effects for our pilots. I take it very seriously. We all need to see the Company say more and do more to help us with these problems.

Captain Chris Lee Well, thanks for coming, Dave, and thanks for listening. If you have any questions, please go to fdx.alpa.org and utilize the [PDR link](#). As always, be safe out there and we'll see you next time.