

Lufthansa Pilots Go on Two-Day Strike



Berlin, September 8 (RHC)-- Pilots at Germany's main airline, Lufthansa, have started a two-day strike in a long-standing dispute with the German flag carrier's management over retirement benefits.

On Monday, the Vereinigung Cockpit (VC), the union representing Lufthansa pilots, announced the cancellation of half of its long-haul flights (84 out of a total 1,500) planned for Tuesday over the strike by the pilots.

The airline also said that pilots on short and medium-haul flights departing Germany would walk out of their jobs on Wednesday between 2201 GMT and 2159 GMT.

The strike, the 13th in 18 months, will affect passenger and cargo flights out of Germany. The Vereinigung Cockpit and Lufthansa's management have been embroiled in a bitter dispute since April 2014 over plans to change the pilots' early retirement arrangements.

The union is demanding the carrier to allow pilots to choose early retirement at 55 and receive up to 60 percent of their pay until they reach the statutory retirement age. The airline, however, wants all fit pilots to keep flying until 65.

Talks between the VC and the management foundered last week after the latter reportedly refused to accept the union's concessions in exchange for pursuing its own cost-cutting plans.

On Monday, the VC accused Lufthansa's officials of seeking to "smash wage-agreement structures and demolish protective mechanisms in order to weaken the union."

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