

Mayday Air Jamaica Takes Stand Against Spirit Airlines' Bid to Purchase Air J

A former president of the Jamaica Airline Pilots Association (JALPA) has sent an open letter to Spirit Airlines, asking the low-cost carrier to drop its bid to purchase Air Jamaica and disclose the purchase price to the current and former Air Jamaica employees who are determined to keep the country's only airline under Jamaican ownership - even if it means purchasing it themselves.

Wesley Sampson and his organization, Mayday Air Jamaica (<http://www.maydayairjamaica.com>), mean business: If Spirit Airlines does not walk away from the deal, Mayday Air Jamaica and its supporters will picket at Air Jamaica in Miami on December 15. Sampson is staging the peaceful protest knowing full well its potential to disrupt holiday travel at one of the nation's busiest hubs.

"According to the United Nations' Human Development Index, which measures the percentage of a population suffering from malnourishment, Jamaica is one of the ten poorest countries in the world," Sampson stated. "Air Jamaica is our one remaining national treasure, our only resource to hand down to the children of Jamaica in hopes of a better future for them. It is unconscionable to take this asset out of Jamaican hands and place it under the control and ownership of private foreign nationals when we have capable, experienced Jamaicans ready, willing and able to purchase and run the airline right now."

Mayday Air Jamaica contends the national airline of Jamaica is the only net foreign exchange earner the government of Jamaica owns; to remove it completely from Jamaican ownership would be to push the country further into poverty. In addition to asking Spirit Airlines to withdraw its offer to buy Air Jamaica and publicly disclose the terms of its purchase deal, Mayday Air Jamaica is asking the Jamaican government to sell the airline to the employees at the same terms, at a 20% discount designed to show support for the people of Jamaica.

Sampson, an American citizen, and his colleagues in the Mayday Air Jamaica cause who are standing by in hopes of purchasing Air Jamaica are not seeking to shut out Spirit Airlines completely. The group is open to talking with Spirit Airlines about the U.S. carrier's specific needs on the route in which it is primarily interested in operating.

"Mayday Air Jamaica's intent is to use all peaceful and legal means at its disposal, including picketing at Miami International and boycotting all potential foreign buyers, to discourage foreign interests from pursuing the purchase of Air Jamaica and to convince the government of Jamaica to sell the national airline to its current and former employees," Sampson finished.

A petition supporting Mayday Air Jamaica's platform is now circulating at Miami International, and discussion is underway at Mayday Air Jamaica's blog, <http://blog.maydayairjamaica.com>. - sflcn.com