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## Cabin crew chief's Hitler jibe ups stakes in feud with pilots' union

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Hong Kong's largest pilots' union has severed relations with the Flight Attendants Union (FAU) after its leader allegedly called the pilots "selfish and balls-less" for withdrawing legal funding from sacked colleagues.

The president of the Aircrew Officers Association (AOA), Murray Gardner, has written to Becky Kwan Siu-wa, chairwoman of the 4,000-member FAU, telling her "all forms of co-operation" were suspended.

Ms Kwan sent a reply to Mr Gardner yesterday, comparing his rhetoric to that of Adolf Hitler and describing his letter as "high-handed, colonial and grossly inappropriate".

The dispute centres on the FAU's decision to provide temporary banking facilities for the newly formed Cathay Pilots Union, which intends to carry on the legal fight for a group of sacked pilots known as the "49ers".

In April, AOA members voted to halt legal funding for the pilots, sacked during a 2001 work-to-rule, and accept Cathay's offer of 10-month payoffs or interviews for positions as freighter pilots for their sacked colleagues.

In a phone call early last month, Ms Kwan is alleged by the pilots' union to have told AOA general secretary John Findlay: "Your members are selfish and balls-less. If the AOA won't help the 49ers, the FAU can and will."

Mr Gardner wrote to Ms Kwan afterwards saying: "I find your remarks offensive and impertinent; they are not at all what I would expect from a fellow union leader."

Asked if she had used the expression "balls-less", Ms Kwan told the *Sunday Morning Post*: "I never said those exact words but I think people

have been saying this to the FAU and it is the kind of thing people have been saying to us."

She called Mr Gardner's letter arrogant and said many pilots admired the FAU for winning a \$280 million payout from Cathay in April for breaching the contracts of longer-serving flight attendants.

"Pilots have been saying to us 'you have got more balls than us'," she said. "We are determined to always stand up for our rights and stand up for justice. We will never abandon our members in the way the AOA has done."

In his letter to Ms Kwan, dated May 9, Mr Gardner accused her of siding with the breakaway union for personal reasons.

Mr Gardner said the FAU had "chosen to side with, and provide assistance to, this disgruntled, small minority ... whose actions could cause considerable damage to the AOA".

He added: "It is very clear that the relationship with the AOA which you have chosen to cast aside for personal reasons is quite important to your members, to the members of the AOA and indeed to all employees of Cathay Pacific."

Ms Kwan wrote to Mr Gardner: "We are of the opinion that your small Hitlerian rhetoric is a failed attempt at managerial posturing."



[Back](#)

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