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Sunday May 29 2005

Breakaway union backs diehards

Simon Parry

A breakaway pilots' union has been formed to continue to fund the court battles of sacked Cathay Pacific pilots who refuse to accept job interviews or payouts to drop their legal cases.

The Cathay Pilots' Union has circulated a newsletter to members of the Aircrew Officers Association (AOA) and other pilots in Hong Kong seeking recruits, who will be asked to pay 1.25 per cent of their salaries to support the court cases.

However, AOA president Murray Gardner has voiced 'great concern' over the breakaway union and warned that any pilots who join it will be stripped of their AOA membership.

In its circular to pilots, the Cathay Pilots' Union said: '[We] will continue to support the 49er legal processes in Hong Kong, Australia and the United Kingdom. We are confident of securing successful rulings within the next year ... In the absence of a fair settlement, these actions represent an investment in career security.'

The union, whose founders have requested anonymity citing fear of management reprisals, is not yet registered and is operating with the help of the Flight Attendants' Union, which has provided a temporary banking facility to it.

Mr Gardner has written to AOA members warning: 'Should you choose to join CPU, you would have to relinquish your membership of the AOA.'

He said the AOA had signed a legally binding agreement with Cathay to cease funding 49ers' legal actions and said dual membership would see pilots supporting two courses of actions by two different unions.

Cathay director of flight operations Nick Rhodes said while the airline respects the right of pilots to belong to any union they wished, 'we only recognise, and negotiate with, the AOA as the representative body of Cathay Pacific pilots'.
