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Continental Welcomes Back Last of Furloughed Pilots

HOUSTON (04/01/05) — The last of the 637 pilots furloughed by Continental Airlines in the aftermath of 9/11 returned to their jobs at the airline today to begin retraining. The 19 pilots return under a brand new labor contract that goes into effect today.

“In reality, this is the last act required by our old contract,” noted Capt. Jay Panarello, chairman of the Continental Master Executive Council (CAL MEC), a unit of the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA). “It guaranteed those who were furloughed the opportunity to return to active service by today and now that guarantee has been fulfilled.”

Continental is the first legacy carrier to recall all of its furloughed pilots, doing so on the basis of a business plan that emphasizes growth. Continental also becomes the first legacy carrier to begin the hiring of new pilots. The first new-hire group, composed of approximately 100 ExpressJet (XJT) pilots (formerly Continental Express), will begin training this month, with the first class scheduled next week.

These XJT pilots had already been accepted at Continental and were scheduled for classes in the fall of 2001 before the company canceled their training classes in the wake of 9/11.

The new CAL ALPA labor contract protects the pilots with a “no furlough” clause, the only such clause at any of the legacy airlines that have negotiated new pilot contracts since 9/11. It also gives preferential interview treatment at Continental Airlines to pilots from ExpressJet, American Trans Air and other carriers.

CAL MEC represents the 4,200 pilots of Continental Airlines. ALPA is the world’s largest pilot union and represents 64,000 airline pilots at 41 airlines in the U.S. and Canada.

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