

Flight cancellations snarl holiday plans

Staffing issues tied to COVID-19 cited

NEW YORK, Dec 26, (AP): Airlines continued to cancel hundreds of flights Saturday because of staffing issues tied to COVID-19, disrupting holiday celebrations during one of the busiest travel times of the year.

FlightAware, a flight-tracking website, noted nearly 1,000 canceled flights entering, leaving or inside the U.S. Saturday, up from 690 flights scrapped on Friday. Over 250 more flights were already canceled for Sunday. FlightAware does not say why flights are canceled.

Delta, United and JetBlue had all said Friday that the omicron variant was causing staffing problems leading to flight cancellations. United spokesperson Maddie King said staffing shortages were still causing cancellations and it was unclear when normal operations would return. "This was unexpected," she said of omicron's impact on staffing. Delta and JetBlue did not respond to questions Saturday.

According to FlightAware, the three airlines canceled more than 10% of their scheduled Saturday flights. American Airlines also canceled more than 90 flights Saturday, about 3% of its schedule, according to FlightAware. American spokesperson Derek Walls said the cancellations stemmed from "COVID-related sick calls." European and Australian airlines have also canceled holiday-season flights because of staffing problems tied to COVID-19.

For travelers, that meant time away from loved ones, chaos at the airport and the stress of spending hours standing in line and on the phone trying to rebook flights. Peter Bockman, a retired actor, and his daughter Malaika, a college student, were supposed to be in Senegal on Saturday celebrating with relatives they hadn't seen in a decade. But their 7:30 p.m. flight Friday from New York to Da-



Holiday travelers line up at the security checkpoint at Pittsburgh International Airport in Imperial, Pa., Thursday, Dec. 23, 2021. At least three major airlines say they have canceled dozens of flights, Friday, Dec. 24, because illnesses largely tied to the omicron variant of COVID-19 have taken a toll on flight crew numbers during the busy holiday travel season. (AP)

kar was canceled, which they found out only when they got to the airport. They were there until 2 a.m. trying to rebook a flight.

"Nobody was organizing, trying to sort things out," he said, faulting Delta for a lack of customer service. "Nobody explained anything. Not even, 'Oh we're so sorry, this is what we can do to help you.'"

Their new flight, for Monday evening, has a layover in Paris, and they are

worried there will be issues with that one as well. They have already missed a big family get-together that was scheduled for Saturday.

FlightAware's data shows airlines scrapped more than 6,000 flights globally for Friday, Saturday and Sunday combined as of Saturday evening, with almost one-third of affected flights to, from or within the United States. Chinese airlines made up many of the canceled flights, and Chinese airports

topped FlightAware's lists of those with most cancellations. It wasn't clear why. China has strict pandemic control measures, including frequent lockdowns, and the government set one on Xi'an, a city of 13 million people, earlier this week.

Employees who answered the phone Sunday at customer hotlines for Air China and China Eastern airlines said they had received no notice of cancellations of flights to or from the United

States.

Air China usually flies between New York City and Shanghai twice a week. China Eastern has two weekly flights to Los Angeles, one from Beijing and the other from the southern city of Shenzhen. Another Chinese airline, Hainan Airlines, suspended flights to the United States early in the pandemic.

The Civil Aviation Administration of China's flight schedule through

the end of March shows a total of 408 international flights planned per week. That is down 21% from a year earlier.

Flight delays and cancellations tied to staffing shortages have been a regular problem for the U.S. airline industry this year. Airlines encouraged workers to quit in 2020, when air travel collapsed, and were caught short-staffed this year as travel recovered.

NLRB to review order blocking Nissan plant small union 'vote'

NASHVILLE, Tenn., Dec 26, (AP): A federal labor board is reviewing a decision by one of its regional officials to deny a union from trying to organize fewer than 100 of the thousands of employees at Nissan's auto assembly plant in Tennessee.

A 3-2 decision Tuesday by the National Labor Relations Board - now with a Democratic majority under President Joe Biden - ordered a review of the June ruling that prevented a vote limited to 87 tool and die technicians at Nissan's Smyrna plant, about 25 miles (40 kilometers) outside Nashville.

The NLRB's new order says the decision by an acting regional director "raises substantial issues warranting review."

The regional official ruled against the smaller bloc vote after finding the few dozen workers share an "overwhelming community of interest" with the rest of the facility's production and maintenance workers, and that the only appropriate unionized group through the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers campaign would be one representing about 4,300 plantwide production and maintenance workers. The union did not want the larger vote and didn't pursue it.

Three Democratic NLRB members picked by President Joe Biden voted to review that ruling. Two Republican members selected by former President Donald Trump voted against it.

The decision restores some hope for

unions in what had been the latest failed foray in the uphill fight to gain traction at foreign-owned auto assembly plants in the traditionally anti-union South.

The union has argued that the 87 employees sought for a bargaining unit have extremely specialized skills for a job that others at the plant cannot do and should be eligible for standalone representation.

"We are pleased to see the Board acknowledge the importance of this case, particularly within the scope of how employees choose to organize themselves under the NLRA," machinists union spokesperson DeLane Adams said. "Tool and Die Maintenance Technicians at Nissan Tennessee have fought hard for a union and deserve to have a voice on the job."

Meanwhile, the company has contended that the employees are not sufficiently distinct from other plant workers to be eligible for their own small unionized subgroup.

"Nissan believes the Regional Director's decision is supported by the evidence," Nissan spokesperson Lloryn Love-Carter said. "Nissan remains committed to all of our employees before, during, and after the NLRB's process."

Nissan does work with organized labor in the rest of the world, but votes to unionize broadly at the U.S. two plants have not been close. Workers in Smyrna rejected a plantwide union under the United Auto Workers in 2001 and 1989.

KUWAIT FUND FOR ARAB ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Signature of a Grant Agreement of US\$ 2.0 Million in support of Highly Vulnerable Internally Displaced Persons and Host Communities Project in the Republic of Yemen

A Grant Agreement was signed today in Kuwait between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, whereby Kuwait Fund will provide a Grant in the amount of US\$ 2.0 Million in support of Highly Vulnerable Internally Displaced Persons and Host Communities Project in the Republic of Yemen. This Grant falls within the framework of Kuwait Fund's contributions towards fulfilling the State of Kuwait commitment announced on the sidelines of the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly to provide a Grant of US\$ 20 Million in support of the humanitarian situation in the Republic of Yemen from the resources available in the Fund.

The Project aims at improving living conditions of internally displaced families

and of their host communities and improve access to basic services for them in a number of cities in Yemen including Sana'a, Aden, Al-Hudaydah and Marib, for approximately 200 thousand people dispersed over numerous camp-like settings.

The Project consists of providing basic building materials for temporary shelters, rehabilitating and improving sites' infrastructure, which will include rehabilitation and improvement initiatives of water sources, establishment of water channels and sewage system, waste management and road repairs, and supply and installation of solar-powered street lighting in about 25 sites.

The Grant Agreement was signed on behalf of the UNHCR by Resident Representative to the State of Kuwait Mrs.

Nisreen Rubaian, and on behalf of Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development by Director General Mr. Marwan A. Th. Alghanem.

This is the fifth opportunity for collaboration between the two institutions, as Kuwait Fund had previously signed four Grant Agreements with UNHCR; the first was signed in 2016 for the amount of US\$ 3.0 Million in support of the Response Plan for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, and another two Grants in the amount of US\$ 10.0 million in 2018 and US\$ 2.6 million in 2020 for Improving the Living Conditions for Syrian Refugees in Kurdistan Iraq, while the last Grant Agreement was signed in 2021 in the amount of US\$ 1.917 million for Improving Access to Health Services for Syrian Refugees in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Covetrus announces rejig

PORTLAND, Maine, Dec 26, (Agencies): Covetrus announced a new organizational structure within Northern and Central Europe to execute the company's three-year strategy, deliver operational efficiencies, and better enable the company's combined commercial teams to service their customers and provide a reset for the German and U.K. businesses.

Earlier this year, Covetrus announced the hiring of András Bolcskei as Covetrus' first president of International. Mr. Bolcskei was charged with bringing all commercial teams outside of North America together, and today's announcement advances that plan. Key changes include the development of a new International leadership team and a concerted focus within the U.K. and German businesses, an anticipated element of the company's strategic plan, as well as an immediate and strong reaction to recent pressures within those two regions.

Covetrus Germany will move its DACH headquarter from Hamburg to Düsseldorf. Effective April 1, 2022, Covetrus' Düsseldorf location will create the DACH hub for the company under the leadership of Dr. Andreas Tschuor and will strengthen its commercial capabilities, service to customers and competitiveness within the German market. In addition, the proximity of Düsseldorf to two other Covetrus regions (Belgium and the Netherlands) will enable and lead to increased efficiencies and operational excellence within those regions' commercial teams. The company will close its Hamburg office on March 31, 2022. Employment contracts tied to Hamburg will be discontinued, and employees will be offered the choice to continue employment with unchanged conditions in the new Düsseldorf office on April 1, 2022.

Development of a new leadership team to drive the company's International Business. Effective January 1, 2022, and similar to the structure adopted in the U.S. earlier this year, the U.K. commercial and the Global Technology Solutions (GTS) teams, and the U.K. & Europe sales teams will come under one, unified commercial leadership, led by Loic Jegou, Country Manager and VP, Northern Europe. Mr. Jegou joined Covetrus last month with 18 years of experience in the animal health pharmaceutical business at Pfizer and MSD Animal Health. The U.K. business will increase service to U.K.-based customers through an extended focus of the company's "One Face to Customer" approach. Additionally, in keeping with a true International approach, Australia and New Zealand are adopting the same go-to-market strategy, and the GTS sales team within the APAC region will report directly to Simon Hellams, VP, APAC. Covetrus is uniquely suited, within the animal health industry, to meet their customers' overall needs with a single point of contact due to Covetrus' expansive product and service offering and breadth of capabilities.

Company took part in launch of federation's strategic plan at Jaber Stadium

Zain Platinum Sponsor of Kuwait School Sports Federation



Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its platinum sponsorship of the Kuwait School and Higher Education Sports Federation. The announcement came during the event held at Jaber Al Ahmad International Stadium to launch the federation's strategic plan, which was held under the patronage of H.E. Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al Mutairi.

Zain took part in the inauguration ceremony held at Jaber Al Ahmad International Stadium, which witnessed the presence of President of Kuwait Football Federation Sheikh Ahmad Al Yousef Al Sabah, representative of the event's patron Deputy General Manager of the Public Authority for Sports for Facilities and Maintenance Sheikh Humoud Al Mubarak Al Sabah,

President of the Kuwait School and Higher Education Sports Federation Faisal Al Maqseed, External and Internal Relations Department Manager at Zain Kuwait Hamad Al Musaiheeb, as well as many Kuwaiti athletes and prominent figures from sports and education sectors.

Zain expressed its pride in supporting the federation's strategic plan for the next five years, which springs from the company's comprehensive corporate sustainability strategy towards supporting the Kuwaiti sports, youth, and education sectors. Zain strongly believes in the importance of developing students' skills and embracing their passion for sports from an early age and throughout their academic lives to prepare them for professional careers in various sports, ultimately enabling them to

represent Kuwait in local, regional, and international sports arenas.

The Kuwait School and Higher Education Sports Federation's strategy for the next five years (2021-2026) comes to implement the directives of H.H. the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, which direct to bring back school sports as a first step to embrace Kuwait's students, discover their talents, and develop their skills, allowing them to join local clubs and national teams to represent their nation, achieve medals, and raise the Kuwaiti flag high.

Through its plan, the federation aims at infusing a number of positive concepts within students, including respect, unity, excellence, teamwork, professionalism, and pride. The federation is set to organize and manage

school sports programs within all academic years from kindergarten to university levels.

Zain is always keen on supporting the various sports programs hosted in Kuwait with the aim of elevating the Kuwaiti sports, youth, and education scene. The company strongly believes that the private sector has a vital role in progressing sports and youth initiatives, and it makes this belief a reality by sponsoring similar initiatives.

As a leading private sector company in Kuwait, Zain is constantly looking to identify and support excellence across the sports sector. The company continues to put Kuwaiti sports and athletes at the forefront of its priorities and pledges to continue motivating them to achieve all the recognition and support they deserve.

