1-24-1992

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Nicaragua: Airline Workers Stage Protest

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

Published: Friday, January 24, 1992

On Jan. 17 at Managua's international airport, employees of the state-run airline, Aeronica, took control of a Boeing 707. Regularly scheduled flights to Miami, Florida, were consequently cancelled. Employee union spokespersons said the takeover constituted a protest against the government's failure to comply with 1990 accords on privatization of state-run enterprises. The accords stipulated that 25% of the stock in privatized companies would be offered to employees. Aeronica employees say the government had offered a 12% stake in the company. Union members said the government is negotiating acquisition of a 49% stake in Aeronica by the Salvadoran airline TACA. On Jan. 18, Dayton Caldera, director of the Nicaraguan Public Sector Corporation (CORNAP) which oversees operations of state-owned companies, said the government is not currently engaged in privatizing Aeronica. Instead, he said, TACA is negotiating a "joint investment" with Aeronica. Caldera added that the government "cannot continue subsidizing the national airline, which has been bankrupt for the last several months." On Jan. 23, Aeronica employees suspended their protest, and vacated the plane. [On Jan. 17, TACA spokespersons in San Jose announced that the company had increased its stake in Costa Rica's LACSA airline to 10%.] (Basic data from Agence France-Presse, 01/17/92, 01/18/92, 01/23/92)

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