

Cathay ordered to pay more than \$7M in labor case

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HONG KONG

A Hong Kong court has ruled that Cathay Pacific unfairly fired 18 pilots amid a labor dispute in 2001 and ordered the airline to pay their former employees more than \$7 million.

The 18 pilots were among a group of 49 fired in July 2001 when Cathay's main pilots' union and management were locked in a dispute over wages and scheduling. The union launched a "work-to-rule" campaign, discouraging members from working beyond the terms of their contracts.

Hong Kong High Court Judge A.T. Reyes said in a ruling Wednesday the 18 pilots were unfairly dismissed and wrongfully terminated.

He said Cathay executives also defamed them by publicly accusing them of disrupting the airline's operations.

The judge awarded 17 of the 18 plaintiffs HK\$150,000 (\$19,350) each for unfair dismissal, a month's pay each for wrongful termination and HK\$3.3 million (\$425,800) each in defamation damages.

Cathay Pacific spokeswoman Carolyn Leung said she was still studying the ruling and had no immediate comment.

The pilots' union, the Hong Kong Aircrew Officers Association, didn't immediately return a call seeking comment.