

Long-haul carrier Emirates says it fires staff amid virus

May 31 2020, by Jon Gambrell



In this Nov. 17, 2019 file photo, an Emirates Airline A-380 leads the "Al Fursan", or the Knights, a UAE Air Force aerobatic display team during the opening day of the Dubai Airshow, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Dubai's long-haul carrier Emirates said Sunday, May 31, 2020, that it fired an undisclosed number of employees as the coronavirus pandemic has halted global aviation. That makes it the latest Mideast airline to shed staff over the outbreak. (AP Photo/Kamran Jebreili, File)

Dubai's long-haul carrier Emirates said Sunday it fired an undisclosed number of employees as the coronavirus pandemic has halted global aviation, becoming the latest Mideast airline to shed staff over the outbreak.

Emirates, the jewel of the sheikhdom's vast array of state-linked enterprises known as "Dubai Inc." to diplomats and investors, declined to offer figures on how many staff it fired.

"We have endeavored to sustain the current family as is ... but have come to the conclusion that we unfortunately have to say goodbye to a few of the wonderful people that worked with us," the airline said in a statement.

The carrier said it would treat fired staff "with fairness and respect," without elaborating.

Emirates had been the sole holdout among the Gulf's two other major East-West carriers on retaining staff. Previously, Abu Dhabi-based Etihad and Doha-based Qatar Airways similarly fired staff as countries shut down their airspace as the virus spread.

While the airlines have run repatriation and cargo flights as traffic slowly picks up, the losses have been tremendous. In March, Dubai's Crown Prince Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum announced the sheikhdom would inject equity into the airline, but offered no details.



In this March 22, 2017, file photo, an Emirates plane taxis to a gate at Dubai International Airport in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The Middle East's biggest carrier, Emirates, declared on Sunday, May 10, 2020, higher profits of \$288 million over the past year even as revenue declined due to flight suspensions sparked by the coronavirus, offering a glimpse of the financial toll now facing airlines around the world. (AP Photo/Adam Schreck, File)

Emirates, owned by a Dubai sovereign wealth fund, already reduced salaries for its [staff](#). The [carrier](#) announced profits of \$288 million in 2019, but acknowledged the virus would deeply affect its business.

Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international passengers that's home to Emirates, has been operating at a fraction of its usual pace.

Ramping up activity at both Emirates and Dubai International Airport is crucial for Dubai, which created itself as a vital hub for the free movement of trade, people and money worldwide—all things that have been disrupted by the pandemic. The airport-based firm Dubai Duty Free, whose vast shelves of alcohol, electronics, perfumes and playthings greet bleary-eyed travelers from the world over, had sales of just over \$2 billion last year alone.

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