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HOLIDAY HELL AS 1TIME COLLAPSES

UK-based South Africans returning home for Christmas face a holiday nightmare after 1Time airline went bust

by HEATHER WALKER

THOUSANDS of South Africans will be left stranded on their Christmas holidays following Friday's announcement that 1Time airline has gone into liquidation.

The low cost airline owes various institutions, including Airports Company of South Africa, around R350 million.

1Time had been under business rescue for a few months under the leadership of new chief executive officer Blacky Komani. However the airline was declared bankrupt and in final liquidation on Friday. Its last flight was on Friday afternoon.

1Time's website has now been shut down but it was fully operational on Thursday when London-based South African Jess Shelver made the ill-fated decision to book several Christmas flights with the airline. "I can't believe they let me buy flights yesterday!" she fumed.

Another reader of The South African, James Brown, added, "Was told by their staff on Thursday that I had nothing to worry about. I'm really angry."

1Time passengers, including those living in the UK who are planning to return home over December, now face a holiday nightmare. Not only will they



1Time's planes may still be smiling but its customers certainly aren't after the airline went bankrupt. Photo by Ian Barbour.

have to fork out more money for expensive peak season flights on other airlines, they may not be refunded for their 1Time tickets.

If you bought your tickets with a South African or British credit card however, you may be able to get a refund. Many credit card companies in South Africa and Britain will refund money if the airline you booked with goes bankrupt. If your transaction was more than £100, your money is

protected under the terms of the Consumer Credit Act in the UK. Your money may be protected even if the cost of your air travel was less than £100 and you paid by credit card, but you should claim within a reasonable time. South African credit card transactions are similarly protected by the Consumer Protection Act.

However if you paid for your flights by any other means, it's not certain whether you will get that

money back.

Readers of The South African expressed sympathy for the airline's staff who are now jobless a few weeks before Christmas, but some felt that those at the top would walk off unscathed. "Bet Blacky Komani is flying SAA first class for his Dec holidays!" wrote one stranded passenger.

Have you been affected by the demise of 1Time? Tell us on www.thesouthafrican.com/news



INSIDE:

SA Power 100: Richard E Grant | p11

The famous actor grew up in Swaziland and studied drama in Cape Town before moving to London and being cast in 'Withnail and I', the cult film that launched his movie career.

Mandela banknotes released | p2

New South African banknotes, featuring the face of former President Nelson Mandela on the front and images of the Big Five on the back, will be released into circulation this week.

Lift-off for Africa's Space Odyssey | p9

Nigeria's national space agency launched its first satellite in 2003, but in the past two years the scale and ambition of its projects has increased.

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