



UNITED CONTINENTAL SAID TO HAVE WEIGHED NAMING INTERIM CEO

News / Airlines



United Continental Holdings Inc.'s directors as recently as Friday were at an impasse on whether to appoint an interim chief executive officer or start seeking a new one to replace ailing Oscar Munoz, a person familiar with the situation said.

Munoz suffered a heart attack Thursday after little more than a month on the job. The board discussed possible courses of action on Friday but was stymied by a lack of information about the condition of the 56-year-old executive, said the person, who was briefed on the deliberation and asked not to be named discussing private information. It was unclear on Sunday whether the board had reached a conclusion.

United spokeswoman Megan McCarthy declined to comment on Sunday, ahead of a week in which the airline is scheduled to report the first earnings under Munoz's helm. The Chicago-based airline confirmed Friday the CEO had been hospitalized but didn't give a reason or say whether anyone had temporarily assumed his duties. The company, in its statement, said the airline would "continue to operate normally."

Munoz's absence threatens to add to the turmoil at United, where former CEO Jeff Smisek was dismissed amid a federal investigation into the airline's ties to the former chairman of the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey. The new CEO has highlighted the need for soothing strained union ties and improving service since his surprise hiring from railroad CSX Corp., where he was

president.

United Continental is scheduled to report third-quarter earnings on Thursday. Vice Chairman James Compton, who is also United's chief revenue officer, has typically shared responsibility with Smisek in presenting United's results on quarterly conference calls.

The airline company's shares fell 3.1 percent to US\$55.97 at Friday's close in New York. The stock's 16 percent drop this year lags behind the Bloomberg U.S. Airlines Index, which is down 5.8 percent.

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