

Stellantis spearheading global wave of job cuts in the auto industry

Jerry White
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Job cuts in the global auto industry are accelerating as automakers seek to gain an edge in the highly competitive electric vehicle market by slashing employment levels and shifting costs onto the backs of workers around the world.

Stellantis, the world's third-largest automaker, shut down the third shift at its Detroit Assembly Complex-Mack plant last Friday as it ramps up its Dare Forward 2030 global cost-cutting program. Stellantis claims the 2,455 layoffs are only temporary, but executives have repeatedly threatened to permanently slash jobs at the plant.

"A lot of people were crying here Friday, but most weren't talking about it," a Mack worker told the WSW. "The third shift has been eliminated, so they are assigning people to new jobs." Workers say among those being let go were 750 supplementary (temporary) workers who have no recall rights despite being ostensibly represented by the United Auto Workers.

Another 1,225 job cuts at Stellantis' Toledo Assembly Complex, originally slated for Monday, have been postponed until February 19, workers told the WSW. In an effort to sell its supposedly "record" labor agreement last November, UAW officials told workers the company would be adding a third shift at the plant and hiring more workers. The UAW claimed 1,100 supplemental employees, or SEs, at Toledo would be converted to full-time positions under the new agreement.

"Everyone at the job is talking, but all there is to go on are rumors," an SE told the WSW. "I am just waiting to see if I get a layoff notice. Every time you try to get information from the union, they tell you no one has the information. No one knows what's going on. But they are getting away with it."

The 5,500 workers, who produce Jeep Wranglers and

Gladiators, struck for six weeks during UAW President Shawn Fain's bogus "stand-up" strike last year, which kept two-thirds of the UAW membership on the job. Despite this effort to wear down their resistance, Toledo workers voted down the sellout agreement. "Everyone on my team said while we were on strike that they would probably end up firing every SE," the worker said.

On January 12, Stellantis fired 539 SEs in metro Detroit and Kokomo, Indiana, and cut off medical insurance a few weeks later. UAW officials admit the company plans to terminate another 1,600 company-wide in coming weeks and have made clear they will do nothing to oppose it.

Under the terms of its deal with Stellantis, the UAW also agreed to the closure of 10 parts distribution centers and the Tipton Transmission Plant near Kokomo, Indiana. Tipton is likely to be the first of many transmission plants to be closed as Stellantis begins purchasing transmissions from Hyundai Transys, a subsidiary of South Korea's Hyundai Motor Group. The Jeep brand "will be the first to install the Hyundai Transys transmissions," *Maeil Business News Korea* reported.

"Everyone is worried about the company buying transmissions from Hyundai," said a recently fired SE from the Indiana Transmission Plant, one of several Stellantis propulsion factories in the Kokomo, Indiana, area, which employ more than 3,600 UAW members. "They fired us before we rolled over to cheat us out of our profit-sharing checks and higher pay," she said.

In an interview on a local NBC News affiliate in Detroit Sunday, Fain repeated that the UAW labor agreements were "the richest in our history." Asked about the mass firings of SEs, he replied these were driven by "corporate greed" not anything in the UAW

contracts. “You know we have a contract and we’re going to operate within the means of that contract, but we expect the company to take care of our members and we’re going to fight every step of the way for them.”

“He must think we are stupid,” said Hannah, who was recently fired along with another 170 SEs at the Warren Truck plant in suburban Detroit. “These were premeditated. The UAW officials told us we’d get rolled over and have job security if the contract passed. Now, Fain has endorsed Biden who wants these wars. That was the plan all along. Fain and Biden worked to push through this contract and cut our jobs,” she said.

“We’re out here looking for work and trying to keep our kids fed. If they can do this to SEs, they can do it to full-timers. We can’t wait for the UAW bureaucrats to give us answers or protect our jobs—they’ve already decided which side they’re on. We need to build rank-and-file committees to overcome the union officials’ divide-and-conquer tactics, unite SEs and full-timers, hold mass demonstrations and take action to reinstate us and defend everyone’s job.”

On Sunday night, autoworkers joined an online meeting sponsored by the UPS Rank-and-File Committee and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) to fight the recently announced 12,000 job cuts at UPS and unite workers across industries and across borders in defense of their jobs and livelihoods.

Stellantis is accelerating its job-cutting campaign worldwide. Production is being reduced at its Mirafiori plant, in Turin, Italy, over the next two months due to weak market demand for its fully electric Fiat 500 small car and Maserati models, Reuters reported Monday. The production slowdown is on top of previously announced furloughs for about 2,250 workers from February 12 to March 3. The factory is being reduced to one eight-hour daily shift instead of two daily ones through March 30, except the week of February 12, when it will be totally closed. Officials from the FIOM CGIL union said 300-350 workers will be furloughed every week out of a total of around 1,250 workers making the electric Fiat 500 and a further 1,000 producing Maserati models.

Stellantis is also cutting the jobs of 600 contract workers at its Mulhouse plant in eastern France, with a CFE-CGC union representative saying the company

cited “the wider geopolitical situation and its current price race against competitors regarding electric cars as reasons for the cuts,” according to Reuters.

Stellantis’ layoffs are part of a Europe-wide jobs massacre. VW is axing thousands of jobs to reduce costs by \$11 billion. Bosch, the world’s largest automotive supplier, said 1,200 employees in its software and electronics division would be fired by the end of 2026. ZF Friedrichshafen, Germany’s second-largest supplier, could slash 12,000 workers in a “worst-case scenario” by 2030, the *Financial Times* reported.

On Monday, Stellantis Chairman John Elkann denied reports that the automaker was considering a merger with rival Renault, a move that would escalate the restructuring of the global industry and lead to tens, if not hundreds, of thousands more job cuts. On Sunday, the Italian daily *Il Messaggero* reported that the French government, which is Renault’s largest shareholder and has a stake in Stellantis, was studying a merger plan between the two automakers to “strengthen its grip on the sector and counter Chinese and German competition.”

Reuters reported that the merger discussion in the Italian media was fueled by Stellantis CEO Carlos Tavares’ remarks in recent weeks predicting that the struggle to cut EV prices and gain market share, without sufficiently slashing labor costs, would lead to a “bloodbath” and “race to the bottom” in the global auto industry.

Are you an autoworker? Fill out the form below to discuss joining the network of rank-and-file committees to fight the job cuts.



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