

Volvo Group announces plans for truck plant in Mexico to “deliver logistical efficiency” after betrayed Mack Trucks strike

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Last week, the Volvo Group, parent company to heavy vehicle manufacturers Volvo Trucks and Mack Trucks, announced the construction of a 1.7-million-square-foot truck plant in Mexico, to open in 2026.

The plant will focus on production of heavy-duty conventional vehicles for both Volvo and Mack, acting as a vehicle assembly facility including cab body-in-white production and paint. According to the memorandum, “Adding production in Mexico will deliver logistical efficiencies for supporting sales to the southwestern/western regions of the U.S., and to Mexico and Latin America.”

The company insisted that the existing heavy truck plants, including Mack Trucks Lehigh Valley Operations (LVO) in Macungie, Pennsylvania, and Volvo Trucks New River Valley (NRV) in Dublin, Virginia, would remain the main centers of Volvo Group’s North American operations.

Regardless of the company’s assurances, the intent of the facility is to divide workers in North America from one another more so than the constellation of contracts, expiration dates and outright treachery of the United Auto Workers (UAW) has already done.

In this regard, it is significant that the Volvo company memo mentions both the Mack Trucks Lehigh Valley Operations plant and the New River Valley Volvo Trucks facility in the same sentence. It states “LVO and NRV will continue to be the company’s main North American heavy truck production sites.”

This tacitly admits what every worker at these two sites already knows: despite the nominal difference in ownership and the different contracts imposed by the UAW, they function essentially as one in the production of vehicles. As such, they should be unified

under one contract to stop the workers at one site from being forced to scab on one another when the other location goes on strike.

The announcement came almost five months after a 39-day strike at Mack Trucks in North America. The workers at Mack Trucks voted by 73 percent in early October to reject an offer, cobbled together at the last minute, that would have included wage increases well below inflation, no cost-of-living increases (COLA) and threats to job security.

The company directly relied on the treachery of the UAW leaders to force a re-vote on the same contract, under threat that workers would be fired for turning it down and staying on strike. UAW president Shawn Fain had personally called the company’s offer “a record contract for the Heavy Truck industry.”

During the Mack Trucks strike, the UAW worked to isolate the strike and refused to extend the strike to include workers from the Volvo New River Valley plant in Dublin, Virginia. As a result, those workers were forced to remain on the job. A similar situation played out during the spring and summer of 2021 when workers at the Volvo NRV plant were striking against a slew of sellout offers and workers at Mack Trucks remained at work.

The strike at NRV ended with a betrayal similar to the one last year at Mack Trucks, as workers were forced to accept the same contract they had rejected under threat of the loss of their jobs. Last year, the UAW isolated striking Ford, General Motors (GM) and Stellantis workers through a policy of partial “stand-up” strikes that weakened the auto workers and paved the way for a contract that enforces a jobs bloodbath in the auto industry.

UAW Local 677, which serves the Mack LVO plant, told local press that the union was “extremely disappointed in Volvo's decision to build a class 8 plant in Mexico as our local leadership have been working closely with local and state government officials to build a state-of-the-art plant in the Lehigh Valley....This is a slap in the face for all of us.”

Such verbal protests from the UAW should only provoke contempt, as every worker at Volvo Trucks and Mack Trucks knows it will do nothing to oppose the company.

The opening of the Volvo Trucks facility in Mexico raises front and center the question of how to unite the workers and fight the company across international lines. The leaders of the UAW and other unions have used nationalism as a tool to pit workers from different countries against one another, only weakening them when production is entirely globalized.

North American Volvo and Mack Trucks workers have a double-need to establish lines of contact and build a unified struggle with their Mexican co-workers. The workers in Mexico currently work under exploitative conditions similar to their American peers.

Their unions are hated tools of management, the same as in the United States. In Mexico, the UAW in alliance with the American State Department has worked to impose these corrupt organizations, such as the supposedly “independent” SINTTIA union at GM, to enforce the will of American corporations as the U.S. prepares for war with China.

The way forward is through the formation of rank-and-file committees, independent of and opposed to the union bureaucracy, and fighting for the rights of workers everywhere.

When the Mack Truck Workers Rank-and-File Committee was formed in Macungie in July 2021, its opening statement called on workers to 'develop lines of communication with other Rank and File Committees at other Volvo and UAW plants globally....The workers will see every instance of betrayal by the UAW and we will garner support from workers across the world. New River Valley workers received massive amounts of support poured in from workers as far away as Australia, Belgium, Germany, the United Kingdom, and us here in the United States.'

During last year's auto worker strikes, the rank-and-file committees fought to extend the ongoing strikes to

the Big 3 auto companies, as opposed to the isolation and essential scabbing operation in the form of the UAW's “stand-up” strikes.



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