

Citing tariffs, Volvo North America cutting 800 jobs at Mack Truck and NRV plants

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Late last week Volvo Group North America announced it planned to lay off hundreds of workers at its Mack Trucks and Volvo Trucks operations in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia over the next three months. The global truck maker is taking the action to “align production with reduced demand for our vehicles,” a company spokesperson said.

The job cuts will affect:

- 250-350 workers at the Mack Trucks Lehigh Valley Operations in Macungie, Pennsylvania;
- 50-100 workers at the Volvo Group Powertrain Operations in Hagerstown, Maryland; and
- 250-350 workers at the Volvo Trucks New River Valley Operations in Dublin, Virginia.

The job cuts at New River Valley (NRV) are in addition to the 180 workers laid off in February. As a result, the originally announced target of 250-350 cuts at NRV has been increased to 430-530.

Volvo Trucks spokesperson Kimberly Pupillo said:

Heavy-duty truck orders continue to be negatively affected by market uncertainty about freight rates and demand, possible regulatory changes, and the impact of tariffs.

Trump’s trade war measures have been fully supported by United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain, who echoed the fascist president’s claims that he is defending American workers and their jobs. But the tariffs and counter-tariffs have instead led to an increasing number of layoffs throughout the auto and trucking industries with predictions of a sharp economic downturn.

Earlier this month, Indiana-based ACT Research, which provides projections for commercial vehicle and freight markets, downgraded its 2025 North American Class 8 truck production forecast from 289,000 to 255,100 units for all original equipment manufacturers. Class 8 heavy duty trucks are the largest and most widely available commercial vehicles on the market.

“Approximately 45% of all Class 8 trucks built for the U.S. and Canadian markets will be subject to the 25% US tariff on all imports from Canada and Mexico and planned Canadian counter tariffs,” Dan Moyer of FTR Transportation Intelligence said last month. “About 40% of U.S. Class 8 trucks are produced in Mexico, and roughly 65% of Canada’s Class 8 trucks are assembled in the US.”

The Trump administration has initiated a near-blockade on the Chinese economy, erecting an unprecedented 145 percent tariff wall. For its part, Chinese officials have hit US-based suppliers with a 125 percent tariff regime. Notably, Chinese manufacturers are Mack Trucks’ second-largest parts suppliers, producing at least 13 percent of its needed parts.

This is part of the broader impact of Trump’s trade war measures on the working class. Detroit automaker Stellantis recently announced 900

layoffs in Detroit and Kokomo, Indiana, following the temporary halting of production at two assembly plants in Canada and Mexico as a result of US tariffs.

At the same time, global trucking and auto corporations are using the crisis to implement long-standing plans to slash their workforces as they transition to electric vehicle and autonomous vehicle production.

In the fall of 2023, Fain and the UAW bureaucracy sold out the powerful five-week strike by nearly 4,000 Mack Trucks workers in Pennsylvania and Maryland for substantial wage improvements, cost-of-living protections and job security. UAW officials made it clear they would do nothing to fight the company’s plans to bring in scab replacements and forced workers to accept the company’s “last, best and final” offer, which was virtually identical to the first UAW-backed contract that contained below-inflation wage increases of 19 percent over five years and no cost-of-living adjustment raises (COLA).

To cover its tracks after the sellout, the UAW filed an unfair labor practice charge, accusing the company of renegeing on its supposed contract promises to further invest in Pennsylvania and instead building a new plant in Monterrey, Mexico. Last month, the UAW issued a video supporting Trump’s protectionist measures, which included Local 677 officials blaming Mack Trucks for “relocating work to Mexico.”

Now with the company laying off as many as 800 UAW members in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia, Fain has been silent.

This only underscores the fact that the UAW bureaucracy’s partnership with Trump to “reshore” manufacturing in the US is a cover for its complicity in a savage attack on workers’ jobs, wages and working conditions. The argument of the UAW bureaucracy is: “Don’t invest in Mexico and other countries. We’ll give you cheap labor here!”

As for UAW officials on the local level, they have not even suggested there should be a fight to defend workers’ jobs and livelihoods.

At the Lehigh Valley Operations in Macungie, Pennsylvania, where more than 10 percent of the 3,000 workers will lose their jobs in 90 days, UAW Local 677 Shop Chairman Tim Hertzog issued a letter to union members that simply parroted the company’s line, saying, “Due to the market being in decline, there will be rate and line reduction.” Hertzog claimed “this is the first time I have had an official word from the company that there will be a layoff” but made it clear he had been in backroom discussions with management over potential jobs but had kept this secret from the membership.

Hertzog wrote:

There are conversations I have with the company that I do not even share with the shop committee. I take my responsibilities seriously. I know the time of this announcement is not great, but it is when it was handed down to us.

In comments to the local news media, UAW Local 677 President Scott Wolf said he hopes the company will use the “voluntary layoff” program, which allows more senior employees to take a temporary layoff so lower-seniority workers can keep working. But as autoworkers in Detroit and other cities have experienced, this scheme is only aimed at dissipating anger, dividing the workforce and paving the way for permanent layoffs.

Will Lehman, who ran as a socialist candidate for UAW president against Fain and incumbent Ray Curry in 2022, is a worker at the Mack Trucks plant in Macungie. He has opposed Fain’s support for Trump’s tariffs and has called for the international unity of workers to defend the right for all workers to have secure and good-paying jobs.

In an interview with the *World Socialist Web Site*, Lehman said:

The local UAW officials are not opposing the layoffs, just managing them. The writing was on the wall when they started laying off workers at NRV. That was a clear shot across the bow at all of us. And nothing was done by any rep.

Their orientation isn’t toward fighting back—it’s toward enforcing what the company dictates. This was entirely foreseeable. Even before NRV, this was tied to the broader shift: electrification, automation, a global squeeze on the working class to extract more profit with less labor.

He continued:

And this connects directly to Trump’s tariffs. They’re not just about economics—they’re laying the groundwork for a shooting war with China. The goal is to disconnect from the globally integrated economy. But workers know better. We see every day where parts are made, where they come from. This isn’t about “bringing jobs home.” It’s an illusion. It’s an attempt to build a nationalist alternative to the global economy that simply cannot work. We won’t win by aligning with these nationalist maneuvers.

Lehman called for the expansion of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) to coordinate the struggles of workers across borders:

We won’t win as just the “American” working class. We need to reach out to our class counterparts everywhere, internationally, if we’re going to defeat the transnational corporations.

The IWA-RFC is fighting for the international unity of the working class. We can only win through international solidarity—with workers in China, Mexico, Sweden, Germany, everywhere. During the 2021 strike at NRV, the Volvo Trucks Rank-and-File Committee provided real leadership and won support from Swedish Volvo workers who saw they were in the same fight. We have no quarrel with our class brothers and sisters abroad. Our real enemy is the corporations and their shareholders, and the governments that serve them.

He added:

That’s why what Shawn Fain is doing—lining up behind Trump’s tariffs—is a betrayal. This isn’t a case of Fain being “won

over” by Trump’s strategy. It’s that Fain agrees with the nationalist framework. He sees it as a distraction that keeps workers tied to the corporations and the American state. That’s the real danger.

At Mack we didn’t even have a strike for over 35 years until 2019. That’s how long the UAW kept the peace—with the company. But when we did strike in 2019 and again in 2023, they sold us out both times. It didn’t matter who was in office—Trump or Biden. No capitalist party supported us. Biden showed up for a photo op; Trump did nothing. Neither of them lifted a finger to help us.

Lehman described the union’s role in selling out the workers:

And when the company threatened to bring in scabs, Fain and the UAW bureaucracy made it clear they would do nothing to defend us. The UAW buckled like a folding chair. Our reps went around pleading with workers to accept the contract—endorsing the sellout. They acted like the language in the contract—which they hold so holy and dearly—was going to protect us from any jobs moving or from any negative changes. But it was a sellout from top to bottom.

We’re told we can’t take any action to defend ourselves because it’s “not allowed” in the contract. Meanwhile, the company lays off 250, 350 of us, and that’s just accepted. The UAW’s answer is: “The company can do that.”

If we’re going to defend jobs, it must be through coordinated action from below by the rank and file, not just at Mack, but also at NRV and the Big Three. It needs to be an independent movement against the UAW bureaucracy, the Democrats and the Republicans, with international collaboration because we have no differences with our class counterparts in any other country.



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