

Impact of Trump tariffs roils global auto production as workers bear the brunt

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Supply chain disruptions from the Trump administration's tariffs are continuing to roil the US and global auto and auto parts industry due to the globally integrated character of auto production. This includes frequent production halts caused by parts shortages.

The impact of Trump's tariffs is being borne by autoworkers through speed-up, job cuts and the undermining of working conditions enforced by the United Auto Workers bureaucracy. A tragic consequence was the death of Ronald Adams Sr., a skilled trades worker at the Stellantis Dundee Engine Plant in southeast Michigan six months ago under conditions where safety takes a back seat to profit concerns.

This past week workers at the Stellantis Warren Truck Assembly plant learned that they were being put on a mandatory 10-hour, 7-day overtime schedule starting the weekend of October 4. On Friday, however, Warren Truck workers were sent home after only nine hours, with management saying a parts shortage was disrupting production.

According to a management memo sent to Warren Truck workers, the UAW allowed the imposition of a 10-hour 7-day schedule citing Memorandum of Understanding 2 of the 2023 UAW-Stellantis national agreement in advance of the "buildout date" or model changeover. With hundreds of workers still on indefinite layoff at Warren Truck following the elimination of the second shift last year, the company is behind in production of the highly profitable Jeep Wagoneer assembled at Warren Truck. Sales of Jeep brand vehicles were up 10 percent in the third quarter of 2025 year over year, and sales of the three-row Wagoneer SUV built at Warren Truck were up 122 percent in the quarter.

As part of the sellout 2023 contract, the UAW secretly removed restrictions on the ability of Stellantis to make up production due to parts shortages through imposing mandatory overtime. The deal came despite the claim by Shawn Fain that the UAW had fought for "work-life balance."

The imposition of mandatory overtime at Warren Truck and other plants, such as the Stellantis Jeep complex in Toledo, is seen by workers as particularly provocative given that thousands remain on indefinite layoff.

After being forced onto overtime, Warren Truck workers

were told that the plant would be down for three weeks in mid-October due to parts shortages. Management cited the huge fire September 16 of undetermined origin at the Novelis aluminum factory in Oswego County, New York. While no workers were injured, large portions of the factory were damaged. The facility is a major supplier of aluminum sheet for the auto, beverage can and construction industry.

The disruption is seriously impacting Ford, which relies on aluminum from Novelis for its best-selling F-150 light truck. The company says it expects to take a \$1 billion hit to profits as a result. Workers at the Rouge Electric Vehicle Center in Dearborn, Michigan, were informed that the production of F-150 Lightning electric pickups would be suspended next week because of the aluminum plant fire.

The aluminum shortage will likely impact other automakers as well, including Toyota. Given the massive tariffs on imported aluminum, it will be difficult for the industry to make up for the lost production via global suppliers. The resumption of full production at the New York Novelis plant is currently not expected until early 2026.

In another reflection of continuing supply disruptions, workers at the Sterling Heights Assembly Plant, also in suburban Detroit, were told not to come to work two days last week. The production pause was reportedly due to delays in engines coming from the Stellantis plant in Saltillo, Mexico. Engine shortages from Saltillo and other supply issues have been causing production disruptions ever since the imposition of Trump's tariffs.

In mid-September, General Motors announced a three-week shutdown of its Wentzville, Missouri Assembly Plant due to unspecified supply chain issues. GM has also indefinitely laid off 900 workers at its Fairfax, Kansas Assembly Plant that builds the electric Chevy Volt. GM cited slow sales related to Trump's cancellation of EV incentives, which is also impacting other automakers who have invested heavily in the shift to EVs.

According to a recent report by CleanTechnica, "Auto companies in Canada and Michigan are stockpiling parts and laying off workers. Bonus checks for autoworkers are shrinking by thousands. Suppliers are facing higher costs and delaying expansions. The price of a new car could rise by \$2,500. Businesses are considering moving operations entirely overseas

to pay one tariff on one product.”

Highlighting the globally integrated nature of auto production, the Center for Automotive Research and US Department of Commerce data reveal that the average auto part crosses the US–Canada border about 6 to 8 times before final vehicle assembly. When Mexico is added a part can cross the border up to 12 times before a final product is completed. About 50 percent of auto parts used in US assembled vehicles come from Canada or Mexico.

These facts illustrate the absurdity of the claim by UAW President Shawn Fain that the jobs of American workers can be defended by ignoring—or even at the expense of—the interests of workers in other countries.

In opposition to the nationalism of the UAW bureaucracy, the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) is fighting to unify workers across national borders and launch a coordinated struggle against the attack on jobs and conditions by the global automakers and capitalist governments that defend them.

This requires building new forms of working-class organization in every factory and workplace, rank-and-file committees that will transfer power from the high-paid functionaries in the union apparatus to the workers on the shop floor. Collective action must be prepared to defend all jobs, demand the rehiring of laid off workers, and a reduction in the workweek with no loss in pay. This fight is inseparable from the defense of the democratic rights of workers inside and outside the factories, and a struggle against Trump’s plans to invoke the Insurrection Act, establish military rule and use state violence against all opposition, including workers fighting to defend their livelihoods.

A global shakeout is taking place in the auto industry under the impact of Trump’s tariff wars and the costs of EV transition. All across Europe automakers face declining profits and are slashing jobs. Volkswagen, Mercedes, Bosch, ZF, Porsche, Ford, Audi as well as Stellantis have announced job cuts at their European operations.

While Stellantis, Ford and General Motors all saw higher sales in the third quarter of 2025, this was in part due to higher EV sales as buyers took advantage of the \$7,500 tax credit before it expired September 30. Profit figures have yet to be released.

Anger over the mass firing of temporary workers in the wake of the 2023 contract and the elimination of the second shift continues to percolate at Warren Truck. Despite rebounding Stellantis sales very few workers have been recalled and the company is instead resorting to mandatory overtime.

One worker with 8 years told the *World Socialist Web Site* Autoworker Newsletter, “Some (laid off workers) were called back and went to other plants. But most of them are gone. Shawn Fain really messed us up. (The 2023 contract) sounded good. We got more money. But then what did they do, they laid people off. They knew that going in. They knew

exactly what they were going to do.”

New Stellantis CEO Antonio Filosa has indicated his desire to work with the Trump administration on tariffs. In a speech last month, Filosa said that the company is engaging in a “very positive exchange of ideas” with the Trump administration regarding tariffs.

Stellantis is reportedly planning an additional \$5 billion investment in its US operations, an apparent attempt to curry favor with Trump. As part of this, *Bloomberg* says Stellantis will put money into its idled Belvidere, Illinois plant. The move is based on the understanding that Fain and the rest of the UAW apparatus will continue working with management to slash costs and impose sweatshop conditions. The UAW bureaucracy has helped Stellantis cut thousands of jobs while scapegoating foreign workers rather than targeting the real source of the attacks on jobs, the capitalist profit system. Fain worked hand in hand with Stellantis to suppress worker opposition to job cuts and speedup in the wake of the sellout 2023 national contract. For his part Fain has praised Filosa for recommitting to “investment in UAW jobs.”

At the same time the UAW bureaucracy has remained silent on Trump’s increasingly brazen attacks on democratic rights, including the mass roundup of immigrants, the dispatch of troops to US cites and plans to invoke the Insurrection Act.

Sections of the ruling class have noted with alarm the crisis of the Fain administration, which is increasingly despised by autoworkers. No doubt part of the calculations behind the decision to invest additional funds in the US is to throw Fain a political lifeline.

Workers must reject the nationalist program of the UAW and unite with their brother autoworkers in Mexico, Canada and globally to wage a common fight back against the assault on jobs, working conditions and democratic rights. This means supporting the call by the International Workers Alliance of Rank and File Committees (IWA-RFC) for the building of rank-and-file committees in every workplace.

For information on building a rank-and-file committee, fill out the form below.



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