

Delta pilots ratify interim agreement

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NEW YORK (Reuters) - The pilots' union of bankrupt Delta Air Lines Inc. on Wednesday ratified an interim agreement with the carrier, paving the way for negotiations to continue toward a final deal in March, the airline said.

The interim deal, reached earlier this month between the No. 3 U.S. airline and the Air Line Pilots Association, provides for a 14 percent hourly wage reduction as well as cuts in other pay and cost items equivalent to another 1 percent, Delta said in a statement.

Atlanta-based Delta, which filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in September, has been seeking \$3 billion in revenue increases and cost savings, including about \$325 million in givebacks from its pilots.

The concessions, effective from December 15, will save the airline about \$143 million a year until a comprehensive deal is reached, it said.

The two sides are scheduled to negotiate a comprehensive agreement by March 1, with pilot membership ratification due by March 22.

The interim deal also provides for setting up a third-party panel to facilitate a resolution should the pilots and the airline fail to reach a deal by the deadline.