

Pilots At Delta Reestablishing Strike Committee

Thu Nov 3, 2005 6:07 PM ET

WASHINGTON, Nov 3 (Reuters) - Leaders of the pilots' union at bankrupt Delta Air Lines Inc., furious at management's attempt to terminate their contract, are reestablishing a committee that would prepare for a possible strike, the group said on Thursday.

In a letter to pilots dated November 2, union President Lee Moak said the company "never had any intention" of trying to reach a meaningful agreement on givebacks before moving this week in court to void their contract.

Delta said it desperately needs salary and benefit cuts from its only unionized group that would reduce annual costs by \$325 million. Without the cuts, the airline said it could fail in its drive for larger company wide savings, default on financial covenants and have trouble emerging from bankruptcy.

"The (contract motion) is a clear declaration that management has failed," Moak said. "Unwilling to achieve a mutually agreeable solution through negotiations, their filing amounts to nothing less than an attempt to bully us into compliance."

Moak said all legal steps for preserving the contract will be considered. He has authorized the reestablishment of the union's strike preparedness committee.

Moak said union leaders would meet soon on the next steps. No strike authorization vote from the airline's 6,000 pilots has been sought.

Labor unions at other bankrupt carriers have threatened to strike over attempts to terminate their contracts. In each case, negotiations restarted or concession agreements were reached, sometimes at the last minute.

So far, no pilot group has threatened to strike in the recent spate of bankruptcies that also includes United Airlines, U.S. Airways, and Northwest Airlines.

Delta has said it would be willing to meet again with pilots.