AIR FRANCE TO CUT SOME JOBS IN 2016, REST OF PLAN NEGOTIABLE: CEO

News / Airlines

Air France will cut less than a third of the 2,900 job cuts it proposed in a 2016/2017 plan that triggered clashes with some staff, the chief executive of parent company Air France-KLM said on Sunday.

The job cuts in 2016 would be voluntary and heavier job losses in 2017 could be avoided if talks with unions led to an agreement on alternative savings measures by the beginning of next year, Alexandre de Juniac said.

The airline earlier this month presented a "Plan B" of job losses and flight cutbacks after failing to get pilots to sign up to productivity measures that would have involved working more hours for the same pay.

The announcement of the cuts package led to scuffles during which senior managers had their clothes ripped, in embarrassing scenes for the French government as it tries to boost investment to bring down unemployment.

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"The 'Plan B' takes place over two years, 2016 and 2017. For 2016 it is under way," he said in an interview on RTL radio and the LCI news channel.

"If negotiations are successful by the start of 2016, we can avoid implementing Plan B for 2017, which means reverting to the 'Plan A', the 'Perform' plan," he said, reiterating the position expressed by his board on Thursday.

The need to finalize flight schedules several months in advance meant that Air France was required to go ahead with the cutbacks for 2016, de Juniac said.

The cuts would affect fewer than 1,000 jobs and less than a third of the 2,900 job losses outlined in this month's plan, he said.

Air France will discuss the 2016 cuts with union officials at an Oct. 22 meeting of its works council, and de Juniac said the airline had already informed unions of the timetable for further discussions up to the start of next year.

Previous efficiency measures have put Air France on course to make a profit this year, de Juniac said, declining to give a forecast.

But the airline still has higher costs than some of its rivals and is being squeezed by low-cost operators within Europe and Gulf carriers on long-haul routes.

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