

Proposed union deal with British Airways involves cuts of at least 270 jobs and 20% in pay



London, July 24 (RHC)-- British Airways pilots are to vote on a deal struck between the BALPA union and airline management that would involve at least 270 losing their jobs and the rest taking pay cuts of up to 20%.

BALPA said it was "hugely disappointing" that BA had not taken up its proposals that would have avoided any compulsory redundancies, but recommended pilots back the deal as the best it could achieve. The airline sought to lay off up to 12,000 employees, including 1,255 pilots, as the coronavirus pandemic halted international flights.

The union said the deal, after three months of negotiations, avoided the "fire and rehire" proposals affecting cabin crew and ground staff that have been widely condemned by MPs of all parties.

The pilots must vote on a package that includes voluntary redundancy deals and part-time working, and a "holding pool" of pilots on reduced pay who will be re-employed by BA if and when demand picks up. Their wages will be funded by cuts to their colleagues' pay: pilots would take an initial 20% reduction, narrowing to 8% below current levels in two years.

Brian Strutton, Balpa's general secretary, said: "It is hugely disappointing that during our extensive negotiations British Airways would not accept the full package of mitigations we put forward which would have avoided any job losses at all, and at no cost to BA.

The company, which is the largest operator of 747s, said: "It is with great sadness that we can confirm we are proposing to retire our entire 747 fleet with immediate effect.

"As a result there will be some compulsory redundancies amongst the pilot community and that is a matter of huge regret. Given BA's intransigence we have put together the best package we can to save as many jobs as possible."

BA's owner, International Airlines Group, welcomed the news of the ballot. A BA spokeswoman said: "We know this has been an incredibly difficult time for our pilot community, and we would like to thank Balpa's representatives for their hard work and tireless effort to engage and find solutions to save as many pilot jobs as possible."

Last week, BA started serving long-standing cabin crew with "fire or rehire" notices, inviting them to apply for jobs at far lower rates or accept voluntary redundancy.

Labour urged the prime minister to intervene in what it called "totally unacceptable" plans by BA, even in the light of the pandemic. The IAG boss, Willie Walsh, said coronavirus meant BA, which grounded most of its fleet for four months, had a very different future, and "the sooner we all embrace that reality, the better for everyone."

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