American Airlines sweetens labor deal

By David Koenig
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DALLAS — American Airlines, trying to win employee approval of labor concessions and keep the company out of bankruptcy, has sweetened its offer to workers with future bonuses if the carrier's financial situation improves.

The airline said Wednesday night that the union representing 34,000 ground workers accepted the offer and that pilots and flight attendants were still considering it.

American, the world's largest carrier, says it must cut $1.8 billion in annual labor costs to avoid bankruptcy, with the bulk of the savings coming from its three main unions. Last week, American agreed with leaders of those unions on 6-year deals that call for layoffs, upfront wage cuts as high as 23 percent, and reduced benefits.

But employees have complained about the long duration of the contract and the modest 1.5 percent pay increases in later years. Some workers have suggested that the agreements could be voted down, which American says would prompt a quick bankruptcy filing.

In a move to salvage the agreements, American offered Wednesday to pay annual bonuses, or a "variable wage adjustment," of up to 4.5 percent beginning in 2006 if the company's credit ratings improve to levels before Sept. 11, 2001, when terrorist attacks weakened the U.S. airline industry.

In a letter Wednesday to a union leader, American chairman and chief executive Donald J. Carty said the bonuses would make "additional opportunities available to your membership through financial successes we might realize together."

Carty insisted that the side agreement did not change last week's deals.

"It bears repeating that our financial condition makes it impossible to revisit the terms of the agreements because we must deliver $1.8 billion in savings, and we must do it quickly if we hope to stave off bankruptcy," he wrote to James C. Little, a top official in the Transport Workers Union.

Unity

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Ly said her membership in the sorority has taught her the difference between tolerance for and acceptance of other cultures.

"There is a huge difference between the words 'tolerance' and 'acceptance,'" she said. "Tolerance almost has a negative connotation to it, like having to put up with something that you wouldn't if you had the choice. Acceptance carries a meaning of appreciating somebody despite the fact that they are different than what you may be used to."

Ly said taking a step back and spending time outside of one's own respective cultures is the only way to learn about another lifestyle and truly appreciate it.

"I think a lot of stereotypes and misconceptions occur because the public is afraid of inquiring about other's cultures because they don't want to appear stupid or apathetic," she said. "At the Unity Dinner, we want to send out the message that we are all ignorant about other people's way of life in some way, and it's OK to ask questions because it's the only way we can learn."

The Delta Xi Nu Unity Dinner will take place Friday in the Hilton's Oakwood Ballroom at 7 p.m. Tickets are $12 and can be purchased by contacting xihoneys@yahoo.com.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Miami jury convicts police of corruption

MIAMI (AP) — In the biggest Miami police scandal in a generation, a federal jury convicted four officers of corruption Wednesday for planting a gun on an unarmed homeless man or lying to cover it up.

The officers, all assigned to elite undercover teams, were charged after four police shootings in the mid-1990s wounded the homeless man and left three other people dead. One of the victims, an elderly drug suspect, died in a hail of more than 100 bullets.

A sentencing date was not immediately set.

The police ruled all the shootings justified and state prosecutors declined to bring charges, a point made repeatedly by defense lawyers during the 11-week trial.

Federal prosecutors, however, said the defendants thought they were "untouchable" and they called two retired officers who said a cover story was cooked up over lunch a day after one of the shootings.

The shootings happened between 1995 and 1997, a time when Miami was under international pressure to crack down on roving gangs of armed robbers preying on tourists.

It was the city's worst police scandal since the 1980s, when rogue cops peddled cocaine they stole from drug traffickers. In that case, more than 100 officers were arrested, fired or disciplined.

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