



Comité Fronterizo de Obrer@s CFO

**For the labor rights and all human
rights of the maquiladora workers**



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July 12, 2005

Alcoa utilizes high-tech surveillance equipment to scare workers

After the [February firing](#) of 22 workers and written reprimands to 74, repression against workers has increased. Alcoa realized that consulting the rank and file on issues was risky for it. Now the company does not do it, but simply is implementing changes without giving the workers the opportunity to protest, question, or defend themselves.

Plants 1 and Subaru have been without union delegates lately, for different reasons, but Alcoa has not permitted the union to replace them. The union, which is pro-business, does not visit those plants because the workforce repudiates it while the company looks down on it.

Supposedly, the workers are able to use the hot line to raise employee complaints. The problem is that in front of the telephone Alcoa has placed a video camera. The workers are saying that the company replaced the conventional surveillance cameras for a more sophisticated system that has night vision and some sort of microphone. That means that now the cameras can see in the dark.

One worker said: *"The supervisors scare the workers saying the cameras have such a long range that they can see if a worker writes something and can even read it. It can also see our eye color and clearly hear if a worker is talking to another worker. It is forbidden to form groups. Supervisors don't even want to see us gathering during lunch time. Their watching us is excessive here in the factory. They have prohibited personal phone calls and when someone makes a call they want to know why. There is too much intimidation and harassment going on; there is no peace."*

Much uncertainty exists. The rumors of the mill insist that on July 18, upon returning from summer vacations, Plant 2 workers will be readjusted: some will be transferred to Plant 1 and others will be laid off. Apparently Plant Subaru will be expanding to Plant 2. Even though the company told its shareholders the layoffs will be done respecting labor laws, workers were told the company will be *cleaning house*, starting with the people who miss work, are in medical leave, talk too much, or are troublemakers.

The Subaru plant is now Japanese?

It seems almost certain that the Subaru plant is now Japanese-owned. In fact, it did change its name to Fuji Heavy Industries. The workers were notified on May 3. The supervisors showed the information on newsprint but did not provide written information to the workers, the majority of whom are not trusting because they ignore if their seniority rights will be respected.

Fuji Heavy Industries is Subaru's parent company. This plant in Piedras Negras made wire harnesses exclusively for Subaru. Until now it had been a fully-owned subsidiary of Alcoa.

On the other hand, General Motors is a shareholder of Fuji Heavy Industries owning one-fifth, or 20% of the shares.

15,000 pieces returned

Before the beginning of summer vacation a client returned products from a new assembly line called ALISON where small harnesses for Mercedes Benz transmissions are being made. No one knows exactly why the pieces were returned. Alcoa says the client returned them because of their poor quality. But the problem according to the workers is that the company is contracting many new people with very little experience while firing those employees with more seniority. Some say several workers made a mistake in assembling one terminal. Others say that the one to blame is the engineering department. No one really knows the reason, but the truth remains that 15,000 pieces were rejected.

Piedras workers train others in Monterrey

Two hundred people from different plants in Macoelmex in Piedras Negras were sent to Monterrey to make harnesses from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. That means those workers may very well not get a summer vacation this year. The company has given them \$10,000 pesos for lodging and meals. The expenses have to be reported, and if not, the employees have to pay back the difference. But, after 12 hours of working every day, the workers are not going to have much energy to go to other places.

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Mexico-U.S Border Program
of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)



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