



[Print](#) | [Close](#)

AT&T and union leaders spar over job cuts, offshoring

Wednesday, October 20, 2004

By **MARTHA McKAY**
STAFF WRITER

Union leaders and AT&T exchanged sharp jabs Tuesday over job cuts at the Bedminster-based telecommunications company.

The Communications Workers of America issued a news release that accused AT&T of sending American jobs overseas and placing the nation's largest long-distance network at risk as a result.

Less than an hour later, AT&T fired back, issuing a statement that called the CWA's assertions false.

The sparring comes less than two weeks after Ma Bell said it would lay off 7,400 - including 1,500 union workers - this year. The company blamed the cutbacks in part on a change in federal rules that forced it to stop expanding in the consumer phone market.

"This once proud company employed 300,000 workers just 10 years ago. Now, AT&T is rapidly getting rid of workers and managers, outsourcing those jobs and sending more work overseas to India, Mexico and other low-wage countries," said Ralph Maly, CWA vice president for communications and technologies.

"This is a national security issue, too," Maly said. "How safe can AT&T's nationwide network be in the hands of subcontractors, based overseas, with no loyalty to AT&T, or to the United States?"

AT&T spokesman Andy Backover denied the accusations.

"The workforce reductions that are occurring in 2004 are not being outsourced and they are not going offshore," he said.

Asked if AT&T outsourced or sent work offshore prior to the recent layoffs, Backover said, "I'm not going to discuss what kind of strategy the company has to distribute work or how work gets done." Backover also declined to respond to the union's concerns about network security except to say, "Security is one of our top concerns."

He also said: "If we can't safeguard our networks and guarantee reliability to our customers, it will be impossible for us to succeed in such a competitive market." Backover also noted that the CWA, which also represents workers at AT&T rivals such as Verizon, supported the federal rule changes that helped push AT&T to get out of the consumer phone business.

CWA spokeswoman Candice Johnson said the union was told by the company in January that 1,400 call center jobs had been moved to other countries before 2004. She cited jobs that moved from San Antonio, Texas, to Mexico two years ago and a call center closure last month in Charleston, W.Va. Johnson said the West Virginia jobs are being done by a call center in India.

Johnson said the union can't be certain how many of the current job cuts will be filled by overseas workers. "We don't know, and it's not a one-for-one, but we know the call centers have been going [overseas]," she said.

Copyright © 2004 North Jersey Media Group Inc.
[Copyright Infringement Notice](#) [User Agreement & Privacy Policy](#)

[Print](#) | [Close](#)