

## MfD: Czech Airlines to dismiss one-fourth of flight crew

Prague, Aug 17 (CTK) - The Czech state air carrier CSA is going to lay off about 140 pilots and 240 flight attendants, or about one-fourth of the air staff within the planned austerity measures, the daily Mlada fronta Dnes (MfD) wrote on Monday, referring to a report CSA has sent to the Labour Office.

CSA plans to make 860 people redundant, which is almost one-fifth of its staff. The least afflicted group will be administrative employees, of whom only 15 percent are to be dismissed.

In the report MfD has at its disposal, CSA writes that the criteria for lay-offs will be the employees' indispensability, level of salary and work achievements.

Pilots have challenged the planned dismissals as unnecessarily massive.

The dismissals are planned in spite of CSA's positive prospect. After a fall in the first half of the year, the number of CSA passengers is starting to rise again and the outlook is favourable as well.

The minutes from a meeting between the unions and the CSA management, a copy of which MfD has received, show that the potential buyers want the staff to be reduced before the CSA's privatisation.

"It is also a potential investor's demand that has been accepted by the shareholders," CSA vice-president Jiri Devat told the unions at the meeting.

Tomas Uvira, from the Finance Ministry, however, speaks about a misunderstanding.

"The investor has asked the CSA to submit a plan to cope with the impact of the crisis," Uvira told MfD.

Filip Gaspar, head of the pilots' union, challenged the timing of the dismissals.

"Such a reduction of a company should be made one month before its privatisation. It should be decided on by the future owner," Gaspar is quoted as saying.

The potential bidders are Air France-KLM and the consortium Travel Service/Unimex. It is not sure, however, whether they will submit their bids by September 15, as air transport has been afflicted by the crisis and CSA expects a loss this year.