

Incheon Airport Corporation's Strategic Effort to Break Precarious Workers' Union

KPTU Incheon Airport Branch proceeds with plans for November 11 strike

On November 5, contracted workers at Incheon International Airport, members of the KPTU Incheon Airport Regional Branch, carried out a 3 hour warning strike to put forth legitimate demands for job security and decent working conditions.

The strike, in which roughly 500 members participated, followed all legal procedures.



Nov. 7, Democratic Party National Assembly Representatives' press conference to denounce Incheon Airport Corporation's union busting plan

It is now clear, however, that the Incheon International Airport Corporation (Airport Corporation) is seeking to criminalize the strike as illegal and carry out a strategic plan to break the union.

An on-site investigation carried out by Democratic Party National Assembly members on November 6 confirmed that on October 28, Airport Corporation representatives held a meeting with contracting companies managers at which they presented a six-step plan for breaking the union.

This plan consists of the following steps: 1) Airport Corporation publically labels the strike illegal; 2) Airport Corporation demands that contracting companies 'replace' the workers who play leadership roles in the strike, 3) Contracting companies fire these workers; 3) Use delay tactics should the union use legal avenues to challenge unfair labor practices; 4) Make efforts to induce remaining union members to leave the union; 5) Eradicate the union.

Following the meeting, the Airport Corporation sent a memorandum to each contracting company

explaining its plan to label the strike illegal and then official ask the companies to “replace” union leaders and members. Contracting company managers have also sent letters to the union referring to the strike as illegal and threatening disciplinary actions against strike participants. One contracting company has already begun transferring union members out of their original posts to less favorable positions.



Image of replacement workers being trained to use firefighting equipment taken November 7.

The National Assembly members also confirmed that another meeting with contracting companies was held on November 5, during which Airport Corporation representatives told contracting company managers, “Companies that cannot stop workers from participating in the strike will have their contracts cancelled” and then announced their plans to “only contract with non-union companies in the future.”

The Airport Corporation has also been working with contract companies to train replacement workers to use during the strike in clear violation of the law.

That the Airport Corporation, a public institution running an airport ranked best in service globally for 8 consecutive years, is engaging in this sort of union busting is outrageous. Sadly, it is in keeping with the trend of worsening public sector labor repression in South Korea since the start of the Park Geun-hye administration. Following the de-registration of the public Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union (KTU) last month, the Korean government has now sent instructions to the heads of public institutions demanding they revise collective bargaining agreements to drastically limit union activities – a clear violation of the right to independent collective bargaining between labor and management. At the same time, the government is blatantly ignoring countless recommendations and urgent interventions from the ILO calling for the correction of such violations. It is clear that Park administration has declared war against public sector unions.

The KPTU Incheon Airport Regional Branch, however, refuses to back down in the face of repression. They will continue with their next strike action, planned for November 11, and are readying themselves for the prolonged fight ahead.

This article can be found online at:

http://www.kptu.net/mboard.asp?Action=view&strBoardID=KPTU_PDSENG&intPage=1&intCategory=0&strSearchCategory=|s_name|s_subject|&strSearchWord=&intSeq=11616