

MIAMI-DADE POLICE GET A PINK SLIP DELAY



Ninety members of the Miami-Dade Police Force that were expecting to get the pink slip today are getting a pleasant surprise today. They will get to keep their jobs. The union representing the officers and the county administrators have decided to keep the lines of communication open and continue to negotiate a contract that will balance the budget while keeping officers on the streets. The city has kept the officers on as a show of good faith while the negotiations continue. Earlier in this month the mayor of Miami-Dade, Carlos Gimenez, said that if a new contract could not be negotiated that would allow the city to save the needed funded 90 police officers would need to be let go from the force. The layoffs could have gone into effect as early as the beginning of November. Yesterday, the mayor decided to hold off, at least for a few days, while contract negotiations continue. "The layoff letters are not going out on October 17th," a spokeswoman for the mayor's office stated in an e-mail that was sent to The Miami Herald on Sunday. "Discussions will continue at the next bargaining session." The next bargaining session is slated to begin on Tuesday. The negotiations with the Miami-Dade Police Benevolent Association, who represent the majority of the officers within the department, are expected to resume on Tuesday during a public session held at County Hall. Since this session is open to the public it is expected that it will be attended by both the majority of off duty police officers and their supporters. While this will certainly allow for a high level of transparency, it will also create a lopsided audience for these negotiations. This public bargaining session was originally scheduled for two weeks ago, but was postponed after issues during private negotiations. Mayor Gimenez needs to cut roughly \$239 million from the county budget in order to not end the fiscal year at a deficit. In other negotiations with civil servants unions the mayor has taken a tough stance about the budget. While this makes negotiations harder several other organizations have managed to reach agreements with the mayor. Last Friday he was able to reach a tentative agreement with the firefighters' union. That agreement did not call for any layoffs, but instead relies upon three no-pay furlough days and internal restructuring of the fire department. While the most visible of these civil service contract disputes has been with the PBA they may be in for a bit of a surprise. After all the Miami-Dade Police Department has never had to deal with layoffs since its creation. In order to keep the budget balanced the county says that it needs cuts of about 21% of the employee salary and benefits costs. This includes rolling back about 10% of the pay raises that have been approved in recent years. If the negotiations go through then the 90 members of the force would be let go and of 214 vacant police positions will not be filled. If the layoffs go through officers who have promoted to ranks such as lieutenant and sergeant will be demoted and moved down to patrol.