

## Boeing Faces Strike Threat as Defense Workers Reject Contract Deal

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Unionized machinists at Boeing's defense plants in the St. Louis area have voted to reject the company's latest contract offer, setting the stage for a possible strike that could disrupt key military aircraft production. The vote by members of District 837 of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), which represents over 3,200

workers, followed the union's recommendation to reject the deal despite earlier support from union leadership.

The rejected proposal offered a 20 percent wage increase spread over four years, a \$5,000 signing bonus, and improvements to vacation and sick leave benefits. However, union officials stated the terms did not meet the expectations of workers who are demanding stronger recognition of their contributions, particularly as defense production ramps up. Boeing described the package as its most generous to date for this unit but confirmed it is preparing for potential work stoppages. The contract expired at midnight on July 27, triggering a mandatory seven-day cooling-off period before a strike could legally begin.

This labor dispute comes less than a year after Boeing's commercial division endured a high-profile strike in 2024, which lasted more than seven weeks and involved over 33,000 machinists in the Pacific Northwest. That strike halted production of several major aircraft models, including the 737 Max and 777, and concluded only after a new contract was ratified offering a 38 percent wage hike and bonuses of up to \$12,000, though the traditional pension plan was not restored.

From a center-right viewpoint, the situation reflects the challenge of balancing fair labor compensation with the fiscal responsibilities of companies operating in critical defense sectors. While Boeing seeks to maintain cost control amid increasing production demands, especially for programs like the U.S. Air Force's Next Generation Air Dominance (NGAD) F-47 fighter jet, labor advocates argue that competitive pay and working conditions are essential to retaining the skilled workforce necessary for national security contracts.

The current standoff also fits within a broader wave of union activism in recent years. Sectors from auto manufacturing to logistics and entertainment have seen increased demands for better pay and working conditions, often leading to high-profile negotiations or strikes.

As Boeing considers its next steps, the defense and aerospace industry is watching closely. A strike would not only delay key deliveries but could also test Boeing's ability to meet strategic commitments under pressure, both economically and in terms of national defense readiness.