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Boeing today rejected the proposal made by the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM/AW) regarding the production of pressurized commercial airplane doors.

After an intensive two-year study of door production, Boeing advised the union of its intent to place these metal doors with an outside supplier to increase the company's access to key markets and to reduce costs. In making its Dec. 5, 1996 proposal, the IAM/AW exercised new contract language allowing the union to suggest alternatives that would lead to the retention of work that has been identified for placement with suppliers.

The union's proposal suggested changes in how Boeing organizes its business, including formation of an Integrated Product Team with union leaders as members. This team would conduct another six-July study of the door production process in order to make recommendations for improvement. The proposal did not present any alternatives as called for in the contract language.

"While we are very interested in developing a cooperative relationship with the IAM/AW, it's unfortunate that the proposal did not include concrete steps that would result in the retention of the work," said Bob Dryden, executive vice president of Airplane Production for Boeing Commercial Airplane Group. "However, we'd like to sit down with the union and talk about the ways we can work together to meet the challenges involved in improving all our production processes, not just doors."

Approximately 100 IAM/AW-represented and 80 support employees in Renton, Wash., and Wichita, Kan., build doors. Boeing will now proceed to contract the work to an outside supplier. No layoffs will result from this action. All affected employees will be reassigned to available work elsewhere in the company.

"The union proposed involvement in the kind of decision-making processes already used by Boeing in deciding to place work with suppliers," Dryden said. "We're pleased the union recognizes the criteria used in making these decisions. We hope this level of understanding can lead to productive interaction."

"The decision to place doors with a supplier is the result of two years of studying that same criteria," Dryden said. "We continue to believe this decision is the right one, and an important part of our overall strategy to gain market access and ensure the continued production of high-quality airplanes that our customers can afford to buy."

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