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CHICAGO, April 20, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- The Boeing Company said it will vigorously contest a complaint brought before the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) today by the leadership of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM). The complaint challenges Boeing's 2009 decision to complement its production capacity in Washington state with a new assembly plant in South Carolina and seeks to force Boeing to place its second 787 final assembly line in Puget Sound instead of Charleston.

"This claim is legally frivolous and represents a radical departure from both NLRB and Supreme Court precedent," said Boeing Executive Vice President and General Counsel J. Michael Luttig. "Boeing has every right under both federal law and its collective bargaining agreement to build additional U.S. production capacity outside of the Puget Sound region."

Union officials have been pressing the NLRB for more than a year to bring forward the complaint and force Boeing to abandon plans to produce three 787 airplanes per month in the company's new North Charleston, S.C., factory and build them instead in Puget Sound. With today's action by the NLRB's acting general counsel, the board now will begin a formal proceeding to hear the IAM's allegations.

Boeing also was critical of the timing of the complaint, which comes a full 17 months after the company announced plans to expand its manufacturing capacity in the United States in South Carolina. Construction of the factory is nearly complete and the company has hired more than 1,000 new workers. Final assembly of the first airplane is slated to begin in July.

Boeing has made it clear that none of the production jobs created in South Carolina has come at the expense of jobs in Puget Sound and that not a single union member has been adversely affected. In fact, IAM employment in Puget Sound has increased by approximately 2,000 workers since the decision to expand in South Carolina was made in October 2009.

Prior to that decision, Boeing held extensive discussions with the IAM over the potential placement of the new 787 production capacity in Puget Sound. Those discussions ended with Boeing unable to reach agreement with union leadership on demands that would have hampered the company's competitiveness in the increasingly competitive global market for large commercial airplanes.

Luttig said Boeing was confident that the claim would be rejected by the federal courts. He also emphasized that the company will begin assembling 787s in South Carolina this summer, as planned. "We fully expect to complete our new state-of-the-art facility in South Carolina in the weeks ahead, and we will be producing 787s – America's next great export – from our factories in both Puget Sound and South Carolina for decades to come," he said.

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