

Pompeo: Boeing Tanker Work Going To Washington

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — U.S. Rep. Mike Pompeo said Monday that a senior official at the Boeing Co. has informed him the modification work on the Air Force refueling tankers will be done at the company's plant in Washington state rather than in Kansas, a decision that could mean the closure of the Wichita site.

Boeing won a decade-long fight to win Pentagon approval to build 179 refueling tankers worth at least \$35 billion. The project has long been touted as being able to create some 7,500 direct and indirect jobs in Kansas with an overall economic impact of \$388 million.

"We now know that Boeing intends to walk away from that promise — which severely jeopardizes the future of over 2,000 aviation jobs right here in our community," Pompeo said.

The congressman declined to name the senior official he spoke with, and the company did not immediately return calls and emails for comment.

No explanation was given for the decision, Pompeo said.

The congressman also said is his understanding that Boeing intends to move maintenance work on Air Force One out of Wichita.

Boeing said last month it was studying whether to close its Defense, Space & Security's Maintenance, Modifications and Upgrades facility in Wichita to address Defense Department budget cuts.

If the finishing work on the tanker is not done in Wichita and the work on the presidential plane is moved out of Wichita, it is difficult to imagine how the company could keep its Boeing plant open, union officials said.

Wichita Mayor Carl Brewer said the loss of the tanker finishing work was "unacceptable" and said the company made a commitment to the city on the future of the plant.

"We stood beside them and we expect them to stay with us," Brewer said.

The Wichita facility, which specializes in modifying commercial aircraft for military or government operations, has 2,100 employees. Boeing spun off its commercial aircraft operation in Wichita several years ago.

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