

Boeing terminates contract to paint aircraft after workers vote for union

147 Machinists-represented workers will be terminated, though many may be hired by a new contractor from France.

Boeing is terminating its contract with Commercial Aircraft Painting Services (CAPS) — the company that paints its aircraft in Portland. Workers at CAPS had just voted on July 8 to unionize with Machinists District Lodge W24, and were in the process of negotiating a first union contract. But CAPS' five-year contract with Boeing was set to expire Jan. 31.

The contract is for painting new Boeing planes after assembly in Everett, Washington, before delivery to customers. The work is supervised by Boeing employees, and takes place in a pair of aircraft hangars that Boeing leases from the Port of Portland. CAPS sought to renew the contract, but it was up against



These Portland airport hangars say Boeing, but the Boeing aircraft in them are painted by a contractor — with workers paid much less than Boeing workers who do the same work in Everett. To address that, workers voted in July to unionize. Now their company is being replaced by another contractor.

bids from two other companies, and it lost the contract to STTS, an aircraft painting company headquartered in Blagnac, France.

Painting of the Boeing aircraft will continue in the Portland hangars, but under the direction of STTS starting Feb. 1. CAPS notified the State of

Oregon Dec. 1 that it will terminate its 147 union-represented employees effective Jan. 31, 2017, and 27 management employees no later than Feb. 28.

STTS operates in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, and this would be its first operation in North America.

In a Dec. 1 letter to CAPS management and staff, STTS Christophe Cador said the company's top priority over the next two months will be to recruit its U.S. workforce.

"We need to meet with CAPS management over the next few days to agree appropriate protocols but we would like to give you, the staff, a more comprehensive presentation of the STTS Group, our implementation plan for launching in Portland and our employment offer, in the hope that some of you will want to join STTS USA Inc, or indeed any of our subsidiaries around the world," Cador wrote.

If STTS hires more than half of the incumbent employees, it would be obliged by federal labor law to recognize the incumbent union.

UNION ORGANIZING

Union for Fighters? Mixed martial artists form union

Several top mixed martial arts fighters announced Dec. 1 that they intend to form a union — the Mixed Martial Arts Athletes Association — to pool their bargaining power and get a union contract with Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC). Promoter Bjorn Rebney, one of the figures behind the effort, criticized UFC's business practices as exploitive, and says the union wants a benefits package comparable to what NFL players have. The response so far? Fighting words. UFC's president called Rebney "the biggest scumbag in the history of combat sports."

Uber runs anti-Teamsters ad during Seahawks game

Since the City of Seattle passed a unique-in-the-nation ordinance giving Uber drivers a way to unionize, Uber has come out swinging against Teamsters Local 117, which seeks to represent them. The company even aired a TV ad during a recent Seahawks football game in which an Uber driver says that with the Teamsters union, he'd no longer have the flexibility to run his business the way he chooses." Reality check: Drivers decide when and how much to drive, but Uber sets rates and all the rules, including termination without review. Time for a Uber union?

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