

New Boeing CEO pledges to 'reset' relations with machinists

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Boeing CEO Kelly Ortberg says he wants to "reset" the relationship with a key labor union.

Boeing's new boss said Friday he was looking to "reset" relations with a key union representing tens of thousands of its workers, amid

negotiations for a new labor contract.

"I met with the presidents of IAM 751 & W24 this week in Seattle for a productive conversation and the opportunity to listen," Boeing chief executive Kelly Ortberg wrote in a message to the aerospace giant's 170,000-plus [employees](#), a week after taking office.

"I shared with them my commitment to reset our relationship and reach a new contract where we can come together to build a strong future for our employees in the region," Ortberg said in the message, shared with AFP, adding that [contract negotiations](#) were in the "final phase."

The two local branches of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers represent around 33,000 Boeing employees.

They are based in the Seattle area, home to [factories](#) for the company's best-selling 737 and 777 aircraft.

The current 16-year-old agreement expires at midnight on September 12. Union members voted on July 17 to approve the possibility of strike action if there's no agreement by then.

"Ortberg knows that we can't rewrite the past, but we can work on a path forward in the future," the IAM District 751 negotiating committee said in a statement Thursday after the meeting.

"Boeing cannot rebuild the trust it shattered over the last two decades unless it commits to securing these jobs right here, where they belong," they added.

The union is demanding Boeing manufacture its next aircraft—expected in 2035 but not yet announced—in the region.

It is also demanding a pay hike of at least 40 percent over three years, as well as better benefits, including in [health insurance](#) and pensions.

"While Ortberg may not be sitting at the bargaining table, his influence on the negotiation process is undeniable," the committee said.

Ortberg, 64, took over as Boeing CEO on August 8 from Dave Calhoun, who announced he was stepping down earlier this year after four years at the helm of the embattled aviation giant following a series of quality control problems.

During his first week, Ortberg visited the 737 factory outside Seattle, toured Boeing's main supplier Spirit Aerosystems and met executives from airline customers, he said in his message.

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