

Boeing will move up to 400 jobs to Alamo City

S.A.'s facility will gain maintenance responsibilities for Air Force One.

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The Boeing facility in San Antonio will gain hundreds of workers and maintenance responsibilities for [Air Force One](#) now that the aerospace giant has decided to shutter a Wichita, Kan., plant over cost inefficiencies.

The decision announced Wednesday after a lengthy evaluation of facility costs will move 300 to 400 jobs to Boeing's plant in San Antonio and about 800 jobs to Oklahoma City, said [Mark Bass](#), vice president of maintenance, modifications and upgrades for the Boeing unit that operates the Wichita plant.

San Antonio is scheduled to take on aircraft maintenance, modification and support work that would have gone to Wichita, while engineering work will be shifted to Boeing's Oklahoma City facility.

Also moving is the work being performed in Wichita on the KC-46 refueling tanker, a contract worth at least \$35 billion that Kansas officials were counting on to bolster aerospace activities in a city known for its aviation capabilities.

About 200 jobs on the tanker will move to a facility in Puget Sound, Wash.

The decision drew angry responses from Kansas lawmakers who had helped Boeing win the tanker contract. U.S. Rep. [Mike Pompeo](#), a Republican representing the Wichita area, called the announcement "terrible news" by a company that has turned its back on a commitment to Kansas.

But San Antonio officials, including Mayor [Julián Castro](#), were energized by the decision and pledged to focus on keeping San Antonio's aerospace industry strong.

"It's a great way to start 2012," Castro said. "I'm confident this will be a great year for job creation in San Antonio."

Boeing said labor and infrastructure costs at the Wichita plant had made it noncompetitive, especially in a period where contractors were anticipating cutbacks in military spending.

No jobs would be cut in Wichita until early in the third quarter, the company said in a news release. The plant, which currently employs 2,150 people, will close by the end of next year.

The aircraft maintenance and support work moving to San Antonio will include improvements to the nation's fleet of executive jets, including Air Force One, the Boeing 747s that transport the president of the United States, and the jets that transport the vice president, Cabinet members and other government officials, Boeing representatives said.

Exactly when work would begin to arrive in San Antonio was unclear Wednesday.

Officials said some of the jobs heading to San Antonio would be filled by employees transferred from Wichita and others would be hired locally, but the split had not been finalized.

Boeing spokeswoman [Wendy Parker](#) said the San Antonio facility, currently the largest employer in Port San Antonio with 2,800 employees, may need to expand to accommodate the new workers. Boeing real estate officials will decide on any changes.

Bass told reporters in a news conference that financial incentives offered by states to attract new jobs were not part of the review that led to the closure of the Wichita plant. But incentives are available in the states where the work is moving, and Boeing will pursue tax breaks and other assistance available there, the vice president said.

Gov. [Rick Perry](#)'s and Mayor Castro's offices said they were open to discuss incentives but made no promises.

San Antonio business leaders were excited about Boeing's plans, though they recognized how competitive the aerospace industry is and how important it is for the city to focus on the industry's needs.

Richard Perez, president of the [Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce](#), said that based on Wichita's experience, some may question how long aerospace jobs will last.

"I think they'll last as long as we do good work," he said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Courtesy of JB Goodwin