BOEING SAYS CHINA PLANE ORDERS SUPPORT 150,000 U.S. JOBS A YEAR

News / Manufacturer

Deliveries to China by Boeing Co., the largest U.S. exporter, support approximately 150,000 American jobs every year, Vice Chairman Ray Conner said.

Chinese customers are expected to take delivery of 30 percent of all its top-selling 737 models and about 25 percent all aircraft produced in Washington State and South Carolina, Conner said Thursday at a National Committee on U.S.-China Relations event in New York.

"Obviously these deliveries are very significant to the nearly 76,000 Boeing employees who design, assemble and support our commercial airplanes," Conner said. "China is enormously important to our success as a company and as a major U.S. exporter."

The comments come as Boeing, long a bellwether for trade relations between the world's two largest economies, faces new risks from U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's threats of punitive tariffs on China. A trade war could cause Boeing to lose a chunk of the $1 trillion market for airplanes it forecasts over the next 20 years, and one Communist Party newspaper recently said orders could be given to Airbus Group SE should a trade tiff erupt.

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President Xi Jinping himself toured a Boeing plant near Seattle, its main production hub for commercial aircraft, on an official state visit to the U.S. last year and announced a $38 billion order for 300 of the company's jetliners.

"The Chinese aviation market continues to grow, so we're going to continue to see the number of U.S. jobs at Boeing and throughout our supply chain continue to grow as well," said Conner, who previously was chief executive officer of the Chicago-based company's commercial airplanes division. "It's also very significant to the 1.5 million people in jobs that are supported through our supply chain here in the U.S."

Trump hasn't indicated whether he plans to honor his campaign proposal for tariffs on the world's largest trading nation, which had $627 billion in U.S. trade in 2015. The Communist Party's Global Times newspaper already responded with an editorial calling for "tit for tat" retaliation to tariffs. "Boeing orderswill be replaced by Airbus," it said.

Boeing projects China will displace the U.S. as the world's biggest aircraft and travel market within two decades. Air China Ltd., China Southern Airlines Co. and China Eastern Airlines Corp., the three biggest state-owned carriers, are expanding fleets as decades of economic boom enables more people to travel in the world's most populous nation.

China needs 6,810 aircraft valued at $1.025 trillion in the next two decades, making the nation the first trillion-dollar aviation market as a rising middle class spurs leisure and business travel, Boeing said in September.

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