

Boeing 737-300 catches fire on runway in Senegal, injures 10

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10 May 2024

A Boeing 737-300, attempting to take off from Blaise Diagne International Airport in Dakar, Senegal, caught fire and skidded off the runway on Wednesday evening. Of the 85 passengers and crew on the Air Sénégal Flight HC301, 10 were injured, including the pilot, according to the Transport Minister El Malick Ndiaye.

All were immediately rushed to a nearby hospital, with four in critical condition.

The flight was operated by TransAir, a regional airline based in Senegal that provides service from Senegal's capital of Dakar to as far south as Brazzaville, the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. HC301 was headed to Bamako, the capital of Mali.

TransAir's fleet consists of Embraer ERJ-145, Embraer EMB-120, Beechcraft 1900C jetliners, in addition to the Boeing 737-300. The 737-300 "Classic" is one of Boeing's oldest operating planes. Its development began in 1979 and first began operations in 1984. The aerospace giant made 1,113 of the planes during its production run, which lasted from 1981-1999.

While no further information has been released from the Senegalese government as to the immediate cause of the fire, it is likely that the sheer age of the aircraft played a role. The 737-300, -400 and -500 aircraft have also some of the company's most accident-prone designs. Boeing's own data in a report from September 2023 shows that the aircraft series has suffered 62 "hull losses," where the plane was unrecoverable, of which 20 resulted in fatalities.

The older 737 models stand alongside the 737 MAX as among the most deadly commercial airplanes currently flown. Two crashes of the 737 MAX-8 in October 2018 and March 2019 killed a combined total of 346 passengers and crew, the direct result of Boeing

executives pushing for a new aircraft to bring to market while ignoring numerous known safety issues. To date, no executives or senior leadership have been charged for the deaths.

The same day of the fire in Senegal, another Boeing plane, a 767 model, was forced to land without its landing gear in Istanbul, Turkey. The plane was a freight variant operated by FedEx that was coming from Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport. The pilot reported to air traffic control that the landing gear had not deployed and was instructed to land without them while emergency vehicles stood by.

There were no reported injuries, though the pilot was forced to leave the plane via the cockpit's window.

Another accident occurred in Turkey on Thursday, when a tire burst on one of Boeing's 737-800 aircraft. The plane was coming from Cologne, Germany and landed at Gazipasa Airport, near the coastal town of Alanya, Turkey. It was carrying 184 passengers and six crew, none of whom were injured.

These new incidents of Boeing's aircraft failures are only the latest in a series of other accidents and near disasters this year that began in January with the door blowout of a US-based Boeing 737 MAX 9 flight shortly after takeoff. The company is currently under investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) for faulty production, quality and safety practices, as well as a criminal investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Since then, there have been more than a dozen different reported incidents on Boeing planes this year, including engines catching fire, panels falling off and a "technical event" on a 787 Dreamliner headed to New Zealand which saw the plane unexpectedly nosedive. Paramedics treated 50 people after the plane landed,

and four had to be rushed to a hospital.

Given the latest string of accidents, it is only a matter of time before more people are killed on Boeing planes, repeating or exceeding the tragedies of the two 737 MAX 8 crashes in 2018 and 2019.

Boeing has faced a slew of whistleblowers coming forward about internal safety and quality failures, both at Boeing and its main supplier, Spirit AeroSystems.

The most recent is Santiago Paredes, a former quality manager for Spirit who worked for about 10 years doing final inspections of the fuselages for 737 aircraft before they were shipped to Boeing.

In an interview with “CBS News,” Paredes described how he was finding hundreds of defects every day. “It was very rare for us to look at a job and not find any defects.” He was pejoratively nicknamed “Showstopper” by management and asked to be less specific in his reports to stop production delays. Many of the issues he found were in the same area of the January door blowout.

“I was put in a place where I had, if I say, no, I was gonna get fired,” Paredes told “CBS News.” “If I say yes, I was admitting that I was gonna do something wrong.” He was eventually stripped of his team leadership role and then resigned in 2022.

The drive to increase production reported by Paredes mirrors comments from other Boeing whistleblowers about the internal culture of the company.

Boeing whistleblower Sam Salehpour testified before Congress in April, asserting that Boeing is knowingly “putting out defective airplanes.”

The company’s response to Salehpour’s attempts to correct the issues internally was retaliation and threats of violence. He testified, “I was told to ‘shut up,’ I was sidelined, I received physical threats.” He continued, “My boss said, ‘I would have killed someone who said what you said in a meeting.’”

Salehpour was testifying on the safety of the Boeing 777 “Triple Seven” and 787 Dreamliner aircraft. All told, the 737, 767, 777, and 787 aircraft lines are the vast majority of Boeing’s commercial airlines currently in service, and all have seen safety and quality issues.

In addition to Paredes and Salehpour, two other Boeing whistleblowers were in the process of exposing the ongoing and dangerous practices within the company and are now dead.

John Barnett, 62, was a Boeing quality manager who

was forced out in 2017. He was slated to give a third day of testimony in a civil lawsuit against Boeing about his attempts to correct Boeing’s ongoing defects, when he was found dead on March 9 in a hotel parking lot in Charleston, South Carolina.

Barnett had raised serious concerns about the production of the 787 Dreamliner. Initial reports from the coroner declared his death was self-inflicted, but it has emerged from close family friends and family members that Barnett warned, “If anything happens to me, it’s not suicide.”

A Spirit Aerosystems whistleblower, Joshua Dean, 45, died last week after a sudden illness in which he was hospitalized and intubated. Dean had been a quality auditor for Spirit and was in the middle of a deposition alleging “serious and gross misconduct by senior quality management of the 737 production line.” Dean had reportedly been in good health and having a healthy lifestyle in the lead-up to his death.



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