

Boeing in “panic mode” as airline company’s crisis continues

Bryan Dyne
6 June 2024

A recent report in the *Guardian* reveals that managers and executives at Boeing responsible for operating the company’s plant in Everett, Washington, are in “panic mode” as quality and safety concerns continue to emerge about the planes produced by the aerospace giant.

One of the main issues revealed is that the facility is “full” of 787 Dreamliner aircraft that are faulty, according to a mechanic with more than 30 years at Boeing. The jetliner’s fuselage is produced by Boeing supplier Spirit AeroSystems and assembled at Boeing’s factory in South Carolina.

“There is no way in God’s green earth I would want to be a pilot in South Carolina flying those from South Carolina to here,” continued the mechanic. “Because when they get in here, we’re stripping them apart.”

The *Guardian* also reported that managers “will hound mechanics” not to report safety and quality concerns, demanding that planes are put into service to ensure corporate profits rise.

Once considered among the safest aircraft manufacturers, Boeing is now facing an essentially continuous deluge of whistleblowers and leaks making clear that the primary concern of the company’s managers and corporate heads is not the safety of the flying public but the bottom line for their shareholders and themselves.

The dangers of such an attitude were dramatically exposed this past January, when a door plug blew out of a 737 MAX 9 jetliner shortly after takeoff, injuring dozens on the flight. It was only luck that the incident occurred at a relatively low altitude, that no passengers were killed by being sucked out of the plane.

Since then, dozens of incidents have been reported on Boeing planes, from panels coming off, landing gear not deploying correctly and fires on board aircraft.

Even the company’s new manned spaceship, the Starliner, had been delayed for months for various critical problems discovered by NASA before it finally launched on Wednesday.

The January door blowout also brings to mind the two 737 MAX 8 crashes in October 2018 and March 2019, when 346 passengers and crew were killed. Subsequent reports found that Boeing deliberately hid internal software issues from pilots, regulators and all those on board their planes, problems that Boeing knew were incredibly dangerous.

None of Boeing’s senior executives were ever tried for murder for knowingly encouraging the deadly planes to be developed and produced. The most Boeing suffered was a \$2.5 billion plea deal to avoid criminal liability for fraud and for the 346 deaths.

The ongoing issues with the 787 Dreamliner are especially significant because of the fate of Boeing whistleblower John “Mitch” Barnett. On March 9, Barnett was about to give a third day of a deposition about his time as a quality manager for Boeing and his criticisms of the company’s attitude toward safety on the 787 project and the factory in South Carolina, when he was found dead by a “self-inflicted gunshot wound” to his head in his rental car in his hotel parking lot.

Barnett had been let go by Boeing in 2017, which he alleged was retaliation for concerns he had raised internally about quality problems of the production of the Dreamliner aircraft. Since then, he had been interviewed many times about the dangers he saw for anyone flying on a 787 jet.

A family friend quoted Barnett as telling her, “If anything happens to me, it’s not suicide.”

Among the many problems Boeing currently faces is the fallout of an audit done in March by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which found

numerous instances where manufacturing and quality control were well below federally mandated requirements.

One of the FAA's auditors, Najmedin Meshkati, especially called out the 1997 merger of Boeing and McDonnell Douglas, which "under the direct watch of its leaders and board of directors," are "complicit in and ultimately responsible for its present problems."

McDonnell Douglas gained infamy in the 1970s for the production of the DC-10, which remains to this day one of the deadliest aircraft ever produced. In its original design, the rear cargo door did not always lock properly, inducing explosive decompression that collapsed the floor of the plane's main cabin. The DC-10 suffered 55 accidents over its lifetime, which have caused a total of 1,261 fatalities.

Boeing's contempt for safety is also highlighted the ongoing contract talks with 32,000 machinists, part of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), at the Everett plant. One of the main demands of the workers is the restoration of the many hundreds of positions dedicated to maintaining safety and quality that Boeing has eliminated over the past decade. Boeing has so far refused this demand.

The contract for the machinists expires on September 12, and a strike authorization vote is scheduled for July 17.

The elimination of so many safety and quality positions speaks to the underlying class nature of Boeing's position. While the merger with McDonnell Douglas certainly accelerated the process, the decline of American capitalism ultimately underscores the degeneration of Boeing. The drive by every corporation is for profits—in Boeing's case, market share against European rival Airbus—and human lives are just the cost of doing business.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact