

Further evidence of Boeing's criminality exposed as near-silence on death of whistleblower John Barnett continues

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On Tuesday, the *Wall Street Journal* published an article providing further evidence of the criminality and neglect of aerospace giant Boeing during the production stages of its commercial aircraft. While the piece only focuses on a single production line at the company's facility in Renton, Washington, and the final assembly of the 737 MAX 9 that had its door blow out while in flight this past January, it further exposes the underlying causes of the numerous dangerous issues known to affect Boeing aircraft.

The basis of the *Journal's* report is from previously unreported communications from Boeing's messaging system, the Shipline Action Tracker (SAT), which is designed to communicate issues during an aircraft's production so, ostensibly, they can be fixed before the plane is shipped out.

Starting on September 1, 2023, the fuselage of the specific 737 MAX 9, noted internally as Line No. 8789, had been flagged as having damaged rivets which needed fixing. For nearly three weeks, workers at Boeing wrote comments in the SAT that the rivets had to be replaced. One entry read, "Damaged rivets are not acceptable and need to be removed and replaced."

In particular, they were requesting that work be done by Spirit AeroSystems, which had made the fuselage and made the mistake but was unresponsive. "No Spirit work in progress," noted another entry.

And when Spirit finally did claim it had fixed the issue, a further extraordinary message in the SAT read, "CONDITION STILL EXIST. RIVETS WERE JUST PAINTED OVER."

It was during this process that four door plugs were removed to ultimately fix the rivets. Those door plugs were not replaced, which was the immediate cause of

the January blowout.

Spirit is infamous for its shoddy quality, which is even admitted by Boeing itself. A critical defect in 737 fuselages had been detected last August which required detailed inspection and redrilling to correct. Rather than force Spirit to correct its issues, Boeing implemented a "traveled work" system in which production at the Renton facility was done out of order to fix errors as they were found.

What the *Journal* makes no mention of, however, is that these sorts of issues have been raised repeatedly by Boeing whistleblowers, especially by the late John Barnett. Barnett had worked for Boeing for 32 years, until 2017, and was a quality manager at the company's facility in Charleston, South Carolina, which produces the 787 Dreamliner aircraft.

Barnett was in the middle of a detailed deposition against Boeing in which he alleged that Boeing retaliated against him in numerous ways for speaking out against production practices that made the planes unsafe. These allegations include that he was told to work in "the grey area" and not document defects, not report when parts from the plane were "being stolen," and to submit "an incomplete build record, which constitutes a criminal felony offense and has the potential to adversely impact the safety of the flying public."

On the third day of his deposition, March 9, Barnett was found dead from a gun shot wound in a truck in a Holiday Inn parking lot. It was ruled a suicide by the county coroner within 48 hours.

Almost immediately, his lawyers questioned the official account. They asserted, "We didn't see any indication that he would take his own life. No one can

believe it. The Charleston police need to investigate this fully and accurately and tell the public. No detail can be left unturned.”

Days later, a close family friend of Barnett’s spoke to an ABC affiliate and said Barnett told her, “If anything happens to me, it’s not suicide.”

Most recently, Barnett’s mother Vicky Stokes was interviewed by CBS News. When asked if she blamed Boeing for her son’s death, she replied, “I think if this hadn’t gone on so long, I’d still have my son. My sons would still have their brother, and we wouldn’t be sitting here. So, in that respect, I do.”

It is absurd, given the sheer volume of Barnett’s allegations against Boeing, a total of 32 pages, and the suspicious nature of his death, that none of this is mentioned in the article by the *Wall Street Journal*.

The *New York Times*, the supposed “newspaper of record,” is no better. It has published several articles on Boeing defects in the past few days, including articles titled, “How Boeing Favored Speed Over Quality,” “4 Takeaways About Boeing’s Quality Problems” and an opinion piece, “You Don’t Need to Freak Out About Boeing Planes (but Boeing Sure Does),” to name just some.

Yet none of them mentions Barnett’s suit or comment in any way on his “suicide,” despite the fact that Barnett is arguably the most prolific Boeing whistleblower, especially since he was finally forced out of the company in 2017. And the CBS News interview proves that the owners and editors of the newspapers are clearly aware of the significance of Barnett’s allegations, both past and present.

The underlying reason for the silence is the stature of Boeing itself. The airplane manufacturer sits at the heart of both American exports and the US military machine, including much of the equipment used by Israel in its genocide against Gaza. There is every reason to suspect that Barnett was in a position to reveal even more about the company’s inner workings and that the media companies had been instructed to “just paint over” his known allegations and subsequent death.

There is little doubt that what else Barnett had to say would have thrown Boeing even further into crisis. As the *Journal* article admits, the reason the company was pushing through defective fuselages was to deliver promised 737 MAX planes. It is several years behind

fulfilling orders after it was forced to halt production in the wake of the two MAX 8 crashes in October 2018 and March 2019 which collectively killed 346 passengers and crew.

Since then, Boeing’s share of the commercial airline market has fallen from 50 to 42 percent. Several ranking officials, including CEO David Calhoun, have been forced out over the recent spate of crises, following the ouster of ex-CEO Dennis Muilenburg at the end of 2019. And while under the tenure of both, the safety and quality of Boeing’s aircraft have taken a nosedive. Yet salaries and bonuses of executives and stock buybacks for investors have never been higher.



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