

# Boeing receives sweetheart deal to avoid criminal prosecution over 737 MAX crashes

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The US Department of Justice announced Friday that it has reached a non-prosecution agreement with Boeing that will allow the aerospace giant to avoid criminal prosecution over two fatal crashes of its 737 MAX 8 aircraft that killed 346 people in 2018 and 2019.

Under the agreement, Boeing will pay approximately \$1.1 billion in fines and compensation, retain a company-selected “independent compliance consultant,” and avoid the felony fraud conviction that would have threatened its status as a major defense contractor. The deal reverses a previous agreement reached under the Biden administration in July 2024, in which Boeing had agreed to plead guilty to criminal fraud charges.

The move represents the calculated intervention of the American state on behalf of the military-industrial complex. Boeing is not merely a civilian aircraft manufacturer but a cornerstone of the US military-industrial complex, receiving over \$20 billion for the next-generation fighter jets and representatives accompanying President Trump on lucrative arms deals in the Middle East.

The timing of this deal is particularly significant. It comes just months after Boeing was awarded the contract for the F-47 fighter jet, designed for warfare against China, and follows Trump’s announcement of a \$96 billion order from Qatar Airways brokered with Boeing’s CEO in attendance.

The legal maneuvering that enabled this outcome was brokered by US District Judge Reed O’Connor. The judge is a notorious right-winger appointed by George W. Bush, who previously served as chief counsel to Republican Senator John Cornyn. He initially rejected the plea deal from Boeing over purported concerns about diversity, equity and inclusion policies in

selecting an independent monitor to reject the deal.

As Friday’s ruling exposes, O’Connor’s December finding was designed to provide time to more completely whitewash the aerospace giant’s role the 346 deaths and prevent even the previous fraud charges from sticking.

The ruling also confirms the warning made by the WSWS at the time, that the “rejection of the plea deal does not mean confidence can be placed in the US judicial system to justly punish those responsible for the deaths of 346 men, women and children. The response by the federal government is a naked expression of class justice in America.”

Attorneys for the families of the crash victims have condemned the agreement as a “slap on the wrist” and “morally repugnant.” Paul Cassell, representing many of the families, called it “unprecedented and obviously wrong for the deadliest corporate crime in US history.”

Boeing’s crimes were not the result of mere oversight or technical failures but represented a systematic conspiracy to prioritize profits over human life. The company deliberately concealed the existence of the Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System (MCAS) from pilots and regulators, knowing that the faulty software could override pilot input and force aircraft into fatal nosedives. Internal communications revealed Boeing employees boasting about “jedi-mind tricking” regulators into approving training materials while systematically covering up the dangers posed by their aircraft.

The scale of Boeing’s criminal conduct extends far beyond the initial crashes. Even after the first crash killed 189 people in October 2018, Boeing and the Federal Aviation Administration allowed the aircraft to continue flying, with internal FAA analysis determining that the MAX would average one fatal

crash every two to three years. This analysis was suppressed from the public even after the second crash occurred just five months later, killing 157 more people.

The financial penalties imposed on Boeing represent a fraction of the company's total value and the profits generated by the MAX program. The \$445 million compensation fund for crash victims amounts to less than \$1.3 million per death. To put Boeing's arithmetic into perspective, the single \$96 billion Qatar Airways deal that Boeing secured with Trump's assistance is worth more than 215 times the compensation fund for all 346 victims combined.

Moreover, Boeing's market capitalization increased by nearly \$200 billion from the time the MAX was announced in 2011 until the fleet was grounded, while company executives personally enriched themselves through well-timed stock sales worth tens of millions of dollars.

The International Association of Machinists union sabotaged the recent strike by 33,000 Boeing workers at facilities across the Pacific Northwest, ensuring that Boeing's defense production remained uninterrupted. The union apparatus worked hand-in-hand with the Biden administration to shut down the strike and maintain Boeing's profitability, demonstrating once again that the labor bureaucracy serves as an instrument of corporate control rather than worker defense.

Boeing's sacrifice of lives to profit is not an aberration. The ruling on Boeing comes after autoworker Ronald Adams Sr. was crushed to death on April 7 while working at Stellantis' Dundee Engine Complex in southeast Michigan. Initial reports indicate that he was killed when an overhead gantry unexpectedly engaged and crushed his torso.

Both the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) are working to conceal the real cause of Adams' death in order to keep Stellantis as profitable as possible. In opposition to this perspective, the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees has called for an independent rank-and-file investigation into the death and to safety in auto plants more broadly.

The deal at Boeing shows that any financial penalties for serious corporate crimes amount to the cost of doing business for American corporations.

The fight to bring Boeing's executives up on charges of murder for the deaths of the 346 passengers and crew cannot be separated from the broader class struggle against the capitalist system that produces such horrors. Only through a fight by the working class to end the domination of society by private profit can such criminality finally be ended.



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