



Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

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November 18, 2021

The Honorable Eric J. Soskin  
Inspector General  
Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E.  
West Building, W70-300  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Inspector General Soskin:

Over the past three years, there has been much attention on the design, development, and certification of the Boeing 737 MAX and its return to service following two fatal accidents. We appreciate the work your office has done to date to evaluate the actions of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Boeing related to the 737 MAX. We are writing to request that the Department of Transportation's Office of Inspector General (OIG) conduct a review of the FAA's oversight of the manufacture and production of the Boeing 787.

In October 2020, Boeing halted delivery of new 787s to customers for multiple months due to production issues.<sup>1</sup> During 2021, Boeing restarted deliveries in March, but Boeing identified additional production issues and halted deliveries in May.<sup>2</sup> Production was again halted in July, and deliveries currently remain paused.<sup>3</sup> Below are some production issues identified in news reports at Boeing's Charleston, South Carolina, 787 plant:

- **August 2020:** Boeing recommended airlines ground eight recently manufactured 787 aircraft to address a manufacturing flaw in the joining of two carbon fiber composite structures that

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<sup>1</sup> Jon Hemmerdinger, *After FAA requests more data, Boeing halts 787 deliveries again*, FLIGHT GLOBAL (May 28, 2021), available at <https://www.flightglobal.com/airframers/after-faa-requests-more-data-boeing-halts-787-deliveries-again/143952.article>.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. FAA confirms Boeing halts 787 Dreamliner deliveries pending approval of planned inspection method, REUTERS (May 28, 2021), available at <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/05/28/us-faa-confirms-boeing-halts-787-dreamliner-deliveries-pending-approval-of-planned-inspection-method.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Eric M. Johnson, *Boeing cuts 787 Production, suffers 737 MAX cancellation*, Reuters (July 14, 2021), available at <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/boeing-cuts-787-production-new-structural-problem-discovered-2021-07-13/>.

seal the aircraft's pressurized cabin.<sup>4</sup> Around the same time Boeing also discovered that "shims" used to fill gaps when two fuselage panels are joined together during production assembly were being improperly manufactured.<sup>5</sup>

- **September 2020:** Boeing disclosed that during the assembly process of the 787 some aircraft had their horizontal stabilizers clamped together with too much force, violating a manufacturing requirement.<sup>6</sup>
- **March 2021:** Boeing announced it was inspecting flight-deck windows of some 787s for potential manufacturing flaws in a limited number of aircraft.<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, in February 2021, the FAA published an airworthiness directive (AD) requiring visual inspection of the decompression panels in the bilge barriers located in the forward and aft cargo compartments of approximately 222 Boeing 787 Dreamliner aircraft to look for damaged or disengaged decompression panels due to previous incidents with these panels.<sup>8</sup>

While the FAA continues to investigate, we request that your office:

1. Evaluate whether the FAA's existing inspection program is sufficient to identify production issues, including whether FAA has enough inspectors, whether FAA performs enough inspections, and whether FAA has appropriate processes in place to identify production issues; and
2. Review and evaluate the effectiveness of the FAA's actions to resolve 787 production issues.

We look forward to the results of your review into the FAA oversight processes related to the production of the Boeing 787. We appreciate your attention to this matter. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact [REDACTED] Majority Aviation Subcommittee staff [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] Minority Aviation Subcommittee staff [REDACTED].

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<sup>4</sup> Chris Isidore and Pete Muntean, *Boeing grounds eight 787 Dreamliners over manufacturing flaw*, CNN (Aug. 28, 2020), available at <https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/28/business/boeing-787-dreamliner-problem/index.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Rytis Beresnevicius, *Boeing potentially faces billions of extra costs to fix 787 Dreamliner issues*, AEROTIME HUB, (February 26, 2021), available at <https://www.aerotime.aero/27357-boeing-costs-787-issues#:~:text=Boeing%20787%20production%20issues,be%20improperly%20manufactured%20as%20well.&text=Another%20problem%20was%20found%20in%20September%202020>.

<sup>6</sup> Id.

<sup>7</sup> See M. Corey Goldman, *Boeing Tests Dreamliner Windows to Ensure They Meet Requirements*, THE STREET, (March 16, 2021), available at <https://www.thestreet.com/investing/boeing-ba-787-dreamliner-production-flaws-inspections>; Winifred Itungu, "Boeing 787 Dreamliner: Another Potential Flaw," AIRWAYS MAGAZINE (March 17, 2021), available at <https://airwaysmag.com/industry/boeing/boeing-787-another-potential-flaw/>.

<sup>8</sup> Federal Register Notice, FAA Airworthiness Directives; The Boeing Company Airplanes, April 20, 2021; available at: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/04/20/2021-08225/airworthiness-directives-the-boeing-company-airplanes>.

The Hon. Eric J. Soskin


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Sincerely,



SAM GRAVES  
Ranking Member



GARRET GRAVES  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Aviation



PETER A. DeFAZIO  
Chair



RICK LARSEN  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Aviation