

Boeing CEO admits 'serious missteps'

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 03 April, 2025



Dhaka: Boeing CEO Kelly Ortberg faced tough questions from lawmakers Tuesday, admitting to "serious missteps in recent years" and pledging to improve safety practices following a series of incidents, including a mid-flight door plug blowout on a 737 Max in January of 2024.

The hearing, before the Senate Commerce Committee, focused on Boeing's efforts to address safety concerns and quality control issues that have plagued the company since the deadly crashes of two 737 Max planes in 2018 and 2019.

"Can travelers trust Boeing?" asked Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, echoing public concerns about the company's safety record.

"737 Max airplanes safely take off and land every two seconds of the day. I'm not denying the horrible incidents that you've outlined. We need

to take immediate action, and we're taking those actions to make sure those accidents never happen again," said Ortberg.

Lawmakers pressed Ortberg on allegations of a culture of intimidation and mismanagement, citing whistleblower complaints.

"You don't have a good record of protecting and supporting whistleblowers," said Sen. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn. "Talk to me about what you're doing to change that policy to support and not to ostracize or isolate whistleblowers."

"The company has an anti-retaliation policy. It's unacceptable for anybody to retaliate against, whether it's a whistleblower or anybody bringing up a quality issue," said Ortberg.

"My experience is that once people understand what behaviors are acceptable, they tend to align to them," said Ortberg. "And it's when we have leadership that maybe is not exhibiting those, people are smart. They figure out how to understand what they're really being rewarded on. So we're really working to change that culture."

"Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass., criticized the composition of Boeing's board of directors, noting that most members lack aerospace expertise.

"Without representation of workers on its board of directors, Boeing is still flying blind because you don't have the workers there on the board giving the insights that the board should hear," said Markey.

Markey announced he is introducing the Safety Starts at the Top Act, which would require companies like Boeing to include labor representatives and safety experts on their boards.

"We've made massive organizational and people changes to make sure they're focused on safety and quality as the foundation of the company, and so far, I'd say the results are showing good results," said Ortberg.

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