



Business

I'm flying on the Dreamliner, again.



Abid Ali

Abid Ali, Al Jazeera's Business Editor, has covered global business for over a decade.

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Boeing's Dreamliner is a remarkable airplane. Its construction using composite materials had its biggest rival Airbus scrambling to develop a competitor after betting large on the A380 double-decker superjumbo.

But a spate of recent problems has raised safety concerns about the Dreamliner and cast a shadow on Boeing's reputation.

"This is comparable to Toyota's recall, Airbus had similar problems with the A380," said Bernhard Bauhofer, managing partner at reputation management firm Sparring Partners in Switzerland.

"The race between Airbus and Boeing is like an inter-continental ballistic war. Quality is suffering to make way for speed, development is happening so fast safety is suffering."

Bouhofer's also concerned with the way to two aircraft manufacturers farm out work: "You can't delegate management... it's just uncontrollable."

"If you're a customer flying on any airline you'll probably take a closer look at what plane you'll be flying on."

"It's important Boeing works with the airlines to build a communications plan that tackles the consumers' concerns."

Building a plane is a complicated process. Ray Conner, the Chief Executive of Boeing Commercial Airplanes, rarely give [interviews](#).

"In an industry full of brash back-slappers with outsized personalities, Conner stands out by not standing out. When he assumed his new role, the governor of Washington even spelled his

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name wrong in a press release." (Reuters)

But right now he's the man facing the flack over the incident-prone 787 Dreamliner, in early December last year I sat down to interview him.

I put it to him why the industry was having trouble bringing big projects in on time and budget.

"We took a big step in technology and I think that step in technology of course was such a departure from what we have done in the past so that was a real learning experience for us, and a lot of things that you can't anticipate come up as you move forward. We changed not only the type of composite materials, we went more for an electric plane, we changed the business model."

Boeing replaced the hydraulic systems with electrical ones, and it appears the problems is the lithium-ion batteries. There are alternatives.

It's a plane the airlines love because its lighter, flies further and helps them to be more profitable. With each plane costing \$206m, airlines will most likely use these incidents and delays to drive down the price.

Flying has never been safer, I know Boeing and the airlines wouldn't put on unsafe flights. Having been to Boeing's industrious plant in Seattle -- I'm sure its engineers will figure this out. I'm looking forward to my next trip on the 787 on the way back from Switzerland next week.

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Cina

If I were you, I would wait about 10-12 months and see if Boeing can sort out its problems. Why should I be a "guinea pig" , and be a paying one at that, just to fly that plane when I am not absolutely sure of its safety when I know there is a choice of other aircraft with much better safety record - including other Boeing aircraft- to fly on? Anyway, what's the hurry?

Besides, you compared the Airbus A380 with the Boeing 787 Dreamliner. The concern with me with the Dreamliner is the FREQUENCY of incidents/problems reported. Unless I am wrong, the frequency of incidents/problems with the A380 was far fewer than the Dreamliner. The other concern I have is I am not absolutely certain if Boeing is even admitting it has any problem, there seems to be a feeling of denial or lack of extreme urgency from Boeing together with the US authorities (they are just "reviewing") instead of facing the issue, knowing exactly what was the cause of the problem(s) and getting to grips with it to solve it- at least, Airbus has acknowledged its problem(s) with the A380 and it is fixing them with a temporary solution and a date for a final solution (wings) or has already fixed them (engine).

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aerynox

Don't be such a dork. People expressing concerns and fears are not necessarily luddites. We are nervous about these problems and want to know whether we can be reasonably sure we will be safe if we fly on a Dreamliner. Rather than hostility, you might try to exercise some compassion and help us dummies understand why you think the Dreamliner is as safe as any other commercial aircraft.

1 day ago in reply to JS222 7 Likes

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cinaahpek

So much for your article entitled " I'm flying the Dreamliner, again". Now even the FAA as well as regulators around the world has grounded the airplane. Even if you wish to fly the 787, ahem, again, there are not many, if any, of these planes which are flying now. By way, reading the above one-sided report gives one the impression the writer is strangely biased towards Boeing, does it not? Maybe Al Jazeera's editorial management should check on him to see if his reports are balanced especially if he is