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Former Rockwell Collins Boss Enters Mix to Replace Boeing CEO

BY HUGH CAMERON *NEWSWEEK*
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Kelly Ortberg. Kelly Ortberg, former CEO and President of Rockwell Collins, speaks at the 14th annual U.S. Chamber Of Commerce Foundation Aviation Summit in downtown Washington, D.C., on March 17, 2014. Ortberg has been named as a potential successor to outgoing Boeing CEO Dave Calhoun. *Kristoffer Tripplaar/Sipa via AP Images*

A new candidate has reportedly joined the race to succeed departing Boeing CEO Dave Calhoun, aiming to guide the company through a period marked by numerous scandals.

Kelly Ortberg has emerged as a contender for the top job at the beleaguered aircraft manufacturer, according to trade publication The Air Current, citing "multiple industry officials."

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Ortberg is the former CEO of Rockwell Collins, a company which provided aviation systems and technology services to commercial customers and government agencies

until it was purchased by United Technologies in November 2018.

Ortberg currently serves on the board of directors of Aptiv, an automotive technology supplier, and as co-chair of the board of directors for FIRST, an organization which hosts annual high-school robotics competitions.

Newsweek has contacted Boeing to inquire about Ortberg's candidacy, and to ask when the new CEO will be chosen.

Ortberg joins [a handful of other potential replacements](#) for Dave Calhoun, who will be stepping down at the end of the year.

Calhoun has led the aerospace giant since 2020, after his predecessor Dennis Muilenburg was fired in the wake of the [2018 and 2019 737 MAX crashes](#).

In March, however, Calhoun announced that he would [be leaving the company](#), kicking off the search for his successor.

His announcement came amid increased scrutiny of the company following the January 5 incident in which a [door plug blew off an Alaska Airlines Boeing aircraft mid-flight](#), and caused the airline to ground its entire fleet of 737 MAX 9s.



Stephanie Pope, chief operating officer at Boeing and CEO of the company's Commercial Airplanes division, attends a press conference at the Paris Air Show in Le Bourget, France, June 20, 2023. Pope is considered one of the frontrunners to replace outgoing CEO Dave Calhoun. Lewis Joly/Associated Press

Besides Ortberg, the other major contenders include Stephanie Pope and Patrick Shanahan.

Pope is currently the chief operating officer at Boeing, and CEO of the company's Commercial Airplanes division.

Analysts previously told *Newsweek* that Pope's tenure with Boeing – having joined the company in 1994 – made her a strong internal candidate.

Shanahan is the president and CEO of Spirit AeroSystems, and previously served as

Acting U.S. Secretary of Defense between January and June 2019.

Shanahan became one of the favorites in early July, after Boeing [agreed to buy back](#) Spirit, the supplier which had spun off from the company in 2005, in a deal Boeing said was worth \$8.3 billion.

Reuters also identified Boeing Chair Steve Mollenkopf as a potential replacement for Calhoun.



Boeing CEO Dave Calhoun testifies before the Senate Homeland Security Subcommittee on Investigations on Capitol Hill June 18, 2024. In March, Calhoun announced that he would be stepping down from the CEO position, and several internal candidates have since been touted as potential replacements. Francis Chung/POLITICO via AP Images

Ernest Arvai, president of aviation consultancy group AirInsight, previously told *Newsweek* that Pope and Shanahan's long-standing association with Boeing has deeply ingrained them in the company's culture, potentially hindering their ability to implement the wide-ranging changes that Boeing needs.

Boeing has yet to make a decision, but industry sources told The Air Current that the company wants to make a decision "sooner rather than later."

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