



[ISABELLA FERTEL](#) | USA TODAY



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The claim: Photos show 'barrels of chemtrails' on planes

Some conspiracy theorists believe the white trails left by airplanes in the sky are "[chemtrails](#)," toxic chemicals supposedly added to the atmosphere by governments or other nefarious actors.

There's [no evidence](#) of this, as scientists and airplane pilots have [repeatedly](#) maintained, yet claims to the contrary continue to circulate on social media.

A Nov. 29 Facebook post ([direct link](#), [archive link](#)) features three images that the post claims show "barrel's (sic) of chemtrails" inside various aircraft. The post was shared more than 500 times in one week.

But the claim is false.

The bottom photos show different kinds of ballast barrels filled with water. Ballast barrels are commonly used by aircraft manufacturers to control the

The top photo shows fuel tanks used for long-distance flights.

USA TODAY reached out to the Facebook user who shared the post for comment.

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Containers pictured in post hold fuel and water, not dangerous chemicals

The containers featured in the post's top image are marked with the [Hawaiian Airlines](#) logo. [Alex Da Silva](#), a representative for Hawaiian Airlines, confirmed the containers fuel tanks used for long-distance flights.

"These are fuel tanks used to boost the range of our short-haul 717s when we need to fly them longer distances for heavy maintenance," Da Silva said in an email to USA TODAY.

The bottom right photo in the post includes a caption that indicates it was taken on an [Airbus](#) airplane.

[MaryAnne Greczyn](#), a spokesperson for Airbus, confirmed the image shows barrels filled with water on an Airbus test plane. She said using [water tanks](#) and [ballasts](#) to test new airplanes has been an industry standard for decades.

"Different weight and center of gravity test campaigns are essential to qualify and certify a new aircraft for its passenger or cargo service," Greczyn said in an email to USA TODAY. "Water tanks are a very simple and flexible way to simulate more or less weight during the test campaigns."

The ballast barrels in the bottom left photo appear similar in [size and shape](#) to the ballast barrels used by Boeing to test new models of aircraft.

Boeing Chief Pilot [Van Chaney](#) described the barrels' use in a [video tour](#) of the Boeing 747-9 aircraft.

"The first thing you'll notice are these large, black barrels," Chaney says in the video. "We have two sets of these, at the front of the airplane and at the back

Chaney also points out pallets on the plane used to hold lead ballast barrels, like the barrels pictured on the Airbus aircraft.

[USA TODAY](#) and [other news outlets](#) have [debunked a multitude of false claims](#) regarding the chemtrails theory.

Fact check: [Oregon weatherman mentioned military maneuver, not chemtrails, in 2010 clip](#)

Our rating: False

Based on our research, we rate FALSE the claim that photos show "barrels of chemtrails" on planes. The photos show ballast barrels filled with water for aircraft testing and fuel tanks used for long-distance flights. There's no evidence anyone is adding "chemtrails" and toxic chemicals to the atmosphere by plane.

Our sources:

- [Airbus \(YouTube\), June 13, 2013, A350 XWB: Equipped for testing](#)
- [Alex Da Silva, Dec. 8, Email exchange with USA TODAY.](#)
- [Associated Press, Oct. 20, CNBC report on climate research didn't confirm 'chemtrails' theory](#)
- [BBC, July 23, Chemtrails: What's the truth behind the conspiracy theory?](#)
- [Boeing, February 2022, LinkedIn post](#)
- [Boeing \(YouTube\), May 12, 2011, Onboard the first Boeing 787 Dreamliner](#)
- [Full Fact, Sept. 16, Supposed 'chemtrails' in the sky are just clouds left by planes](#)
- [Harvard University, accessed Dec. 7, Chemtrails Conspiracy Theory](#)
- [East Bay Times, Oct. 5, 2007, Business writer marvels at world's biggest jetliner](#)
- [MaryAnne Greczyn, Dec. 8, email exchange with USA TODAY](#)
- [PolitiFact, April 13, Chemtrails are not real, no matter what Alexa says](#)
- [Smithsonian Magazine, Aug. 22, 2016, Science Officially Debunks Chemtrails, But the Conspiracy Will Likely Live On](#)

maneuver, not chemtrails, in 2010 clip



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