

EPISODE 183

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[0:00:07] IP: Hello, and welcome to Episode 183 of AvTalk. I am Ian Petchenik, here, as always with –

[0:00:16] JR: Jason Rabinowitz. Hello, Ian. How's it going?

[0:00:18] IP: Hello, Jason. I know some of our listeners will be happy to hear your voice back as well. I did a live stream with Gabe earlier in the week, about the hurricane hunters and how to use flightradar24 to track the storm. We had one commenter say, “Well, but I didn't hear as always with Jason Rabinowitz.” I thought, you could only hear that on a Friday.

[0:00:39] JR: Yeah. Funny enough, this is actually the first time even hearing of that even happening. I hope it went well.

[0:00:44] IP: I think it went well. We're going to keep doing more of them. I hope that you'll join for some in the future in which you can lend your area of expertise. This one was all about hurricanes and hurricane hunter, so I hope people found that useful. If you want to go back and watch, you can check out our YouTube channel for that. We'll put a link in the show notes. Jason, you are back from your travels. I hope they were well.

[0:01:08] JR: Yeah, thank you. I'm back from Seattle. Went out there, not anything airplane related, other than flying out to Seattle and back. Had a couple interesting flights; all went mostly well. But yeah, I'm back. It was good. Mostly good.

[0:01:23] IP: It was okay.

[0:01:24] JR: It was okay. Yeah. I originally booked Alaska out to Seattle on a 737 MAX 9. It would have actually been my very first flight on a 737 MAX. It seems like, it's just it's still not meant to be and I cancelled and then ended up re-booking on Delta. I think I mentioned this in the last episode, because I saw a shiny object and that shiny object was the A321neo, which

unfortunately got replaced on my flight out to Seattle by a 737-900 ER. They had some bad luck with the Neo fleet that week. I think, one had a bird strike and another got stuck somewhere.

A couple of flights took some very lengthy delays, but thankfully, mine just resulted in an equipment swap, thankfully, which these days it's, I guess, it's a bit easier for airlines to find another airplane lying around somewhere to operate my flights. I thought we were going to get out on time at first, and then we had this, not a freak morning thunderstorm, but an unusual morning thunderstorm. I'm watching the inbound aircraft coming into JFK at around 9:00, and just plane after plane after plane starts diverting. I'm thinking, "Oh, crap. If my plane diverts, that's at least a two-hour delay by the time the aircraft goes to Philly, or Harrisburg, or Buffalo, or Albany. Gasses up and then gets back to JFK." Thankfully, of I think the five aircraft in the race track holding pattern over Southern New York, mine was the only aircraft that managed to actually continue on to JFK, so that was nice.

[0:02:58] IP: They knew you were going to be on the plane. I'm just going to say that's – I know, this is a throwback, but it's the Delta difference that a lot of other airlines probably didn't take maximum fuel, or they didn't want to burn the fuel and that they wanted to divert and try again. Delta, bless them, they just kept going around in circles until the air traffic control told them you could continue on to JFK. I appreciated that

[0:03:21] IP: When stubbornness and excellent planning pays off.

[0:03:24] JR: Yeah. In the end, it didn't really matter all that much, because we took an hour and a half delay after pushing back, because those same storms came over JFK and closed all the departures for a good while, and it was pretty gross out. We got out. We ended up in Seattle only with a 15-minute delay, so not too bad.

[0:03:40] IP: These days, that is excellent news.

[0:03:42] JR: Yeah. That's my worst flight delay all summer into the fall season, so I'll take it.

[0:03:48] IP: There you go. Let's talk about what's happening now in Florida. It is Wednesday, September 28th. Hurricane Ian has come ashore near the Tampa area. Last night, Tampa, so

Tuesday evening, Tampa Airport's closed for the next couple of days. Orlando airport closed today. Disney World is closed. There are waffle houses closing. This is an –

[0:04:12] JR: Way to go, Ian. Way to go.

[0:04:14] IP: Yeah. If any of our listeners are down in Florida, we hope you're safe and well and things work out for you soon. As far as hurricane related aviation goes, Florida is a ghost town at the moment. Miami has escaped the brunt of it and has done quite well for itself being able to continue operating flights, which is a bit of a saving grace as far as connectivity and being able to get supplies into Florida Go. Tampa is certainly going to be out of commission for a while.

The hurricane hunter aircraft were active, or have been active for weeks now. Over the last few days, really a lot of flights into the hurricane. Apparently, today I follow the few of the hurricane hunter Twitter accounts, as well as Nic Underwood, who is an engineer for NOAA, that flies aboard the hurricane hunter aircraft. He shared some video that we'll link to in the show notes. It was nasty looking.

[0:05:12] JR: Yeah, they seem to get rocked around, even more than usual. That says a lot for the hurricane hunters. Some of the videos are just, imagine the worst turbulence you've ever been and then crank it up a little bit more.

[0:05:24] IP: The video that he posted and his description of it was the vertical turbulence wasn't – he said, they've experienced before, but it was the lateral movement that really made the difference as far as how turbulent it was. He shared some pictures of the – I guess, there's a bunk in the rear of the aircraft. This is one of the WP3Ds. I believe, he was in Kermit NOAA 42 today, and there's apparently a bunk in the back that came out of where the bunk is supposed to be, AND there was coffee everywhere and things like that.

If you want to get a interesting look at what happened inside the aircraft, by all means, have a click on that in the show notes. They continued to work. It came across, it made landfall as a category four storm, maximum sustained winds of about 150 miles per hour. Then unfortunately, it's going to slow down and parts of Florida could get over 2 feet of rain. Not a great story, and certainly, one we're following to see the overall aviation impact over the next couple days.

[0:06:28] JR: Yeah. By the time this podcast comes out, I'm sure we'll already know the aftermath and the damage and the toll. The east coast of Florida operating pretty much as scheduled. Tampa is actually quite a large base for maintenance and cargo conversions. There's actually quite a number of commercial aircraft still on the ground at Tampa that were not able to be evacuated. I think, there are four Frontier a 320neos. I'm not quite sure why they're there. There's a pair of formerly SAS A321s that are being converted to freighters. A trio of United 737s. Actually, I think there are four. I hope those aircraft are buttoned down, or stashed away in a hangar and they'll be okay somewhere. That's more aircraft on the ground at Tampa, category four hurricane than I would have expected. Though, obviously, if they were air worthy, they would have been removed.

[0:07:20] IP: Yeah, most likely. Hopefully, they are safely inside the hangar, or at least some sort of cover, but we'll see how things turn out. We'll have more about Hurricane Ian in the show next week, once we know what the damage and the fallout from the storm passing over Florida is. Until then, everyone, we hope you're staying safe if you're impacted by the storm, and hanging there.

Last week in the show, we talked about the electric aspect of aviation. We talked about the ES30, which airlines are warming up to. That's being manufactured, or design and manufacture by Heart. Then we talked about Eviation's Alice aircraft, which was scheduled to fly at the beginning of this week, and it did. It conducted a rather short first flight.

[0:08:13] JR: Eight minutes.

[0:08:14] IP: It didn't stray far from the airfield. It did what it needed to do to prove that the aircraft could fly. Congratulations to them. Looking forward to seeing them expand the flight envelope of the aircraft and what happens over future test flights. I hope they fix their transponder. There's a couple of different transponder modes. I think, we've talked about this before in the context of air shows, where there's a mode on the transponder where you can set it to not report an altitude. It says, "Here I am. I'm here. This is my position in space." But it doesn't provide the 3D portion of the position, which is the altitude. It looks like that's how they

ran the aircraft at the beginning of the week, most as like, because we have the track of the aircraft just fine. But it looks like they drove around the entire time, which obviously, they didn't.

Especially if you look at the GPS altitude, which is the information that comes outside of the ADS-B data as part of the extended Mode S data. Hopefully, they fix that for next time so we can see how high they're flying much more easily.

[0:09:20] JR: Yeah, congratulations. All involved out there in Moses Lake, that was a nice moment. The largest battery electric aircraft to fly to date. I don't believe this is going to end up being the production version of the aircraft, more of a proof of concept, or a prototype, but it's exciting nonetheless. And it's a looker.

[0:09:39] IP: It is a very good-looking aircraft. Yeah, let's hope for the best there. They've got an air taxi version, a VIP version and a cargo version coming down the pipe. It'd be interesting to see how each of those develop and the changes that come out towards production. Also, happening this week is the 41st Assembly of ICAO, the International Civil Aviation Organization. That is taking place in Montreal. They are meeting to hopefully, achieve some consensus on the future path for how aircraft are powered. What is the role of carbon in the future of aviation? How are we all going to get there? These are governments meeting.

On the back of the meeting last year that laid out a pathway forward, that was based on airline agreements and industry agreements. These are governments coming together and being encouraged by airlines, airframers like Airbus and Boeing to come to an agreement on what the rules are going to be worldwide for aviation moving forward. By next week, we'll hopefully have some positive news to see how those nations have reached an agreement, we hope. It'll be interesting to see whether or not that actually comes about and how toothful, I guess is an interesting way of putting it, the agreements will be.

There's some speculation that the agreements that are already in place could be weakened. There's concern that the nations that have a more developed aviation sector that contribute more now to emissions could have a negative impact on developing nations that are beginning to contribute more, but are not yet, because the question of fairness, hey, you've already developed and you're already meeting this, why can't we? Versus, coming together and saying,

“Okay, we need to figure out a way to stop releasing so much carbon, and ideally release no more carbon into the atmosphere.” It'll be interesting to see what comes out of this week's meetings.

[0:11:55] JR: Yup. Very interesting. Because if there's anything a whole host of governments can get in a room and do, it's typically not agree on something and put it in writing. Hopefully, something useful comes out of this assembly.

[0:12:09] IP: We shall see.

[0:12:10] JR: We'll see. Very good points by some of those countries, though. But there's a lot to do.

[0:12:15] IP: Yeah. There is a lot to do. It'll be rather interesting to see not so much the agreement, because everyone agrees what needs to happen. The interesting part is, can we all agree on a timeline? How do we make it happen? How enforceable is any agreement? Because you can agree on anything. Then if airlines, or air framers, or countries themselves are free to ignore the agreement, well then, what's the point of the agreement in the first place? It'd be interesting to see the enforcement mechanisms that come about, out of any eventual agreement here.

[0:12:50] JR: Yeah. I'd like to see some mechanisms on the use of SAF and what exactly can go into the production of SAF, since you don't want to divert feedstock, or actual crops that can be used to feed people into SAFs. Maybe not to specifically target Boom here, but maybe some limitations on what you can do SAFs for and not silly things, like burning four times as much for supersonic aircraft would be a good thing to jot down on paper.

[0:13:22] IP: Well, maybe even something a little bit stronger than – Should we go back to chiseling things in stone?

[0:13:29] JR: I think so. Writing this in stone would be good, then you have to listen to it.

[0:13:33] IP: That would be one way to do it. We've actually got a whole mess of things that fall under the government's coming up with more rules, or changing rules things. Let's just run through them all. One thing that was released earlier this week that I thought was well timed, because we just talked about this, are the FAA releases the vertiport design standards. These are the design standards for any area, whether it's on the ground, or on top of a building that is going to be able to handle these various and sundry collection of VTOL or eVTOL aircraft.

It's a very thorough, in-depth, as you would expect from the FAA's technical guidance about where you can build, how you can build, the design markers, what needs to come about, what type of lighting you need, where the lighting needs to be, what color it needs to be, shape, size, etc., etc. The most interesting thing for me, besides the whole thing, but picking out one little piece is the vertiport visual identification symbol.

[0:14:52] JR: Yes. I think you've just added this at the last second before we started talking about it, but I actually had it started, because I was just reading this as well and I wanted to talk about it. It's basically, heliports, but some interesting additions to that. What I particularly found interesting was the distance you're going to be able to put this from a taxiway, or a runway and for small airplane runway and taxiways, it only has to be a minimum of 300 feet away, which is not all that far. I don't know exactly what the rules are for helicopters. I'm pretty sure those can land on the runway, or over the runway and pretend to land and taxi and over the taxiways.

Yeah, I do quite like the imagery. I think on the very second to last page of the PDF, where they even put out proposed vertiport caution signs. It looks like a very particular model of this type of aircraft, even though we know some of the designs can be wildly different.

[0:15:48] IP: I think that what they went with was the drone adjacent pictogram, where they're like, people already know what a drone looks like, so let's just go with this.

[0:15:57] JR: Let's just go with a quadcopter and call it a day.

[0:16:00] IP: Yeah, and it'll be fine. We'll put a link in the show notes to the – we'll go with the website. Then if you want to click through and read the detailed PDF, by all means, please feel free to do so.

[0:16:12] JR: Yeah. Some interesting parts to that, especially the beacon. Every vertiport is going to have to have a beacon for night operations, which I didn't think was going to be something they'd even allow, but the vertiports are going to have a beacon flashing white, yellow, or green with a rate of 30 to 45 flashes per minute. If you have a vertiport placed somewhere near where you live, you're going to see it.

[0:16:36] IP: Yeah. On the good side, the pilots will certainly see it. On the downside, if your building is higher than the location of an on rooftop vertiport, you'll also see it.

[0:16:49] JR: Yes. That's also assuming, there is a pilot, since many of these are proposed to be pilotless, at least at some point. There's of infrastructure and safety measures, like beacons and wind socks for no particular reason for some of these aircraft, at least.

[0:17:04] IP: Well, these design standards are only for piloted –

[0:17:07] JR: Ah, I must have missed that in the 45-page document.

[0:17:12] IP: It's in the very beginning, before you actually get into the meat of the thing, where they lay out their suppositions. These rules are specifically tailored towards piloted eVTOLs. To your point, yeah, eventually, most, if not all of these are eventually, the goal is that there isn't a pilot, because a pilot takes up weight and space, and they just want these things to fly on their own. It'll be interesting to see how that design changes, if it does at all.

I mean, it seems to me that those things, like the beacon and the wind cone, those are easy to have for backup in case there is a pilot operating in this particular aircraft or anything like that. Who knows? Maybe they did come up with different design schema, or they just leave them in there. Some good reading, if technical guidance on vertiport design is your thing. Or if you just want to learn more about how the things that are going to supposedly be dotting your neighborhood are eventually going to look.

Let's stick with the US and talk about rules for passengers. The US Department of Transportation is proposing that airline fees are disclosed altogether. Any expected fees are disclosed altogether in the first time and airfare is displayed to the consumer.

[0:18:30] JR: All right, we sure do love forcing airlines to disclose all their fees and the total fare ahead of time, as we're not doing anything of the sort with hotels, or rental cars, or any other part of the travel industry. I just booked a few things today. Man, do I hate when the price jumps from when you first see it to whatever it is at the final, where they end all the resort fees and city fees and taxes and all that and suddenly, the price doubles. They have really targeted airlines. I'm not saying that's a bad thing. What they're looking to do is make more upfront the fees for seating a family together, or baggage fees, or what were some of the other things.

[0:19:11] IP: What is it? Ticket change fees. Are you going to have baggage fees? Are there any cancellation fees? Anything that would add to the cost of the ticket would be shown as part of the cost of the ticket, the first time that the price of the ticket is displayed to you. Which, I think, is a good idea, writ large. I mean, and I think the airlines have half a leg to stand on I guess, because as you mentioned, it's bad when you go to book a car, or hotel, or anything really. Then you get two-thirds of the way through the process, you're like, "Okay, this seems like a fairly good deal." Then they're like, "Oh, but wait. Here's the actual price."

[0:19:56] JR: Yeah, it's not great. Travel is not the only industry that does this nonsense. It's like, you're a Comcast subscriber, so it's probably when they send you a thing in the mail that says, "Hey, you can get cable service for \$30 a month." But that doesn't include the mandatory cable modem rental fee, or the mandatory cable box rental fee. It is literally impossible to get that \$30 rate. It's much the same with hotels and rental cars. Much worse with rental cars in my mind than hotels, or aviation at this point. Yeah, the DOT really seems to be cracking down on airlines after the summer of misery that we had this year.

[0:20:31] IP: I think, certainly, some of it is feeling political pressure. Why stop at airlines? Why not just have it the same for – Just show me the price that you want me to pay for the thing that I want, across the board for anything.

[0:20:47] JR: That'd be great.

[0:20:48] IP: I would love that. I would love that. I think that the argument is, is that well, it conditions – we've conditioned people to expect to pay less, and then we can add more things in. Why can't you tell me what those things are going to cost just upfront? I mean, I think one of the things is with airline, or with air framers, you're searching against multiple, multiple airlines in a single search. In travel in general, you can find prices for multiple offers. Then once you click into one, you're like, "Oh, well, that's not what the price was. Now I got to go back and start again."

[0:21:25] JR: Yeah. Not great. I'd love some equal love across the travel industry. It's not just airlines. Everyone needs these rules applied equally in my mind.

[0:21:35] IP: Let's go on to the other side of things, with regulations being taken away. Hong Kong is scrapping their hotel quarantine. You'll still need tests. You will still need to stay away from certain places, like restaurants until you are cleared. Other than that, you are now good to go for Hong Kong. As soon as that was announced, Cathay Pacific's website crashed. They instituted a waiting room. I went to book a ticket and had to wait. I think it was 17 minutes, to be able to book a ticket. Then you had to complete your purchase within a certain amount of time. Interesting there to see how quickly things are coming back, once the rules are dropped. Japan is reopening visa free from October 11, so just a few weeks' time. I know Jason is happy about that one.

[0:22:32] JR: Well, yeah. Japan, I mean, more so than Hong Kong, Japan went from straight up, "No, you cannot fly to Japan. Please go away," to, "All right, everyone, everyone come on in." At least, Hong Kong. You could go to Hong Kong if you're willing to put up with the quarantine, but Japan was just a straight up no for a long time.

[0:22:51] IP: Yeah. Then they were like, "Well, you can come if you book in a certain way with a certain –"

[0:22:55] JR: That was a non-vitation to pull the quote from Seinfeld. That was an invitation to come to Japan, but not really. They didn't want you to come, because nobody wanted to do that.

[0:23:03] IP: If you have to. This is a no tourist visa, no nothing. Just October 11, show up in Japan. Then Canada is dropping pretty much all of its rules.

[0:23:15] JR: Not pretty much. It's like, there are no rules. As of October 1st, Canada is ditching everything, from the arrive can requirement, which is the app you needed to fill out before you flew to Canada, to COVID testing at random. Even the mask requirement, which they still do require in all flights and train and public transit. They're ditching everything on October 1st. That's interesting, because they only just somewhat recently reinstated the random COVID testing upon entry into Canada, which is annoying and problematic. Come October 1st, COVID is over in Canada.

[0:23:51] IP: You don't have to weight that, apparently. Yeah.

[0:23:54] JR: Okay.

[0:23:54] IP: All right. Let's turn out to some of the things that didn't go well for airlines this week. We've got a Copa 737 that went off the runway in Panama City. That was landing in poor weather. The aircraft suffered a runway excursion to the left of the runway, went off-roading for quite a bit. We'll put a link to the data in the show notes. Basically, went down the left side of the runway for quite some time through the grass, came to rest deep in the mud, but no one was injured.

[0:24:29] JR: All right. That's good.

[0:24:31] IP: That's good news there.

[0:24:32] JR: Yeah. An ad for runway safety areas right there.

[0:24:35] IP: Yeah, that's very true. Then a West Atlantic 737 landing in Montpellier in France, decided that it needed a drink in the bay. It came to rest – it left the usable portion of the runway, to use technical terms and euphemism there, and ended up with its nose in the bay. There were three crew members onboard. All three escaped with only minor injuries.

[0:25:02] JR: Another as for runway safety areas.

[0:25:05] IP: There you go.

[0:25:05] JR: Yeah. Thankfully, this one it stopped just short to make the pictures look like it was just a little thirsty and wanted a drink of some fresh bay water.

[0:25:14] IP: The thing that was, I mean, outside of the reasons for why the aircraft did that, the most interesting thing about all of that to me was the recovery of the aircraft out of the water and off the end of the runway, that using two cranes, and we shared a picture that was posted by the airport authority. It showed one of the cranes, not quite leaning over, but the boom was definitely bending. I'm sure that's part of the design of the crane. But it was a little bendy.

[0:25:46] JR: Yeah, airplanes are heavy.

[0:25:48] IP: Airplanes are heavy, especially ones that have a bit of water in them.

[0:25:52] JR: Little waterlogged.

[0:25:54] IP: Okay, Jason. Two things that I need you to explain to me.

[0:25:57] JR: I'll try.

[0:25:58] IP: The first is Virgin Atlantic joining SkyTeam, which seems to make sense on the face of it, and one of those why haven't they done that already?

[0:26:04] JR: Yeah. Honestly, I mean, I knew they weren't SkyTeam, but does this even change anything? They're mostly owned by Delta. I think 49% Delta, maybe 51% or something? I can't remember if it's minority, or majority. But who cares? They're so intertwined with Delta, this doesn't make a difference to me. I don't understand what the purpose of this is. Then SkyTeam also said, they're not looking to take on any new members into the alliance. I'm just here thinking, why not? You're the weakest alliance.

[0:26:33] IP: Also, why say that?

[0:26:35] JR: Yeah, why say that? Exactly. SkyTeam is by far the weakest alliance compared to One World, or Star. why is SkyTeam looking at Virgin Atlantic, an airline that doesn't really bring much to the table and saying, "No, we're okay." I don't know.

[0:26:51] IP: Yeah, I don't know.

[0:26:52] JR: I got nothing.

[0:26:54] IP: Speaking of I got nothing, I will read word for word, the press release title. British Airways and Qatar Airways Complete Expansion to Form the Largest Airline Joint Business.

[0:27:06] JR: Okay. What's that mean?

[0:27:07] IP: I don't know.

[0:27:08] JR: All I know is that Qatar own some percentage of BA and they cooperate, because they're both One World. Do you need to know more than that?

[0:27:18] IP: I don't understand.

[0:27:19] JR: They made it seem like it was this huge, big event, like Emirates and United a few weeks ago. This is not that. I don't know why they were tweeting up to it about some major announcement. Nobody could figure out what it is they announced.

[0:27:34] IP: All of the factual statements that are part of the press release are just random factual statements about either airline. It's very confusing to me. Other than the fact you can now more closely as a passenger, link your frequent flyer accounts. That seemed to be the major benefit from a passenger's perspective.

[0:27:58] JR: Sure. If they can actually deliver on that. I mean, it took three months for American to post miles from a recent Iberia flight. Three months. That's in a joint venture,

immunized Atlantic JV thing. I can't imagine that this brings, again, much to the table. But sure, whatever. Once we figure out what it is they actually announced, we'll let you know. That's to say, we'll probably never let you know, because we'll never figure out what they announced.

[0:28:30] IP: We'll have to figure it out one day and try and make –

[0:28:34] JR: Something happened. Something might be easier. There might be more routes. They weren't specific. That's all there is to it.

[0:28:41] IP: All right. Sounds good.

[0:28:42] JR: Okay.

[0:28:43] IP: After we recorded last week, I think this came out Thursday. This was one of those stories where there was an initial article that said, this is probably going to happen. Then about two minutes later, it was released everywhere. Which always like, why write that? Why not just wait for –

[0:29:01] JR: Because they had to be first. Anyway, what happened?

[0:29:07] IP: The US Securities and Exchange Commission, which is in charge of regulating, among other things, public businesses, so businesses that are listed publicly on the stock exchange and have public investors, they are responsible for regulating, among other things, those companies. The statements they make about their business that could have a material impact on whether or not someone would reasonably want to invest money into the business.

The SEC was investigating Boeing for making possibly misleading statements after the 737 MAX crashes. What the investigation hinged on was the rosy picture that Boeing and CEO Dennis Muilenburg were painting after the MAX crashes, saying that the Boeing 737 MAX is one of the safest aircraft to ever fly. It's as safe as any other aircraft in the sky, and so on and so forth.

The SEC's investigation was into whether or not those statements were fundamentally misleading towards investors based on what Boeing knew and what CEO Dennis Muilenburg specifically knew about the 737 MAX crashes. Fast forward to last week, the SEC and Boeing and Muilenburg settled. Boeing has agreed to pay 200 million dollars to settle the case. Muilenburg will individually pay 1 million dollars to settle the case.

[0:30:33] JR: Oh, no. 1/60th of his golden parachute from when he was forced out of Boeing. How will he move on? I don't know.

[0:30:42] IP: What he will do is he moved on quickly.

[0:30:43] JR: He will cut a check, or pay in pennies. I don't know. The men walked away from Boeing with a 60-million-dollar golden parachute. I think, he'll be able to pay this fine while laughing. I don't know.

[0:30:57] IP: I hope not while laughing.

[0:30:58] JR: Well, given past performance, he'll probably be laughing.

[0:31:00] IP: Yeah, I mean, some of the public statements that he made following the first crash, especially and up to the second crash, where I don't know if they were laughing, but yeah, they definitely weren't great.

[0:31:12] JR: They were measurably 1 million dollars' worth of not great.

[0:31:17] IP: Okay, that's a fair assessment at this point. Let's talk about some aircraft orders. Then the last story we're going to talk about this week is just –

[0:31:23] JR: A stupid topic, but we have to mention it.

[0:31:26] IP: Yeah, we'll get there. Jason, tell me about the new airline that is coming to a shipping container near you.

[0:31:34] JR: Yeah, one of the world's largest shipping companies, or the shipping shippers, I don't know. Container shipping companies in the world, if not the largest, is moving from shipping ships to aircraft, which is an interesting twist. The same company that tried to buy out ITA a little while ago, which is the corpse of Alitalia is moving into air freight, because apparently, that's really, really lucrative these days. They will lease four 777 freighters that will be operated by Atlas Air and painted in a new MSC livery. That's exciting. Not every day we get a new 777 operator.

[0:32:13] IP: Yeah. I mean, it's certainly not unheard of, in recent memory, or recent developments, both as what is it? CJCGM and Maersk are beginning their own dedicated air cargo operation. It makes perfect sense at this point for MSC to get in on the game. It'll be interesting to see what happens when there's an eventual downturn, whether or not they stick around. For now, it'll be interesting to see.

[0:32:42] JR: Yeah. It's pretty modest. It's just four aircraft operated by Atlas right now, starting the beginning of next year. Clearly, there is a void in the air freight world that they think they can help fill. Sometimes boats just aren't fast enough.

[0:32:58] IP: Sometimes boats just aren't fast enough. Let's see, what other orders we have? Xiamen Air has ordered 40 A320neo aircraft. The reason that's a very interesting order is because, Jason?

[0:33:11] JR: They're an all-Boeing airline, at least up until they –

[0:33:14] IP: Not anymore.

[0:33:15] JR: At least until they get their first A320 family aircraft, and it's not an insignificant fleet. They have a 150 total 737s, of that is 10 MAX 8s, which may or may not fly ever again. I don't know. 12 787s put evenly between the eight and nine. Very interesting that yet another all-Boeing airline is converting over to Airbus. Though, not completely surprising, given what's going on in China, the tensions between China and the US. This is not completely unexpected, but still a major break for a very loyal Boeing customer. Though, I'm assuming not by choice.

[0:33:54] IP: Yeah. It'll be interesting to see how they further develop their fleet. Though, I guess, it is good that Airbus is preparing for a 50 rate for the A320 family continuing preparations for 50 aircraft a month, and could we see 75 like they say we're going to see by 2025? At this rate, probably.

[0:34:14] JR: Maybe. Maybe.

[0:34:15] IP: Just crazy to me.

[0:34:17] JR: Well, they'd have to really crank up their assembly lines out in Mobile and Hamburg and Toulouse. They feel like they can do it. If they say they can do it, they probably can.

[0:34:29] IP: Let's stay in China and talk about what happened over the weekend. Because this was just a very, very strange episode. Over the weekend, we started to get a number of social media queries about flights in China. We get a lot of questions about particular airlines, or particular airports, or things like that. This is questions about, have thousands of flights been canceled in China? It was a very concerted effort and it centered around the hashtag that started trending called China Coup, basically claiming that Chinese President Xi Jinping had been removed and a coup is underway. Part of the evidence for this was that there weren't any flights flying in China, and that there were thousands and thousands and thousands, nearly 10,000 flight cancellations in China each day and that was news.

The problem with these things, is not that they were untrue, because both of those statements were factually correct. There were no flights appearing, or very few flights appearing on flightradar24 at the time that those pictures were taken. Jason, when do you think those screenshots were captured?

[0:35:47] JR: Oh, I could tell you exactly when it was, because people tagged me in these tweets and I just replied once before ignoring the topic entirely. It was at 4 am. If you've ever flown anywhere before, you're probably aware that flights don't typically depart in the middle of the night, unless you're in Dubai, or something like that. Those are long-haul flights. There are not a mass of flights that depart all times of day. Pilots sleep, people sleep, passengers

generally don't want to depart at 3:45 in the morning. There just weren't a lot of flights. That happens everywhere, doesn't it?

[0:36:21] IP: It does. It does, indeed. That was part one of the factually correct, but erroneous information. Then part two was the thousands and thousands and thousands of canceled flights. That part is absolutely true as well. But it has nothing to do with anything related to this week's events or anything like that. It has everything to do with how China and Chinese airlines have decided to process the massive schedule changes that have been in place since late January of 2020.

Whereas, a lot of other airlines and regions decided that they would remove flights from the flight program and say, instead of scheduling a 100 flights, we're now only scheduling 20. Then bringing that number back up as things change. Airlines in China didn't do that at all. They have kept all of the flights for over two years, scheduled and canceled them on a daily basis.

[0:37:21] JR: Yeah. It's not particularly a great practice, but –

[0:37:23] IP: It drives me nuts.

[0:37:25] JR: It is ridiculous. Here we are in the US with a massive category for nearly five hurricane bearing down on Florida. China Eastern still has a higher percentage by a wide margin of canceled flights in any airline in the US. Yeah, that's typical. There are thousands of canceled flights in China, literally every day. Among those that are not canceled, they are not departing at 3:15 in the morning.

[0:37:50] IP: That was a very interesting way to spend a bit of my weekend, trying to figure out what was going on and why it was happening. Some interesting internetting.

[0:38:00] JR: Interesting is one way to put it. Yet, another lesson in why you should not just take anything you see on the Internet for the truth, because it's probably not right if you do –

[0:38:11] IP: Trusted sources and make sure you have context.

[0:38:11] JR: - the most minimal amount of research.

[0:38:15] IP: Yes. There you go, trusted sources and as much context as you can grab. That was an interesting way to spend the weekend. Then we are into the week, we are going to have some really good conversations coming up over the next couple weeks. Tomorrow, we're chatting with Mike from flying in life. We're going to talk with him about being a dispatcher for a major US airline. All the questions that you've already sent in, we're going to talk about and that'll be available in a future episode.

We're also talking with the commercial director from ANSL, which is the organization that manages air traffic at Gatwick Airport. That conversation is really going to center around what it's like to get into the aviation industry as a young woman and move your way up through the industry and some opportunities that are available for young women looking to get into the aviation industry.

If you have a friend, colleague, family member who's looking for some tips on how to do that, as we know the aviation industry is still heavily skewed male, doing a small bit to change that and promote a bit more participation by women in the industry. I hope that that will be a fruitful conversation for many of us. We'll have that next week as well.

For this week, this has been Episode 183. I am Ian Petchenik, here, as always with –

[0:39:40] JR: Jason Rabinowitz. Thanks for listening.

[END]