

**EPISODE 203**

[EPISODE]

**[0:00:07] IP:** Hello and welcome to episode 203 of AvTalk. I am Ian Petchenik, here, as always with –

**[0:00:15] JR:** Jason Rabinowitz. How are you, Ian? It has been days since I saw you last.

**[0:00:20] IP:** It has been days. It has been days and days and days. It's been just a few days, in fact, because we enjoyed each other's company and the company of Seth Miller as well. You find people, made your way to Chicago and we enjoyed meals upon meals upon meals and airplanes upon airplanes upon airplanes. A good time was had by all, I think.

**[0:00:38] JR:** Yeah, I enjoyed it very much. I love doing these day trips out to Chicago on otherwise, lazy Saturdays, where I have nothing to do and the weather is nice and the flights are not just on time, but early and everything works the way it's supposed to, except for some unimportant things.

**[0:00:56] IP:** You were so early, you got put in the penalty box.

**[0:00:59] JR:** We did. I think we touched down like 35 minutes early. We were only in the penalty box for a few minutes, because again, it's Saturday morning, so the flight occupying our gate pushed back exactly on time. Thank you, Delta. We still blocked into the gate 25 minutes early, or something like that, which was great. On the way back, our flight took off four minutes after scheduled departure time from O'Hare, which is unheard of. When does that happen? That never happens.

**[0:01:27] IP:** Saturday night.

**[0:01:29] JR:** Saturday night.

**[0:01:29] IP:** Is the only time.

**[0:01:31] JR:** It was great. I flew Delta on a pair of A220-100s. Got upgraded to first class even, due to my relatively still pretty low status with the airline. Again, flying on a Saturday. It's great. There are 80 empty seats on each flight. Everything was great. On the way back, we took a really northerly approach between Chicago and New York. We actually flew over Toronto, which is a little odd for that route. We had an approach to runway, what was it? Runway 4 at LaGuardia. It was the best approach I've ever had into LaGuardia view-wise, since we cut right over Midtown Manhattan, went down the Hudson River and made a U-turn around the battery of lower Manhattan. It was just an absolutely spectacular view at night. I wish every flight were that easy and scenic.

**[0:02:26] IP:** That would be ideal. But alas, what would we have to talk about if every flight was that easy?

**[0:02:30] JR:** Yeah. That story was real short. I mean, it was nice going to O'Hare, seeing some airplanes I don't typically get to see; got some interesting airlines out there.

**[0:02:40] IP:** Yeah. Like SkyWest.

**[0:02:44] JR:** Yeah. Wasn't really what I meant, but yeah.

**[0:02:48] IP:** Oh, I'm sorry.

**[0:02:49] JR:** I mean, there are a lot of E145s there. That's interesting. We don't get to see those here in New York, I think at all, not even at Newark anymore. If there are, there are very few of them. Overall, very fun day. Got to go to Delta's new terminals in both LaGuardia and O'Hare. Cross two off my list there.

**[0:03:08] IP:** A win all around.

**[0:03:10] JR:** It's a win all around. I got some hotdogs and Italian beef sandwiches and everything was great.

**[0:03:15] IP:** There you go. Outside of that day trip, it was a very busy weekend for all the wrong reasons, unfortunately. That was a nice diversion before diving right back into all sorts of things that have been happening over the week that we're going to talk about now.

**[0:03:33] JR:** Yeah. Some of these are big ones.

**[0:03:35] IP:** Yeah. First up, let's just get the unidentified floating object story out of the way. We're up to, I think, four shot downs now in total, between the Chinese balloon that was shot down off the east coast last week now. Then the three more that were not necessarily balloons, but things, possibly balloons, likely balloons, but not necessarily spy balloons, probably not spy balloons. We don't know. We're still trying to find them after we shot them down. Anyway, the other ones were shot down, because they were flying at altitudes where commercial flights could in fact, impact them. The Chinese balloons was shot down, because they wanted to shoot down the Chinese spy balloon. These were downed because they were flying at altitudes, I think, ranging between 20 and 40,000 feet, where a commercial aircraft could ostensibly impact it and that would be bad. They downed them. There's an errant sidewinder missile somewhere in, or around Lake Huron.

**[0:04:42] JR:** Some say it's still going today. It never came down.

**[0:04:45] IP:** Some say. If you find that, don't touch it. Call local authorities. Hopefully, this is all done, but we'll see. The explanation that we've got from NORAD about why all of a sudden we're seeing a bunch more floating objects, it is both helpful in its simplicity, but also makes you go, "Huh." Because they said that these things aren't necessarily new. It's just that they turned up the juice on the radars, so that they could see more stuff. Now, they're seeing more stuff. Was there always stuff there before that they weren't seeing? I don't know if that's supposed to make me feel better, because they weren't wasting their time. Because it seems like these weren't necessarily, or weren't at all threats to anybody, other than perhaps floating through commercial airspace. Does that make me feel better? I don't know.

**[0:05:45] JR:** I feel like, this has probably been going on for a long, long time. Now it made the public view and they can't be ignored at this point, until the public forgets about it in the next news cycle, and then life continues. I can't imagine that the military is going to keep shooting

these down anytime there's something unexplained in the air, because these could vary from legitimate weather balloons to ridiculous gender reveal things, floating in the sky that probably shouldn't be there. I think we've probably heard the last of this for a while, but that opinion might turn out to be completely wrong.

**[0:06:21] IP:** One can only hope. I just keep thinking of the scene from Blazing Saddles when he goes, "Gentlemen, we must protect our phony baloney jobs," with all of these balloon things just one after another.

**[0:06:31] JR:** I don't know. Those missiles are expensive. What are they? They were like 400 grand a piece?

**[0:06:34] IP:** \$400,000 a piece.

**[0:06:36] JR:** If you find the one that missed the target, which happens at the end, these are very small targets. If you happen to find it, don't try to sell it, because they probably won't buy it back.

**[0:06:48] IP:** One sidewinder on eBay. Great. Okay, let's not talk about that for the rest of time, if we can manage it. Now, here's where the weekend really got busy, unfortunately. I got a message from our good friend, Jon Ostrower, who was just on the program? He said, "Do you have some data on a particular flight?" He included language that led me to believe that I was not going to like what I saw when I pulled the data for him. Sure enough, that's exactly what happened.

**[0:07:22] JR:** How quickly did you go from pulling up the data to going, "Oh. Oh, no. Oh, no. Oh, no"?

**[0:07:29] IP:** I found the flight. As soon as I opened the speed altitude graphed, it was abundantly clear that something went very wrong. We're talking about United Airlines flight 1722 that departed from Maui last December. This was the 18<sup>th</sup> of December. The flight was flying from Maui to San Francisco. About a minute and 11 seconds after takeoff, the aircraft went from leveling off after departure to a steep dive and dove down for a short period of time, but it dove

pretty far to about 800 feet above the sea. The lowest recorded point in the ADS-B data that we have is 775 feet.

The aircraft recovered and they continued their climb and flew on to San Francisco. Landed without incident. They filed the appropriate internal something bad happened reports. The airline began an investigation that is currently ongoing. The FAA began an investigation. The airline stated that the pilots involved have received additional training. Then two days after the publication of Jon's article, which went up on Sunday, so yesterday, Tuesday, the 14<sup>th</sup> of February, the NTSB announced that it is in fact investigating this incident. United had previously said that the NTSB notification was unnecessary, because no one was hurt and the aircraft was not damaged. The NTSB says, "No, we're going to take a look at it." They're currently investigating.

Jon's done some additional reporting. His reporting now points to how the pilots retracted the flaps and their communication while that was occurring. I'll read from Jon's latest report. "The increase into the incident currently center on how and when the 777's flaps were retracted and the interaction of the two crew members during the climb out leading to the upset. That's according to people briefed on the matter and Jon's reporting in the aircraft, which we'll link to, because their aviation safety reporting is available without a paywall.

**[0:09:53] JR:** Yeah. Unfortunately, this is another incident where the recorders onboard the aircraft, about the data recorder and the voice recorder will be of no help, because they only record, was it two hours of data and the flight itself was probably triple that duration. It's gone. There's not going to be much here for the NTSB to rely on, especially since crew communication was almost certainly going to be the most important part of what they need to look into here. Not great. Really, really, really need to up those recorder standards, but it's not even certain in this case that even though that the crew did file the proper procedures with United internally and that FAA was notified, it's not clear that the recorders ever were pulled, or would have been pulled, because they did not notify the NTSB.

Regardless, even if they wanted to, that data is gone long before they landed. It's yet another case that solidifies a push to increase the recorder time onboard these aircraft. Just the two-hour limitation repeatedly coming up recently as being woefully inadequate.

**[0:11:02] IP:** To be clear, the two-hour recording limitation is the loop on the cockpit voice recorder. The entirety of the flight would have been available on the flight data recorder. The control column inputs and things like that. That would have been available. As Jason mentioned, it's unclear whether or not the flight data recorder was pulled when the flight arrived in San Francisco. If they pulled the quick access recorder, if they pulled the full flight data recorder, or if they just did nothing and filed the report.

As Jason mentioned, regardless of whether or not they would have pulled, or could have pulled any of those things, the cockpit voice recorder, gone. The NTSB has been calling for increased cockpit voice recording lengths for a long period of time. We talked about this. I mean, we mentioned it when we talked about the Qatar incident a few weeks ago, when we talked about it with Sean Payne, the investigator in the NTSB's recorder lab, about how the NTSB has consistently lost out on valuable information, because they don't have access to what was being said, or the sounds that the aircraft is making on the flight deck during an incident, or before and after an incident. I think at this point, it's long past time. It's not the technology is unavailable here.

**[0:12:20] JR:** This is purely a restriction that does – is fabricated. Doesn't need to exist. This is a code change on the existing hardware to increase the looped recording time from two hours to, what is the proposed time? 28 hours, or something like that?

**[0:12:34] IP:** I believe it's 25.

**[0:12:36] JR:** 25 hours. Something much, much more adequate that should cover – Ideally, it would be able to cover any outbound and return flights of let's say, the longest flights in the world. I guess, 25 is probably going to cover 95% of those. This has got to change. We are well beyond any technical limitation for virtually any aircraft operating the world. I'm sure, this is nothing more than a single line of code in these recorders that needs to be changed. You change at two. You don't even have to delete the two. You can just add a five next to the two and it's fine. I don't actually know what –

**[0:13:11] IP:** I'm not sure that's how it works.

**[0:13:13] JR:** But whatever it is, whether they need upgraded firmware on the existing hardware, or I doubt they would need actual new hardware, or if they need to just put in another memory module, an existing hardware. Either way, there is no rational, reasonable argument against increasing the recording time at this point. Anyone who argues against increasing over two hours, it is disingenuous and they have another agenda, or they're just outright lying. It has got to change at this point.

**[0:13:45] IP:** I would love to hear the argument against it, if you've got one. Email us at [podcast@fr24.com](mailto:podcast@fr24.com) and we'll talk about it on the show.

**[0:13:51] JR:** I don't think anyone with the stance is going to be reaching out.

**[0:13:54] IP:** I'm just saying. I'm just saying. If you're against it, please let us know why and we'll talk about it on the show. On a different Hawaiian island, about a month later, a much less dire incident occurred. The NTSB announced that they're investigating a runway incursion involving a United 777 Kamaka Air Cessna 208.

**[0:14:18] JR:** Did it happen to be the same United 777? Not to put you on the spot, but –

**[0:14:22] IP:** No. It's a different –

**[0:14:24] JR:** We can't just identify a troublemaker.

**[0:14:27] IP:** No, it's not. It's a different aircraft. The 777 involved in the runway incursion is actually line number two. One of the very old 777s, the second 777 ever built. What happened was United flight from Denver landed runway 4 right in Honolulu. The Kamaka Air flight was landing runway 4 left. The United Flight crossed runway 4 left as the Cessna was completing its landing role. Looking at the data. It's one of those, yes, this was a runway incursion. But no, there was never really a danger of the two aircraft ever coming into contact. This was certainly a case of figuring out what went wrong.

As with all NTSB safety investigations, making sure it doesn't happen again and certainly something that we don't want to see. The Cessna was much well into its deceleration process to make its turn off onto a much earlier taxiway, and the 777 was moving across the runway. Should it have happened? Absolutely not. Was this along the lines of JFK, which we'll talk about in a few minutes? Not necessarily. No. Actually, let's talk about the JFK thing now and then we'll work our way up to what the FAA announced today.

**[0:15:47] JR:** All right. Where do we even begin with this? It's been an interesting week on this topic.

**[0:15:53] IP:** Yeah. I think over the weekend, when we were trying to enjoy a meal –

**[0:15:56] JR:** I think it was a Friday news dump, actually.

**[0:15:58] IP:** Okay. Okay. What happened was, we found out that the pilots of the American Airlines flight that crossed JFK's runway 4 left, sticking to 4 left now, but moving to JFK, they were refusing to speak with the NTSB investigators.

**[0:16:17] JR:** Yeah. The NTSB put out its, I believe, its preliminary report on the matter, which is quite quick, which is great. Some other information was revealed as well. I think the two aircraft came within, what was it? 1,400 feet of each other. Did I get that right?

**[0:16:32] IP:** 1,400 feet. Yes.

**[0:16:33] JR:** 1,400 feet, which is not much. 1,400 feet separation on runway 4 left, but then it was quite concerning to read that the NTSB noted that the American pilots refused to talk to the NTSB on not just on the record, but have a recording, or a stenographer take a transcript of the interview with the pilots. The NTSB just basically flat out said and then actually followed up with a press release after the release of the preliminary report that the American pilots refused to talk. The NTSB offered multiple methods of recording the meeting, rather than just, I guess, handwritten notes.

The NTSB wanted to either do audio recording, or have a stenographer take a transcript of the meeting, which apparently is not uncommon, the latter of the two. The union of the American pilots just refused to participate in that for reasons I don't agree with, but I think you, Ian, have a different opinion on the matter. Because we already had this conversation.

**[0:17:39] IP:** Yeah. We've already had this conversation, but we can have it again, because now we're recording it. My feeling was that these are safety investigations. These are not –

**[0:17:49] JR:** Prosecutionary.

**[0:17:50] IP:** Prosecution. They're not adversarial events. It's not the movie solely where the NTSB is portrayed to be a prosecutor.

**[0:17:58] JR:** I was going to say the same thing.

**[0:17:59] IP:** That's not it. Anyone who saw that movie who is familiar with how an NTSB investigation works –

**[0:18:06] JR:** Go read Robert Sumwalt's piece about it, who published a piece about that a couple months ago, who basically outright said, "That movie right there, that's all –" That didn't happen.

**[0:18:17] IP:** Oh, we're going to have to bleep that.

**[0:18:20] JR:** Yeah. It'll have to happen.

**[0:18:22] IP:** But, Jason's right. Robert Sumwalt, who is the former chair of the NTSB, by the way.

**[0:18:27] JR:** Thank you.

**[0:18:28] IP:** That's what he did, in fact, say. My argument here is if we're going to record the interviews, because what the NTSB wanted to do was audio record it for transfer – for a

verbatim transcription. The pilots union said, they would not participate in audio recorded interviews in any manner. I get where they're coming from, because if there's an audio recording, there's the possibility that that recording could be used in any manner in an adversarial context, or there's a chance that that recording could be leaked.

**[0:19:05] JR:** As there's a chance, but does that ever happen?

**[0:19:08] IP:** Let me defend the NTSB on the back half of that sentence. The NTSB and when we talked with Sean Payne about this, we talked about what happens to the CVR recordings. He's like, well, they get locked down. They never get out. We don't let them out.

**[0:19:27] JR:** I don't recall of any case. Forget the NTSB, or any national investigator. I don't know of any instance where the voice recorder has leaked.

**[0:19:37] IP:** There are a few out there. You can find them if you look for them. As far as the NTSB is concerned, they have a stellar track record of making sure that those audio recordings don't get out. I don't see a problem with this, with the assurances that this is for the investigation that the accurate statements of the pilots are recorded accurately and verbatim. I don't see a problem with that. The NTSB said, "Well, okay, fine. We'll subpoena you." They did. Now, the pilots will be talking to investigators.

**[0:20:18] JR:** Yes, but apparently not of their own volition. They're merely complying with the subpoena at this point. It's important to remember that court stenographer, they are not somehow miraculously writing down every single word, to anyone's utters in a courtroom, or in this case, a conference room or whatever. It is very much shorthand. They have to fill in a lot of the gaps. If I were discussing something with the NTSB, I would prefer a recording. I would want everything I say to be transcribed verbatim, rather than, I guess, in this case, a version of a court reporter, or a stenographer where it's more shorthand.

If you read what a court stenographer has taken down in their machine, you're not going to understand what they're saying. There's a lot of interpretation needed in that. I understand why they may not want a recorded interview. Maybe that's not typical, or common, but it's a really bad look for the pilots in the pilots union in my eyes to outright refuse to speak to the NTSB,

merely because it's being recorded. It looks poorly on the union, the airline, the pilots. It doesn't look good for anyone in this industry, especially with the very predictable headlines that went out of American Airlines pilots refuse to talk to investigators. Doesn't look good for anyone. I understand that the pilots are probably just doing what their union representation was telling them to do, but I just don't agree with it.

**[0:21:44] IP:** I don't really have anything to add on that.

**[0:21:46] JR:** No. I'm sure we'll get hate mail for that opinion, but that is my opinion.

**[0:21:50] IP:** If you've got an opinion, our email box is [podcast@fr24.com](mailto:podcast@fr24.com), and always is open. We do read everything. I make Jason transcribe every email we get, verbatim. We said all of that to work up to what happened today. That is the FAA's acting administrator, Billy Nolen, has announced a safety summit and a top-down review of the United States Aviation Safety Scheme. How the FAA keeps air travel safe in the United States. He starts off by saying, "We are experiencing the safest period in aviation history. By the measure of accidents, serious incidents and fatalities, that's true." He then says, "But we cannot take this for granted." I agree. "Recent events remind us that we must not become complacent." Also agree. This is an interesting phrase. "Now is that the time to stare into the data and ask hard questions." I'm not sure what that means, but I like it.

**[0:23:06] JR:** The subtext of that paragraph is, "Hey, everyone. What the hell is going on? We need to probably meet and figure out why we keep having all these near misses, or runway incursions, or planes almost landing on top of each other. Now's the time to stop that from becoming an actual catastrophe." They're going to hold the safety summit in March to examine, I'm quoting here, "What actions the aviation community needs to take to maintain our safety record."

At the very end of this, I find it interesting that the memo here closes out by saying and I quote, "We know that our aviation system is changing dramatically. Now is the time to act." I would love for him to expand on what he means by changing dramatically. What is changing dramatically? I know there's a lot going on. Post-COVID, a lot of progression in the pilot intake process from first officers being promoted to captain rather quickly, because there just isn't a lot of first officer

to pull from these days. I would love for him to open in March on the first day this summer to explain exactly what is changing dramatically.

**[0:24:11] IP:** Well, I mean, I think a few things. One, you have to deal with the dramatic increase in rocketry. He mentions that, as far as dealing with the National Airspace System and rocket launches. Also, I think that the technology of flight is changing, I mean, rather quickly, in terms of aviation development. eVTOLs, electric flight, hydrogen power, etc., etc. I think that's what he means. Again, I would like to hear it from acting administrator, Billy Nolen.

**[0:24:46] JR:** That reminds me, one more thing we forgot to mention back when we were talking about the American runway incursion at JFK, speaking of technology, the NTSB preliminary report and did mention that ASDE-X, which is basically the ground aircraft monitoring system that will notify air traffic control if there is a runway incursion of some sort that was functional that did notify ATC that a runway incursion was, I guess, not imminent, but occurring. That is what triggered the air traffic controller to tell Delta to abort their takeoff, basically. That's one more piece of technology that is changing dramatically for the better in that case.

**[0:25:24] IP:** We'll take it. Okay, so that's a lot going on in the US. Let's leave the US and head to Nepal. Because today, the preliminary report on the crash of the Yeti airlines ATR that crashed last month, that report came out this week. Was released on Monday. Over the past few weeks, we've seen a bit trickle out about the power management by the pilots and the fact that the propellers were put into a feather. Now, we have a bit more information about what had happened.

I do want to back up and talk about who was flying the aircraft. This is from the preliminary report and I'm quoting now. "The accident occurred during a visual approach for runway 12 at VNPR, which is the ICAO code for Pokhara Airport. This was the third flight by the crew members on that day. The flight was operated by two captains. One captain was in the process of obtaining aerodrome familiarization for operating into Pokhara. The other captain was the instructor pilot. The captain being familiarized, who was occupying the left-hand seat was the pilot flying and the instructor pilot occupying the right-hand seat was the pilot monitoring."

**[0:26:36] JR:** Okay, nothing out of the ordinary there. Continue.

**[0:26:40] IP:** Then we move to the final phase of flight. This is section 1.14 of the preliminary report. The pilot flying disengaged the autopilot system at an altitude of 721 feet above ground level. The pilot flying then called for flaps 30 at 10:56:32. The pilot monitoring replied, flaps 30 and descending.

As Jason's vocalizations portend, that's not what happened. "The flight data recorder did not record any flap surface movement at that time. Instead, the propeller rotation speed of both engines decreased simultaneously to less than 25%. The torque started decreasing to zero, which is consistent with both propellers going into the feathered condition. On the cockpit voice recorder, area microphone recording, a single master caution chime was recorded at 10:56:36. The flight crew then carried out the before landing checklist before starting the left turn onto the base leg. During that time, the power lever angle increased from 41% to 44%. At the point, the propeller rotation speed and the torque of both engines were zero. The propellers are in feather. They are not producing thrust."

**[0:28:10] JR:** Yeah, not great. Basically, what happened here, what we believe, or what the investigators believe happened is that the pilot monitoring accidentally feathered the props, rather than moving the flaps from 15 to 30 and confirmed that they were moving to 30, while that was actually not ever going to be the case. He had actually accidentally feathered the props. Taking a look at the, I guess, the throttle quadrant, or the controls for the ATR 72, it's not the greatest design. I know people are going to say well, these two levers, they have a different feel, they have a different travel when you move them. Looking at it, I'm sure the human factors conditions here will bear a lot of information, because the auto condition for the props is at almost the same position that flaps 15 is, which is the levers are directly next to each other. The flaps are on the right, the condition controls for the propellers are just to the left.

Moving down the propeller controls, there are actually two. I'm sure they're probably linked, but I don't know that. But moving them down to the feathered condition, which basically eliminates the chance of them producing any power is almost exactly in the same position of the flaps lever in the 30 position. I understand how this mistake could possibly be made. It is just not great design here, though this specific instance is probably never led to a crash in the past.

The similarities between the condition of the propellers being an auto and feather and the flaps from 15 to 30, they are just so eerily similar in their placement. I could understand how this mistake could be made, but not quite how it could not be caught, since this pilot mentioned that they are 30 and descending, when they were not descending. Apparently, there was a master caution chime in the aircraft that seemingly, may have been ignored since they just continue on with their checklists. We'll have to get these answers, of course, in the final investigation report, but the preliminary report here is not great.

**[0:30:20] IP:** Yeah. While Jason was walking everybody through the throttle quadrant and the flaps overs, I found a photo of the ATR 72 flight deck in flight, where the prop auto and the flaps levers are next to each other on the central column. I'll put a link to that photo in the show notes, so you can see what we're talking about and see how close all of those levers are, including the power, flaps and propeller feathering controls.

**[0:30:48] JR:** Yeah. There are some human design factors here in these controls, where the flaps knob, basically, is actually physically shaped, like the flaps on an aircraft. You're supposed to be able to feel the knob that you're holding here, as opposed to the condition levers, which are distinctly different. Also, there are two of them, which is different. Yeah, the placement of those, especially in the auto versus 15 flaps configuration, they are very close.

**[0:31:18] IP:** Yeah. Okay. Let's take a break. When we come back, we're going to talk about a blockbuster letter of intent.

**[0:31:27] JR:** Oh, okay. I see where you're going.

**[0:31:31] IP:** We'll be right back with more AvTalk.

[BREAK]

**[0:31:39] IP:** Welcome back. It is now finally time to talk about Air India's massive aircraft order that has been teased and exclusivated and scooped. Everyone has said, "It's coming. It's coming. It's coming. It's coming."

**[0:31:52] JR:** It's the biggest order in the history of airplane orders. You know what? It's not an order. It is an intent to one day, order and finalize these aircraft orders.

**[0:32:05] IP:** The best part about this is they were announced initially by the Prime Minister of India and the President of France, where Airbus is based, and then by the Prime Minister of India and the President of the United States where Boeing is based. Then, hours later, the actual announcements came out from Airbus and Boeing, and they were like, "Yeah. When finalized, these orders will represent actual money."

**[0:32:32] JR:** Yeah, it's interesting. I think Boeing said, Air India today announced the carrier has selected Boeing's family to expand, blah, blah, blah, the agreement between Boeing and Air India. The order will post at Boeing's order and deliveries website when final, as opposed to Airbus, which said, what exactly did they say? Has announced its commitment to order 250 aircraft. None of this is I'm sure, it will be finalized in some form or another, probably, exactly as we know it today. Which by the way, is 140 A320neo, 70 A321neo, 34 A350-1000, six A350-900, 190 737 MAX with options for 50 more. 20 787s with options for 20 more and 10 777X, just to round off the now impending fleet complexity of the new Air India.

**[0:33:29] IP:** Excellent.

**[0:33:31] JR:** Yes, that is – I think, I got all that right. But that is –

**[0:33:35] IP:** With deliveries to commence in late 2023.

**[0:33:38] JR:** Very soon. That is a lot of fleet complexity between their existing fleet of 777-200 LR, 777-300ERs, 320 family. Now they're adding on top of that, the 320neo, the 321neo, A350, 73 MAX, the 787, the 777X reminds me of Lufthansa just taking whatever, because they can fix whatever with Lufthansa Technik. Except Air India doesn't have that capability. This is clearly, as you said, a blockbuster order to be, but is not currently an actual order.

**[0:34:16] IP:** Yeah. I mean, I don't expect the order to not finalize.

**[0:34:21] JR:** In some form or another, it will finalize. It's going to happen.

**[0:34:26] IP:** They've chosen engines. The real winner in all of this is GE.

**[0:34:31] JR:** Yes. GE did put out a press release as well simultaneously with Airbus and Boeing, I believe, exclaiming that they have been selected. Yeah, you might be right that GE is the real winner here. The real winner is the Indian public, the Indian passengers of Air India, get some new aircraft that aren't crap, which is good. The new ownership of Air India really seems to be, dare I say, promising. But this is the same half that Alitalia/ITA has taken, where they are no longer a public entity, they're private in some form or another and they make this blockbuster order for whatever aircraft they can scrounge up.

A lot of these aircraft, I reckon are going to be not taken up aircraft. I know some of them are, coming from S7, or Aeroflot, specifically for the A350s. A lot of these will also be new build. The similarities between what's happened with Alitalia and what happened with the old Air India, it's very similar.

**[0:35:32] IP:** Yeah. I think the same caution is warranted, in that if the government stays out of the way, it's very likely that these airlines do well.

**[0:35:42] JR:** Yes. But we have the added complexity here of Air India merging with Vistara, which the past incarnation of Alitalia was a little less complex in that nature. It is a merger, at the same time as a rebirth of an airline compounded with a complete fleet renewal and expansion in

—

**[0:36:03] IP:** Yeah, there is a lot going on.

**[0:36:03] JR:** - a market that is rapidly expanding, where Italy is not. This is quite something to watch.

**[0:36:10] IP:** Yeah. There's a lot going on. It's going to be a very interesting rest of the decade, to see how India's aviation market matures.

**[0:36:20] JR:** I wish luck, because they're going to need it.

**[0:36:25] IP:** Speaking of in need of a little luck, Lufthansa's had a rough week.

**[0:36:29] JR:** Lufthansa Group.

**[0:36:31] IP:** Yes. Lufthansa Group has had a rough week and Lufthansa itself, mostly, is going to have an even rougher back half of the week. Today Wednesday, the Lufthansa Group suffered an IT outage and that led to cancellations and delays across the group of airlines. Not just Lufthansa, but Swiss. Austrian, Brussels, Air Dolomiti. Who am I missing?

**[0:36:57] JR:** I think you got them all.

**[0:36:58] IP:** Okay. All right then.

**[0:36:59] JR:** To be fair, it was not just a traditional airline whoopsie IT outage. It was, I think, a fiber line cut somewhere in Deutsche Telekom's network, where even though the cable was buried 5 meters deep, some guy in a backhoe still managed to break it. It's not traditional IT, like, "Oh, no. Saber's down. We can't do our weight and balance." It was, they cut a fiber line and everything broke for the entire airline group. It raises the question of why we're still in a place, in any industry, forget about the airline industry, but any industry where one fiber cut, or several fiber cuts in the same location can ground an entire airline group. How does that happen? How do they not have any redundancy, or multiple paths for their IT infrastructure to go out over?

**[0:37:47] IP:** It was actually just the parallel port cable that runs to the dot matrix printer, that runs the entire –

**[0:37:53] JR:** I was going to say the dot matrix printer, too. You read my mind. Those things are crucial to keeping this industry afloat. Without that, nothing works.

**[0:38:00] IP:** Industries keeping industries afloat.

**[0:38:03] JR:** Yes. Lufthansa has got more bad news in the future, as there will be a strike at both the Frankfurt and Munich hubs, which I think takes them entirely offline. What is it? Tomorrow or Friday?

**[0:38:14] IP:** Friday. As you're listening to this podcast, Lufthansa folks are not having a good day.

**[0:38:21] JR:** Yeah. We're only in February and we've already seen a number of either air traffic control, or airport employee strikes that typically are reserved for the peak summer season. This doesn't bode well for 2023.

**[0:38:35] IP:** Or, we're getting it out of the way early.

**[0:38:37] JR:** No. That's not. No.

**[0:38:39] IP:** I mean, you're probably right. But I'm choosing to think optimistically.

**[0:38:42] JR:** Okay. Well on the same note, Amsterdam, Schiphol, which last year, set records for just a horrible operation and horrible everything.

**[0:38:55] IP:** Records for how bad things are.

**[0:38:56] JR:** Records for bad. 2023 is not looking too much better so far, as they announced that come the first week of April, they are introducing an extra 5% safety margin, reducing the capacity by 5,000 travelers a day. This is on top of the already reduced, basically new normal for Amsterdam. Not great that we're already starting the year off by having to reduce the overall throughput. It's just, when do we turn it around? When are these European airports going to start paying employees better and getting people to actually staff checkpoints, or whatever so you don't have a line of people stretched back, I don't know, hundreds of meters down a roadway to get through security. Something's got to give. Apparently, 2023 will not be the year where something gives.

**[0:39:45] IP:** I feel like, it's the thing from The Simpsons, where Principal Skinner's got it almost figured out. He's like, "No. It is they who are wrong."

**[0:39:53] JR:** It's the children who are wrong. It's the security screeners who are wrong. No. Thankfully, it only seems to be constrained, or confined to Amsterdam so far at this point. But feels like the dominoes are going to start falling again come summer travel high season starting.

**[0:40:09] IP:** Yeah. I'm not excited, but I'm choosing to remain optimistic at this point, because it's only February. Until I'm given additional reasons to worry, I'm hoping that they're just getting ahead of things. Let's see. What else do we have to talk about this week? Not that it's been a busy week or anything. More 737 MAX operators are returning to action in China. We've got the third operator, I believe, after China Southern and Hainan. We've got Fuzhou Airlines is back in action, or at least flying again and will be back in action soon. Beta's eVTOL had its first test flight over New York City yesterday.

**[0:40:48] JR:** New York City area.

**[0:40:50] IP:** That was a cool thing.

**[0:40:50] JR:** They never entered New York city proper.

**[0:40:53] IP:** Oh, okay.

**[0:40:54] JR:** Yeah, I had not heard of this aircraft before Blade put out early saying, "Hey, we did this thing over Westchester airport." Oh, cool.

**[0:41:01] IP:** Westchester.

**[0:41:02] JR:** Yes, Westchester. Decidedly not New York.

**[0:41:05] IP:** They flew from Albany down to Westchester.

**[0:41:07] JR:** No. They flew all the way from Pittsburgh, all the way down to Schenectady, and then all the way down to Westchester, which I thought was far more interesting, the little 21-minute hop they did over Westchester airport. I thought flying the entire length of New York State from the very northern airport to one of the most southern airports was actually more interesting than a 21-minute circle flight over the burbs north of this.

**[0:41:31] IP:** There you go.

**[0:41:33] JR:** Yeah. I don't look forward to eVTOLs taking over the skies, but if Blade starts operating much quieter eVTOLs over awful turbine-powered helicopters, I'm all for it.

**[0:41:46] IP:** All right. Jason, you brought this one up. I guess, we're only a month and a half into the year, but there's an airline that has already gone bust.

**[0:41:55] JR:** Yes. Aeromar.

**[0:41:56] IP:** More airlines have already gone bust.

**[0:41:57] JR:** Yes. Aeromar, a Mexican regional operator. I think they were based out of Mexico City. Not quite sure. They reorganized during COVID, but apparently, it was not enough. After some repossessions of aircraft and ceasing flights out of Mexico City, because of debt obligations, Aeromar has called it quits and no longer operates, like Flybe, I guess. The little similarity there. They were both ATR operators and they are bankrupt again in 2023 and gone for real this time and Flybe's bust.

**[0:42:31] IP:** There you go. Then let's see, the last 747 went back to Paine Field today for another delivery ceremony. That was fun.

**[0:42:39] IP:** Yeah. There are lots of rumors still swirling about why this aircraft –

**[0:42:42] IP:** Wait. What were the rumors? I don't understand.

**[0:42:45] JR:** Aircraft is broken. It's going back to Boeing for engine swabs, or electrical issues, or this, or that. If you're on Twitter today, it was just a circus of people with unsubstantiated claim that the aircraft is broken, or needs engines, whatever.

**[0:43:01] IP:** You could have just stopped after circus of people with unsubstantiated claims.

**[0:43:05] JR:** I reached out to the proper people who could tell me that –

**[0:43:08] IP:** Look at you.

**[0:43:09] JR:** I know. I did my job. That the aircraft is going back to Everett for the handover ceremony to the operator that's on the other half of the airplane that isn't Atlas. I forget who it is, but a little odd. Definitely interesting to note that the aircraft traveled from Cincinnati back to Paine Field at 43,000 feet, which is quite a high altitude for a freighter, though not exceptional. It does happen. There were others in the air that altitude at the same time. There were a lot of rumors swirling, as far as I have been told by the relevant people who know what they're talking about. Nope, just another ceremony.

**[0:43:44] IP:** Just another ceremony. The aircraft is operated by Atlas Air on behalf of Apex Logistics, which is a subsidiary of Kuehne+Nagel, which is a freight massive freight moving operation. The last two 747s ever produced, both operated by Atlas Air are operated on behalf of Kuehne+Nagel companies. Filling out all of that good, fun stuff.

We ended the show with helping out a friend. Martin is a dedicated podcast listener. He wrote in and said, "I'm doing my master's degree in aviation. I'm working on a thesis right now about pilot stress." I thought, well, I'm not a pilot, but I'm very stressed out, so let's see if we can help them out. He's asking if you are a pilot, a commercial pilot, so not if you're a military pilot listening, but if you're a commercial pilot listening, or a civilian pilot, so commercial or private pilot listening, just not military, if you could fill out his survey.

I'll read his little note to give you a little bit more information about what it's about. "I'm writing my thesis about the influence of stress on decision-making processes of civilian pilots and I would like to ask for your help in completing my research. As we have repeatedly seen, cognitive

functioning, situational awareness and decision-making efficiency are a major factor in aviation safety, and can be a decisive factor between an incident and a catastrophe. In order to study this issue, I'm conducting a short – it should take you 20 minutes or less to complete the entire survey. It is completely anonymous survey of civilian pilots.”

He's determined to reach as many pilots as possible, so he reached out to us and now we are reaching out to you, dear listener. If you are a civilian pilot and you've got 20 minutes or less to spare, please consider helping Martin out as he completes his degree. There you go.

I really hope that next week, we just get to talk about, I don't know, maybe – I don't know. Just less stuff.

**[0:45:50] JR:** Oh, okay. Yeah, less stuff. This was a 55-minute episode without even an interview of just mostly not great news. We'll see what we could do next week.

**[0:46:01] IP:** I want more good news. I want more good news next week. Jason, make it happen. Until then, this has been episode 203 of AvTalk. I am Ian Petchenik, here, as always with –

**[0:46:14] JR:** Jason Rabinowitz. Thanks for listening.

[END]