

**EPISODE 205**

[EPISODE]

**[0:00:07] IP:** Hello and welcome to episode 205 of AvTalk. I am Ian Petchenik, here, as always with –

**[0:00:15] JR:** Jason Rabinowitz. How's it going, Ian?

**[0:00:17] IP:** It's going well, Jason. It's going well. It's the 1<sup>st</sup> of March and it's been a very long month.

**[0:00:23] JR:** Yes. This month has been particularly long and it's only been 16 hours so far.

**[0:00:29] IP:** 16 hours. Yeah. We got a lot to talk about. It's been a very long week. I'm also in the weird, get all of the things done now, because I'm going on vacation mode, which I guess, makes it even more frantic and stressful.

**[0:00:47] JR:** Me too. Are we both going away at the same time next week? Are we allowed to do that?

**[0:00:52] IP:** I hope space, time, or whatever doesn't collapse in on itself. But yeah, we're both going to be gone at the same time, which is why we're recording the podcast today. If you, dear listeners, are lucky, you will be listening to this a bit earlier than you normally do, because I want to try and get the podcast published, so that I don't have to do that well on vacation. If we can't do that, then so be it. I will get it published up Friday morning.

**[0:01:14] JR:** Yeah. Hopefully, we have some good flights. Mine, I know, is on what I think is your least favorite widebody aircraft these days. Sorry about that. But I know you booked one of your favorite widebody aircraft and unfortunately, schedule changes struck.

**[0:01:30] IP:** Wait, wait. What?

**[0:01:32] JR:** I'm flying on a 787-8, which you personally despise.

**[0:01:38] IP:** I don't despise the 787-8.

**[0:01:40] JR:** You say terrible things about it and not particularly wrong, but you also booked a 787-10, which you think is a particularly lovely aircraft and ended up getting a 787-9, which is just it's the middle one.

**[0:01:55] IP:** What happened is, no. I had the 9 going out. It's been the 9 all along. But I had the 10 coming back, which I booked specifically so that I could try the 10, because I have not yet flown a 10, but it got switched to an 8. Here's hoping that –

**[0:02:11] JR:** Oh, okay. I see.

**[0:02:12] IP:** - they magically switch it back. Yeah. But no, I'll take it either way. I'm excited. I'm flying. It's domestic, but it's I think long enough to get a feel for the seat and all that fun stuff. I'm flying United's Polaris business, but it's called First, because it's domestic, whatever. Then on the way back, flying whatever they call the premium economy, premium plus. Is that what it's called?

**[0:02:35] JR:** Premium plus, yes. Not to be confused with premium select, or premium economy on American.

**[0:02:41] IP:** I'm excited to try that out. Try both of them, because I've never flown either product.

**[0:02:46] JR:** That's nice.

**[0:02:47] IP:** That'll be a good time. Yeah. I'm going on vacation. The first vacation without kids.

**[0:02:52] JR:** Wow. Good luck.

**[0:02:54] IP:** I know. Thank you very much. I'll let you know how everything goes next week. You're on the 787. Where are you going? You're going a bit further, a field a bit further.

**[0:03:02] JR:** I am going a bit further, but with the jet stream these days, I don't know. Those westbound flights in the US have been taking an eternity these days, but –

**[0:03:09] IP:** That's true. That's true.

**[0:03:10] JR:** I'm on JAL going out to Narita in Tokyo next week, which I'm very excited about on one of the last, if not the only airline still flying the 787 in the originally intended configuration in economy of 242. None of this 333 nonsense. I am very, very excited for that. I am hoping that the schedule gods do not swap that out for a 777. We have that on the way back. Yeah, I do believe, JAL is the last remaining airline in the world to be flying the 787 in that original configuration. That'll be a nice experience. I hope.

**[0:03:50] IP:** I do love a good two seats along the window. I hope you do not fall victim to the operational swaps.

**[0:03:58] JR:** I hope not. I hope not. Even if I do end up on a 777, it's still JAL.

**[0:04:03] IP:** It's still JAL. Yeah, that's a very good way of looking at it.

**[0:04:06] JR:** It is.

**[0:04:07] IP:** We've got a lot to talk about this week. Not a lot of it is great news. We've broken the show into three parts, as we sometimes do. We're going to talk about all of the bad things that happened first; get that out of the way. Lots of discussion to be had and a bit of analysis. Then we're going to talk about things that happened, things that exist, things that we are neither gay or nay on, and then we'll talk about some good news to round out – yeah, we're stuck in neutral on those. Then we'll talk about some good news to close out the show and to close out the week.

Let's dive into the bad news. The FAA is investigating what it has termed a close call in Boston. That is the FAA's statement. Says, that the FAA – I'll read the statement. "The FAA is investigating a close call between a Learjet and a JetBlue flight Monday night at Boston Logan International Airport. According to a preliminary review, the pilot of a Learjet 60 took off without clearance, while JetBlue flight 206 was preparing to land on an intersecting runway.

The pilot of the Learjet was taxiing out for departure and was told to line up and wait on runway nine. The JetBlue flight, which was an Embraer E190 was landing on runway four right. Those two runways intersect, basically at the touchdown point of both runways. The Learjet should have been well clear of the landing E190. E190 should have landed, rolled out, gotten off the runway, and then the Learjet would have been cleared to depart. They never lined up and waited. They lined up and hit the gas.

**[0:05:55] JR:** Lined up and left.

**[0:05:57] IP:** Lined up and left. Yeah.

**[0:05:58] JR:** Yeah. It's interesting to see here, the FAA used the term close call. This is not media hyperbole that we often see media saying, or mainstream media saying close call, when in reality, they're miles apart, or something like that. This was truly and legitimately a close call. It was close enough and interesting enough that the FAA got ahead of it and actually released this information in its initial press statement saying that the pilot of – not the JetBlue flight. What was it the citation, you said it was?

**[0:06:29] IP:** Learjet. Learjet 60.

**[0:06:31] JR:** Yeah. They affirmatively said, the pilot of the Learjet was not cleared to take off. They were cleared to line up and wait. That's not usually a level of detail you get in an immediate acknowledgement from the FAA. Usually, they say there was a runway incursion, or something happened and they will be –

**[0:06:47] IP:** Investigating. Etc., etc.

**[0:06:49] JR:** They got out ahead of this, probably because there have been an odd number of these close calls, near incidents happening in the US aviation space recently. It did feel like the FAA was trying to get ahead of this one saying, “Hey, this wasn't us. This was a pilot screw up.”

**[0:07:07] IP:** This was this guy, or woman hit the gas when they weren't supposed to. We have the data for both flights in its entirety and I crunched the numbers. The runway intersect, when the Learjet is crossing through the runway intersect, so there's a potential hazard. The JetBlue flight is approximately 565 feet away. Again, remember that's from point where the GPS is measured on each aircraft. They could be closer, they could be farther based on what position of the aircraft it was, but about 565 feet. At their closest, they were 531 feet apart, but that was when the Learjet was already clear of the intersection. They could have passed safely at that point.

I mean, like Jason said, oftentimes it was the immediate – they were 3 miles apart. “I could see the other plane. We were way too close.” No. This was in fact an incident where things were very close.

**[0:08:13] JR:** Yeah. I mean, the E190 itself is only 118 feet, 11 inches long. this is roughly give or take, five aircraft lengths away. That is not much in the grand scheme of time and space. Any particular delay removed from this flight, if it were three seconds quicker at some point, if the wind was slightly faster, this could be a very different conversation. That the sequence of events seems to be from what we can transcribe from live ATC is that the air traffic controller at Logan did issue a go around command to JetBlue. Thankfully, they were able to not only hear that, but act on it. Even if they didn't and they did continue to land and run on the runway, they most certainly would not have collided. Damn, was it close.

**[0:09:04] IP:** It would have been real close. Yeah, they would not have, but it would have been real close. Yeah, so we'll hear more about – I don't know if we find out results of what happens to pilots who bust regs like this, but they didn't stop. They hit the runway. They lined up with the center line and then hit the gas. There was no waiting. There was lining up and there was taking off. There was no waiting of any kind.

**[0:09:29] JR:** Critical error. One, I do understand how that happens. It's a high stress environment, a lot going on, checklist, paperwork, distractions, listening to the audio. The difference between processing in your brain, line up and wait and cleared for takeoff, I guess, you could conceivably make that mistake. It happens. Hopefully, this isn't the end of this particular pilot's career, but I would certainly think there's some remedial training at minimum that's going to be delivered.

**[0:10:00] IP:** One would hope. This one was in fact close. Late last week, the NTSB announced it was opening up an investigation into a loss of separation and runway incursion in Burbank. This one involved a Mesa Airlines CRJ900, operating for a regional airline for American and then a SkyWest ERJ-175, which was operating for United. What happened was is the SkyWest flight was departing, the Mesa flight was arriving. The SkyWest flight took a bit too long to get going. Then once it got going, the Mesa flight decided it was going to go around. They didn't like how things were looking and they went around, which is basically, exactly what should happen.

Then things get a bit interesting, because the climb out – and if you're familiar with the Los Angeles area and Burbank in particular, there are areas of high terrain, mountains. It's bad if you fly into a mountain, so they try not to do that. I know, we're starting with the basics here. Both aircraft are making a left turn in order to not fly into a mountain, or to ensure that they're clear of the mountains. In that turn, the aircraft received a TCAS resolution advisory. The aircraft, the TCAS activated and said, “Okay, you need to climb. You need to stop your climb.” The Mesa aircraft climbed, the SkyWest aircraft stopped this climb and actually descended a little bit. The resolution only lasted a short time, because they were in fact already starting to move away from each other.

Not good, but this, I think, is one of those where it falls into the, could have been bad a few steps later, versus what we just talked about in Boston, where this was already very, very bad. TCAS is designed to do exactly this. The pilots responded exactly the way they were supposed to.

**[0:12:13] JR:** Yes. Thankfully, TCAS, it was created and installed on virtually every commercial aircraft of this size for this exact purpose. It did what it was supposed to do. Is a level of

technology in place that talks, or I guess, interacts directly with the pilots onboard the aircraft. TCAS, Traffic Collision Avoidance System, is it?

**[0:12:36] IP:** Yeah, system.

**[0:12:37] JR:** System. Thank you. Basically, what that does is it uses a positional data, or the inertia data of the aircraft to see where they're going, where in space 3D they are to keep aircraft apart from each other. When it detects that there is a possible conflict, it will directly tell the pilots of one aircraft to either climb, descend, or stop doing everything. Basically, just fly level and it will issue the opposite to the other flight crew. It will tell them, it tells the crew of flight A to descend, it will tell the crew of flight B to either not do anything, or ascend.

In this case, the system speaks is onboard the aircraft. The two aircraft communicate back and forth with each other and they give the pilots directly the information of what they need to do at that moment in time, which for something like a runway incursion, or something being on the runway that's not supposed to, that information actually goes to air traffic control, rather than the pilots themselves. There's a layer of added –

**[0:13:34] IP:** Well, it's a separate system.

**[0:13:35] JR:** Yeah, these are completely different systems, I mean. What TCAS was designed to do is to do that and only that. It is not involved in anything regarding what's happening on the ground at an airport. There are systems for that call. I think it's ADSE-X that monitors ground traffic and will issue an alert, but that alert goes to air traffic control, who might miss it, might be busy, the frequency might be blocked. There's definitely seemingly like there's some room for the technological layers of safety we have in place to be communicated directly to the pilots for even quicker resolution of what could be – how they could avoid a dangerous situation, because it seems to work quite well with TCAS.

**[0:14:19] IP:** You need those like, the brake prompt inside the little red rectangle that blinks at you on some cars.

**[0:14:26] JR:** Yup. It detects that you're about to do something stupid and it says, “Hey, stop it.”

**[0:14:29] IP:** Brake.

**[0:14:31] JR:** Stop it.

**[0:14:31] IP:** Can't get that from the ground. This one, the NTSB's investigating. We'll learn more in due course. I did want to talk about it, because there was a TCAS RA. Well, this is actually the first accident we're discussing today, this happened on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February and this was a Guardian flight Pilatus PC-12 that was operating as an air ambulance out of Reno. They were headed for Salt Lake City and they were climbing through 19,400 feet when they began descending and then descended rapidly.

We've talked about the vertical rate that sent via ADS-B data, versus what the actual vertical rate is, because the ADS-B data sends a vertical rate per frame in feet per minute, but it's not actually how fast the aircraft is going, because it's not over a minute and it's based on an internal calculation. If you look at the rate that this aircraft was descending and I hesitate to use the word descending. More like dropping out of the sky. It goes from zero, it goes from climbing to at about 1,300 feet per minute to descending at about minus 500 feet per minute and then it picks up from there over the course of a minute. Minus 1,500, 1,800, minus 2,500, minus 6,500, minus 7,500. The last value we have was minus 32,640 feet per minute.

As we know now from the NTSB investigation, the aircraft did suffer an in-flight breakup. The last data that we have is at 11,000 feet, about one minute after the aircraft began descending. This is not a good situation.

**[0:16:25] JR:** Oh, that is a sad story.

**[0:16:27] IP:** In any way. We'll wait for the NTSB investigation to learn more, because obviously, the data cuts out. The NTSB has said that based on where they found wreckage, the aircraft did suffer an in-flight breakup. That's really all that we know at this point and we'll wait to read more on the NTSB investigation and then hopefully hear more soon with their preliminary report. Then there's a weird one. A Scandinavian flight just forgot to slow down?



**[0:16:59] JR:** Yeah. There's some interesting back and forth now on what did, or did not happen with this particular aircraft. The Aviation Herald published, I guess you would call it a post about Scandinavian flight SK-681 and A320neo from Copenhagen to Rome. Basically, and again, these facts are now quite disputed, but they were saying that it approached with the gear extended flaps and slats retracted at about 230 knots over the ground, when they initiated a go around at an altitude, lowest altitude of 150 feet. That would be more than a 100 knots over what would the actual landing speed should be for that particular aircraft, let alone seeing that the flaps and slats were not extended at all, that doesn't really make any sense.

Apparently, the aircraft climbed to 2,000 feet, positioned for another approach on 16 left and landed safely with flaps and slats and gear extended about 10 minutes after the go around. There is a lot of back and forth about what actually happened here. Ian, why don't you tell us a little bit about calibrated altitude, versus actual altitude on the site?

**[0:18:15] IP:** As we've discussed multiple times, and perhaps we need to spend more time on this given all of the –

**[0:18:22] JR:** Given the comments on the site. Yes, we do.

**[0:18:25] IP:** Well, there's that. The altitude sent from the aircraft as part of the ADSB frame is calibrated to standard pressure. It's calibrated to 1023.25 hectopascals, which translates to 29.92 inches of mercury. Basically, that's the pressure value that's used for the barometric altitude above the transition level. That once aircraft are clear of all obstacles, it makes more sense for them to all agree how high they are up in the sky. It doesn't matter if you set that value to any number, as long as that number is the same for all aircraft, the aircraft agree what they're at.

You could call them flight levels A, B, C, D, E, F, G, doesn't matter. As long as the value is all calibrated the same, the aircraft know that they're flying on that particular level. You can call it whatever you want. Then they won't fly into each other. You can safely space aircraft and things like that. Below that transition altitude, it's important to know you're not going to fly into a mountain. You need to use a local value. That local value is dependent upon weather

conditions, elevation, temperature, and changes day-to-day, minute by minute, hour by hour. That is displayed to the pilots, but it's not sent as part of the ADS-B frame.

There can be, and we haven't even – so, there can be a large discrepancy between the calibrated altitude at lower levels and the actual level. Then there's the fact that neither of those altitudes tell you how high above the ground the aircraft is, because that has to take into account the fact that both of those altitude values are altitude values above mean sea level. Which is fine if the local area is at sea level. But if it's not, you have to take into account the elevation of the surrounding terrain. There's a lot of calculation to go from the standard altitude reported in ADS-B values down to what's reported, or what's actually happening on the flight deck, because the flight deck, the pilots are getting much more information. That was the unexpected altitude lesson for the day. I didn't think I was doing that one.

**[0:20:56] JR:** Yeah. On the spot. You nailed it. Good stuff.

**[0:21:00] IP:** I can do my job. Yay.

**[0:21:01] JR:** Yeah, that's great. I'll alert –

**[0:21:04] IP:** That is that important, Jason.

**[0:21:06] JR:** It is important, because if you look at the playback on this flightradar24 site you may have heard of, you'll see that the calibrated altitude looks very scary, that they were at 150 feet at a ground speed of 239 knots. Actually, we also report the GPS altitude, which is more like 900 feet, which is a little under their actual probable decision altitude. Right at that altitude, they went around, they reconfigured and they landed safely.

I guess, this is less of an event of like, “Oh, my God. What happened here? These pilots were crazy.” More so of a, well, maybe you should pause and look at all the facts and know all of the data before you go out and accuse someone of doing something, because the comments on this page are a bit of a dumpster fire. It is something we wanted to bring up anyway, because you won't almost undoubtedly hear about this somewhere else.

**[0:22:02] IP:** There you go. We'll just move on from there.

**[0:22:04] JR:** Yeah. Oh, and the flight landed early.

**[0:22:06] IP:** There you go.

**[0:22:07] JR:** Scheduled arrival time 10:23, landed 1021. Even with the go around, they landed early. Literally –

**[0:22:13] IP:** There you go.

**[0:22:14] JR:** No one even knew onboard, I'm sure. Boeing has paused 787 deliveries. Again, this is a weird situation, because Boeing's being very cagey about it and so is everybody else. From what we can gather, there was a documentation issue with components that are manufactured by Spirit Aerospace Systems, which manufactures fuselage components, among other things, including the pressure bulkhead. Boeing has termed this an analysis error. Spirit Aerospace Systems says, "We can't say that yet. We've given Boeing two years' worth of documentation. We're not sure if it was an analysis error. Everyone's looking into it." It sounds like some numbers need to be crunched, some computers need to be computed and then this will eventually sort itself out. Not great for 787 deliveries to be on hold again.

**[0:23:14] JR:** No. But at least this is, I guess, on the shoulders of Spirit Aerospace Systems right now, and not some sub, sub, sub little contractor that may only make one little rivet of some little part. This is Spirit Aerospace Systems. They're the ones, I believe that make the 737 fuselage is the greenies that we see transported from Wichita all the way up to the Puget Sound. I would expect this would get resolved, at least the paperwork side, if it is just legitimately a paperwork issue, this will probably get resolved quickly. We'll take a look back at this in 12 months and then see if I'll eat those words.

**[0:23:49] IP:** I hope we don't have to wait that long. We'll keep on top of it to see when the next 787 goes home. Viva Air in Colombia has been player to bankruptcy and merger and all sorts of other imaginations. This week, that all got blown up by the fact that Colombia's Civil Aviation Authority has not ruled on the merger yet and is continuing to hold up approval of the merger

between Viva Air and Avianca. Because of that, Viva just said, "We're done. We're shutting down."

**[0:24:29] JR:** That's not great.

**[0:24:30] IP:** "We're suspending operations. Suspending all operations. We can't continue on until we get this approval." I mean, that's not great.

**[0:24:40] JR:** No. As we know, more often than not, once an airline suspends for financial reason, they typically don't come back. However they do come back is in a drastically different way. Viva was a pretty substantial part of that nation's aerospace industry. It's quite shocking just to see Viva Air just go bust one day in the middle of these negotiations, as Avianca itself pivots to becoming a low-cost carrier from previously its full-service history. It's very interesting and I think pretty unexpected.

**[0:25:16] IP:** Yeah. The merger, it's definitely had some bumps along the way. Colombia Civil Aviation Authority has objected to the deal. They've reopened processes. They've thought of various issues, shall we say, with the process that has gone on. Perhaps, some shady dealing. There's been a lot of friction there. Other airlines are interested in buying Viva. LATAM, JetSmart. There have been other airlines that have wanted to buy Viva. This whole thing is just a bizarre fiasco, I think, is the easiest description to give.

Hopefully, this gets cleared up rather quickly. Whoever wants to buy Viva can and they'll all move on from this. I feel terrible for the passengers who are no fault of their own are now stuck wherever they may be stuck.

**[0:26:14] JR:** Yeah. There's only so much capacity in a country like Colombia to rebook passengers onto. There might be options on Avianca through other South American cities, or countries even. That's going to be a tough one to get all those people rebooked. They operated, or were scheduled to operate 94 flights today, all on high density A320neos, or COs. I think there's Cos.

**[0:26:39] IP:** COs.

**[0:26:39] JR:** That's a lot. These hold 188 passengers a piece. Let's do the math. 94 times 188. That's 17,672 passengers theoretically maximum today displaced in just the Colombian aviation system. That's a lot of people to re-accommodate somehow.

**[0:27:00] IP:** Yeah, LATAM for their part and Avianca have both said that they are adding flights in order to help take care of Viva Air passengers, which is certainly –

**[0:27:09] JR:** Yeah. There's only so much they could add, of course.

**[0:27:12] IP:** Right. Right. Okay. That's the bad news. Now for the this could be good news. Let's start with, last week, we talked about Qantas's premium cabin release for their Project Sunrise flights, where we said, okay, nice, nothing earth-shattering, groundbreaking. Just very nice. Fine. This week, Lufthansa held the event to end all events, it looked like, in Berlin to unveil its new Allegris cabin that will be first coming to the A350 and then to other aircraft as well. It includes a brand-new first class, business class, premium economy, and economy. I guess, do we start with the premium economy and economy and just get that out of the way?

**[0:27:58] JR:** Yeah. Well, if you're in economy, there's nothing here for you. There is nothing new. Moving on. Before we touch on that, okay, I just wanted to mention that apparently, irony is dead in Germany, because Lufthansa hosting this event in Berlin is just all sorts of ironic, because Lufthansa famously has zero intercontinental service from Berlin. All of their long-haul flights go out of Frankfurt, or Munich. Why this event was held in Berlin? I don't know. Whatever.

One more point, the new Allegris cabins will actually, I believe, be first introduced on the 787-9 before the end of 2023, while the A350-900 will be first introduced the new first class in 2024. Of course, all of these numbers are, well, they're not up in the air. They're not yet up in the air, because I don't know, maybe Boeing doesn't deliver these aircraft before the end of 2023. Anytime an airline these days says, before the end of something, it almost certainly means after the end. Maybe next year. Let's skip right past economy, because there's absolutely nothing new to discuss. It's a seat. It'll be fine if you get a good deal. Skipping straight past that to premium economy, Ian, have you ever flown in a premium economy seat with a fixed back shell?

[0:29:16] IP: Yeah. Actually, I have.

[0:29:17] JR: Do you enjoy it?

[0:29:19] IP: I didn't find it to be one way or the other.

[0:29:22] JR: Oh, okay. That's nice. I hate them. If you are a fan of Lufthansa's current premium economy, or pretty much most, if not almost all premium economy seats these days, you know that it's basically just a nice first-class style reclining seat. These will be fixed back shells.

[0:29:40] IP: [Inaudible 0:29:40] first class.

[0:29:42] JR: Yes. Fixed back shells, like we saw on Cathay and I think China Airlines has it, where the seat doesn't actually recline. It just pivots forward and gives you the illusion of reclining. I personally hate that. I do not like that. Though, the seat seems well-appointed overall. There's a wireless charging in premium economy, it looks like, which I think might be a first. They look nice. Nobody is here to hear about premium economy, or economy. This is all about business and first, or excuse me, it's not just first-class. It's first-class suite plus, or something along those lines. Yes, first-class suite plus. The point I'm trying to make here is this product is extremely segregated, complex, difficult to understand. Your typical –

[0:30:29] IP: Individualized.

[0:30:31] JR: Oh, highly customized for retailing enhancements. Most business-class cabins these days, you'll have maybe one or two types of different seats to pick from. Maybe it's that kind that has the thrown seat on Swiss comes to mind, as opposed to the rest of the seats that are not direct aisle access. Lufthansa will not have one, not two, not even three different types of seats in business class. They will have seven different types of business-class seats in one cabin. Do you want to know the name of all of them?

[0:31:03] IP: Give it to me.

**[0:31:03] JR:** Okay. Number one, suites in the first row. These are double suites inside, single suites by the window. Number two, extra space seats. They describe that as unique, spacious single seat with extra work surface. Number three is window seat with high degree –

**[0:31:18] IP:** That's the throne.

**[0:31:19] JR:** That is the throne, I believe. Yes. Number three is window seat with a high degree of privacy. That rolls right off the tongue. Number four is seat with extra-long bed. Okay. Number five, privacy window seat with baby bassinet. Number six is double seat in the last row of business class. Rounding up the list at number seven is classic business class seat. Seat we all know and love. It's a lot to take in. Beyond that, it looks like a very nice cabin. There's something for everyone. Some interesting things here. Heated and cooled seats. That is particularly interesting way. Heated seats are not super common, but they are out there, but cooled seats, they have my attention with that.

**[0:32:04] IP:** I am so excited about cooled seats. I get so hot on an airplane.

**[0:32:10] JR:** Yes. This has been something that we've seen that industry trade shows kicked around as a concept. It's actually something that's become commonplace in a lot of even mid-range cars in the US. You'll have heated seats and you also have ventilated seats. That's just something we've gone away from in modern aircraft. You don't even get the air gaspers above your seat. To reintroduce that as a cooled seat, I am all for that. That is amazing. I hope this pressures other airlines to do that, because I know when I fly JAL next week, it's going to be stifflingly hot on that aircraft. There aren't even personal air vents. This is great. I do love that particular feature. Forget everything else. That's the cherry on top for me.

**[0:32:56] IP:** Excellent. Then we come to the first-class cabin.

**[0:33:02] JR:** Oh, yeah. It's basically unattainable. For most people, you will probably never sit in it. It is quite a step up from business class, as we know what on Lufthansa today. Reminds me a little bit of Air France la premiere, where they have a suite door, which isn't really thermoplastic, or anything like that. It's a flexible fabric thing, which is pretty interesting. It looks really nice. It has a bed next to the seat, I believe, unless I'm misremembering. Let me bring that

up real quick. Yeah, that's interesting. That harkens back to the old Lufthansa first class seat on the 747s, I believe, where there was a bed next to the seat, so you didn't have to convert your seat into a bed. The bed was right there next to you waiting. That's pretty cool.

**[0:33:47] IP:** Wait, are you talking about Qantas, or Lufthansa?

**[0:33:48] JR:** Wait a minute. No. I'm getting the things confused.

**[0:33:52] IP:** Yes.

**[0:33:52] JR:** Sorry, they do not offer a bed next to the seat, but it converts into a double.

**[0:33:56] IP:** It converts into one. Well, the middle one does. The middle ones.

**[0:34:00] JR:** Yeah. Of course, it's not just one bit first class. There's different types of first class seats. The middle one converts into a double wide bed, which is pretty cool. It's really wide. I will almost certainly never fly on this, but maybe someone listening here will. I don't know.

**[0:34:16] IP:** What's interesting to me is it looks like, so there's one A, I assume, and one K on the other side of the aircraft. Then one D and E are in the middle of the aircraft. That's a double suite. It doesn't look like there's a way to make that a single suite. I think it's just a double suite, no matter what. I guess, the question becomes, do you have to have two people to book it?

**[0:34:39] JR:** I would hope not.

**[0:34:40] IP:** I mean, do you have to buy two tickets? That's what's interesting to me is how that's all going to work out? Or can you have it right before takeoff like, "Hey, can I have the middle one to sleep?" I mean, I don't know.

**[0:34:55] JR:** I don't know.

**[0:34:56] IP:** That's interesting to me.



**[0:34:56] JR:** We'll have to figure out on how they sell this thing. Because it is very complicated.

**[0:34:59] IP:** Well, when I win the lottery, I will try and fly it.

**[0:35:02] JR:** All right.

**[0:35:04] IP:** Because it sounds like, that's what it's going to take. All right. Let's move on to, this just is confusing to me. It sounds like, so what's happening is SuperJet International, which was the original joint venture between the Italian aerospace firm Leonardo and Russia's United Aircraft, they're trying the SuperJet International Joint Venture, which used to have UAC, but can't anymore. Because of sanctions, they're trying to get UAC out so that they can have a UAE firm come in, take UAC's place, then make more SuperJets?

**[0:35:49] JR:** Which begs the question, why would that happen? Nobody wants this aircraft outside of Russia. That has proven, there are entire airlines that have crumbled and disintegrated because the SSJ was such a turd of an airplane. I'm talking about InterJet from Mexico, if you're not familiar. But this whole thing is really confusing. At first, I thought it would be UAC, or Russia trying to buy out non-Russian organizations and take control of this thing. It turns out, it's the other way around that Leonardo will own some minor percentage of this firm at this point. Then UAC will sell its 49% stake to Venice-based SGI or sorry, they will be selling it to UAE-based Mark AB capital investments, who then plans to somehow open up a production facility in the UAE and start churning these things out by 2025 and produce 10 to 15 aircraft per year, which I'm pretty sure is more than the SuperJet corporation built ever for this aircraft, because nobody wanted it and they couldn't ever get production rates up very high.

I'm reading this from a Flight Global article written by Dominic Perry, but they suggest that there's a market of a minimum of 240 aircrafts in passenger, freighter, and VIP versions, mostly destined for the UAE and Indian markets. I just don't see it. I don't understand this. There is the notable problem of they would need to source a new engine. The SAM 146 turbo fans from PowerJet, notably another joint venture between Saffron and France and Russia's domestic Russian firm. They can't use those engines anymore, so they would have to find new ones. I just don't understand how literally any of this makes any sense and why anyone would spend hundreds of millions of dollars to repurpose an aircraft that nobody wanted when it was new.

**[0:37:43] IP:** I mean, do you want my take on it?

**[0:37:44] JR:** I do. That's why you co-host this podcast with me.

**[0:37:49] IP:** Fair, fair. My take is that UAC wants some money and they have found a way to get either a willing participant in this cash funneling scheme, or somebody – they've magically convinced some sucker with hundreds of millions of dollars, this is what they should do. This to me sounds like UAC trying to take the cash and run. I don't think they're actually going to restart this production.

**[0:38:15] JR:** Is this money laundering to inject money into Russia, or is this just find a winning idiot to buy this thing, because I would believe either. They are both extremely probable.

**[0:38:29] IP:** I think there's a decent chance that one of those is the correct answer here. I would be very, very surprised. Very, very, very surprised if we ever saw this jet remanufactured, or manufacturing restarted outside of Russia.

**[0:38:44] JR:** Yes. but then the article goes on to say that well, Russia can't afford to not be able to produce this aircraft. Somehow, I don't understand it. Again, the market for the SSJ will split and that they will still be making a de-westernized version of the SSJ, completely made of Russian components, while this other non-Russian SSJ also exists in the market. How does that even work? How is Russia going to build the SSJ if UAC has exited the joint venture? I don't understand at all.

**[0:39:19] IP:** They have all the parts to tooling the – They could just keep building these.

**[0:39:22] JR:** Whatever. Like, they're just going to build the counterfeit SSJ?

**[0:39:25] IP:** Well, I don't know if it's counterfeit, but it's their de-westernified version.

**[0:39:31] JR:** Okay.

**[0:39:31] IP:** Yeah. That's what I said.

**[0:39:32] JR:** All right. Whatever.

**[0:39:34] IP:** We'll keep an eye on it, so that I can eat my words if they do in fact start manufacturing super jets in Dubai.

**[0:39:39] JR:** I don't think the risk of that is high.

**[0:39:41] IP:** Okay. Norse, which is definitely not the reincarnation of Norwegian's long haul, has absolutely not just announced a bunch of routes that Norwegian long haul used to operate.

**[0:39:57] JR:** Weird.

**[0:39:58] IP:** They've definitely not done that.

**[0:40:01] JR:** Yeah, the differences between what was Norwegian long haul and what is now Norse is just you hold them up to each other. I wouldn't even recognize them as the same type of business. Definitely not.

**[0:40:10] IP:** Not even close.

**[0:40:11] JR:** Definitely not the same thing. But if you are in the market for a flight to specifically seeming Gatwick this coming summer, there should be no shortage of relatively inexpensive tickets, as long as you're willing to put up with the shenanigans that plagued Norwegian in the past.

**[0:40:31] IP:** Definitely, don't plague Norse.

**[0:40:34] JR:** No. Well, not yet. Operationally, they have not been that problematic, but we have yet to see them push their fleet and their scheduling capability to full tilt, like we saw in peak Norwegian where everything came burning down.

**[0:40:50] IP:** Yeah. We'll see what happens this summer. Stay tuned.

**[0:40:54] JR:** Okay.

**[0:40:56] IP:** All right. We're finally there. IAG has finally agreed to acquire full control of Air Europa. Good. Done.

**[0:41:03] JR:** That's fun. IAG being the parent company of British Airways and Iberia and who else?

**[0:41:11] IP:** And Aer Lingus.

**[0:41:12] JR:** Aer Lingus. I always forget about Aer Lingus and Welling.

**[0:41:16] IP:** Level.

**[0:41:17] JR:** And Level. Level operated by Welling, marketed by British Airways.

**[0:41:22] IP:** Iberia.

**[0:41:23] JR:** Code shared by Aer Lingus. I don't know. What we're trying to say is that IAG, it has a stranglehold on Spanish aviation now, which is, I don't know how the EU is letting us go through. Apparently, Air Europa will remain an independent brand to some degree. That's a lot of aircraft in Spain that all rolls up to IAG now.

**[0:41:47] IP:** Yep. We'll see how that one pans out. I'm glad that they've done the deal, because I'm done talking about it. Because it's just taken forever.

**[0:41:57] JR:** It is. Well, I mean, this COVID thing happened.

**[0:42:01] IP:** Yeah, there's that.

**[0:42:02] JR:** The deal was originally announced, like February 2020. Things changed.

**[0:42:10] IP:** Yeah. Okay. that was the neutral section. Now for some good news. First up is some time savings. LL's flights used to have to fly all the way around the Arabian Peninsula, because they couldn't fly over Saudi Arabia. They couldn't fly over the UAE. They couldn't fly over Oman. Now with the ability this week to begin flying over Oman, they're cutting some time off of their flights. The flight between Tel Aviv and Bangkok now is three hours shorter.

**[0:42:42] JR:** Yeah, that's good for everyone involved. Previously, let's see, there were some flights on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 10 hours, four minutes. February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 10 hours and 10 minutes, 10 hours and 20 minutes on the 25<sup>th</sup> and then suddenly on the 26<sup>th</sup>, seven hours and 47 minutes and then seven hours and 15 minutes, seven hours, 39 minutes just yesterday. That is a pretty significant amount of time savings for everyone onboard this aircraft, plus fuel use, just everything good about this.

**[0:43:13] IP:** Good news all around.

**[0:43:14] JR:** Good stuff.

**[0:43:16] IP:** Yeah. Sticking in the region, Egyptair took delivery of its first A321neo and also becomes the first operator in Africa to take delivery of the A321neo. Congratulations to Egyptair on that auspicious occasion.

**[0:43:31] JR:** That's nice. Yeah. It's a nice-looking livery, a nice-looking aircraft. I've always liked that livery and it looks good with the recognized on the neo.

**[0:43:40] IP:** It does. It does. They've got their first aircraft and they've got a few more on order. Late last week, early this week, the northern lights were very, very strong over a very large portion of the northern latitudes. You could, I think even last night, you could walk outside in suburban London and see them. A few flights decided that, hey, why let all the passengers on one side of the plane have all the fun. Let's do an orbit. We'll do a 360-degree turn, so that we can let people on the other side see that as well. A couple easyJet flights did it and Finair flight did it, so that everyone on the entire flight could see the northern lights. I thought that was really cool of the airlines and the airlines were both encouraging of it.

EasyJet actually operates some northern lights tour flights. They do a few of those to raise money for charity. One of the charities that they've raised money for just earlier this month, or late last month in February was called Aerobility, which helps people with disabilities learn how to pilot an aircraft. Whatever disability you may have, they work with you specifically to make sure that you can pilot an aircraft, learn how to pilot an aircraft. I thought that was really cool they're raising money for that.

**[0:44:58] JR:** Well, that's nice.

**[0:45:00] IP:** All around, just a heartwarming story. Some people were upset, because I guess, people really like to be upset about certain things.

**[0:45:06] JR:** What is there possibly to be upset about with this?

**[0:45:10] IP:** There was the, let's see. There were two things. The first one was saying, "Oh, it was dangerous."

**[0:45:16] JR:** What, the orbit that took probably 25 seconds to do?

**[0:45:20] IP:** Yes, yes. Yeah, that was one of the things. It was very clear to anyone suggesting that had no idea how communication works between aircraft and air traffic control. They clear those things before they do them. Then the second one was, which is a little more understandable, but not really is that a waste of fuel. Being in the air an extra 30 seconds is worth letting the passengers see that.

**[0:45:47] JR:** Yes, I would say so.

**[0:45:48] IP:** I'm sticking with this is all part of the good news thing. Then to end the show, we want to give a special shout out to listener down in Australia, down from us, I suppose, in Australia, Blake Hogan, a young man who's passionate about aviation and sent us in a great photo of a pair of Virgin Australia aircraft and was just excited to share it. Blake, thanks very much for listening to the podcast. Thanks very much for sending in your photos, which leads me

to say, if anyone else is traveling, or has something that they think, “Hey, that was really cool,” and wants to share it either for the show or not, send us an email, [podcast@fr24.com](mailto:podcast@fr24.com). Let us know if you want us to include something on the show, or if you're just saying hi, which is perfectly fine, too. We read all of those and I thoroughly enjoy getting messages like this from folks who are just as into aviation as Jason and I are.

This has been episode 205 of AvTalk. Thank you so very much for listening. We'll be back next week after Jason and I get a little rest and relaxation. I am Ian Petchenik, here, as always with –

**[0:46:59] JR:** Jason Rabinowitz. Thanks for listening.

[END]