

**EPISODE 209**

[EPISODE]

**[0:00:07] IP:** Hello, and welcome to episode 209 of AvTalk. I am Ian Petchenik, not here, as always this week with Jason. Unfortunately, Jason started the day, we'll say marginal IFR conditions, and quickly deteriorated through cap three conditions. He is laid up in bed for the moment. Wishing him a very speedy recovery. But we've got a very different show this week because we thought we were going to do the show. We thought we were going to be good to go, but Jason was just not feeling up to it.

I guess it's more of a newsy-ish show this week. Less analysis, less banter. We're 100% down on the banter. I'm going to do my best to cover some things that we thought were important enough to cover this week, and then we'll be back next week with your standard AvTalk show. This week was a not great week for nominees to the Federal Aviation Administration and Ministryship, Phillip Washington, who had been the Biden Administration's nominee to lead the FAA, has not had a smooth confirmation process at all. It took a very long time for him to come up for a vote. As they were almost set to vote on it, that didn't happen. They announced another continuance of that, and then Washington withdrew as the nominee to lead the FAA.

Washington's the current CEO of Denver Airport, but this is his first aviation role. He began there in 2021. Before that, he was running municipal transit organizations, including the one also in Denver and Los Angeles. He's been tied to some corruption charges via a search warrant in Los Angeles, which has made him a target of a number of senators, both Republican and Democratic, and there was a lot of concern, given all of the discussion about aviation safety and the FAA's extremely important role in that, that Washington wasn't necessarily the right person for the job at the moment.

That said, it's time for the Biden Administration to announce a new candidate. They said they will do that quickly. The FAA has been operating without a confirmed administrator since April of 2022, so almost a year now for the FAA, without a confirmed administrator. Billy Nolan, who is a former pilot and the FAA's chief safety, aviation safety person, has been the acting administrator for almost a year now, but he is not a confirmed administrator. He has been suggested as a

possible permanent FAA administrator, but that remains to be seen whether the Biden Administration will nominate him, or find somebody else.

The preliminary report on the March 3<sup>rd</sup> inflight upset that occurred as a Bombardier Challenger 300 was flying from Keene down to Virginia and diverted to Windsor Locks, came out. The NTSB released their preliminary report late last week. The initial reporting around this incident in which a passenger was killed during the inflight upset, or killed because of the inflight upset, the initial reporting around this incident was that the aircraft experienced severe turbulence

The updated information that the NTSB put out a few days after said that they were looking at an inflight upset, not necessarily turbulence, and the preliminary report that the NTSB released puts the turbulence question to rest because the pilot states in the report that they at no point experienced any turbulence. This was all an aircraft and piloting issue. Then it gets interesting. The inflight upset occurred immediately after pilots actioned some of the EICAS messages that they were receiving EICAS, which stands for Engine-Indicating and Crew-Alerting System. It's the system on the aircraft that provides shorthand information for errors, alerts, and things that the pilots need to either be aware of or take action on.

They received multiple EICAS messages, including autopilot, stabilizer trim failure, mock trim failure, and autopilot holding nose down. This was during the flight. Prior to the flight, they received a rudder limit fault message, which according to reporting from AIN online is usually cause for not operating a flight until that issue can be resolved. On their first attempt at departure, the aircraft experienced an airspeed disagree alert. They rejected the takeoff. They turned off the runway, went back to the ramp. The second in command investigated the issue outside the aircraft and found that one of the PETA tubes was still covered. They removed the PETA tube. They recommenced departure, and departed, passing about 6,000 feet. They experienced the stabilizer trim failure messages.

The pilots went to the quick reference handbook and decided to use the primary stabilizer trim failure checklist. Not the autopilot stabilizer trim failure checklist, which is the EICAS message that they received the autopilot stabilizer trim failure. In the primary stabilizer trim failure checklist, the first action item is to turn off the stabilizer trim switch. As soon as that happened, the aircraft pitched up and they experienced a positive 3.8G vertical acceleration. Then the

aircraft pitched down, experiencing negative 2.3Gs. Then the aircraft pitched back up to about 20 degrees and experienced a 4.2G vertical acceleration.

After the stabilizer trim switches were turned back on, the pilots were able to regain control of the aircraft, and the pilot in command manually flew the aircraft diverting to Windsor Locks. The Challenger series of aircraft was subject to an airworthiness directive last year. The FAA saying, multiple in-service events where following a stabilizer trim fault advisory message and autopilot disconnect, flight crew commands for a nose-up trim resulted in nose-down trim movement of the horizontal stabilizer instead. We'll put a link to the full airworthiness directive and how the FAA recommends that those issues be addressed in the show notes.

This is just the preliminary report and obviously, we're probably at least a year away from a final report to understand how the passenger was injured, as well as what caused the specific pitch up and pitch down with extreme vertical accelerations. Something that we're going to keep watching and it'll be interesting to see how this affects the wider Challenger fleet, or if this was just a specific incident regarding this particular plane and these particular pilots.

ITA Airways, the flag carrier and state-run airline that is the successor to Alitalia. Remember Alitalia, it was impossible to kill off Alitalia and now they've basically rebranded. They're a slightly different airline, but the ghost is still very much in the room. Well, ITA lost 486 million euros in 2022, which sounds really bad and it is. The airline's blaming "the pandemic," as well as higher fuel costs and the war in Ukraine. I'm not exactly sure what part of the pandemic they're trying to blame at this point, but just the pandemic at large.

That on the other hand could benefit Lufthansa, because Lufthansa now wants a better deal for purchasing a portion of ITA from the Italian government. Lufthansa and ITA have been in and really the Italian government has been in negotiations for months now, is part of an exclusivity period. That runs out on April 24<sup>th</sup>. Just under a month from now, we should know whether or not Lufthansa is going to take a stake in ITA Airways.

On the hydrogen front, we've got some very interesting things happening, because of partnerships. Jason and I have talked about this in multiple episodes, where the next generation of fuels, the next generation of propulsion, the next generation of aircraft is going to be very

much a team effort, because all of these things not only require new propulsion systems, but they also require new fueling systems and they also require new ways of moving that fuel around and we had this conversation around SAF. We had sustainable aviation fuels. We have this conversation about hydrogen.

One of the things that is happening is the need to figure out how they're going to generate all this hydrogen, how they're going to store it, and how they're going to get it to the aircraft. They also need to figure out how these hydrogen power plants are going to work on existing aircraft or work on new aircraft. To that end, Swedish Airline BRA is partnering with ZeroAvia and Skelleftea Airport, and Skelleftea Kraft, which is an energy supplier. The four-way partnership is going to bring about a few things.

First thing is BRA will supply aircraft for ZeroAvia's powertrain, the new ZA2000 powertrain, which is a 2000-kilowatt powertrain, intended for a 40 to 80-seat regional jet. BRA will supply the aircraft so that they can test that powertrain in Sweden. Skelleftea Airport is going to study all of the infrastructure needs for hydrogen. What is going to go into an airport being able to refuel hydrogen-powered aircraft. Skelleftea Airport, if you remember from previous episodes and we also have a great YouTube video on this on our YouTube channel, is host to the Green Flight Academy. They're already very familiar with electric aircraft. They're hosting the All-Electric Green Flight Academy on site already, so they're not unfamiliar with new ways to power aircraft, but they're going to continue and work on studying how hydrogen can be stored and processed on-site.

Then Skelleftea Kraft, which is the municipal energy supplier there, they're going to examine how to produce green hydrogen on-site using renewable resources. All of these things going into the next generation of aircraft coming out in the next 10, 15, 20 years good to see that all of these things are happening now and are going to continue to happen. Staying in the neighborhood, I thought this was a really interesting story that we wanted to pull out. Jason and I always like to talk about the silly side of the business of aviation. This is certainly getting a little silly. airBaltic is wet leasing even more aircraft for the summer series, because and I'll quote Martin Gauss, the CEO of airBaltic, "Extended turnaround times for Pratt and Whitney servicing. The engines are causing operational disruption for airBaltic."

They're not getting their gear turbofan engines back for their A220s fast enough so now they're going to have to wet lease aircraft. They're going to wet lease four more aircraft from Xfly, Danish Air Transport, Carpet Air, and Cypress Airways. This is in addition to the four A220s from Avion Express that they've already contracted. airBaltic says it's not ideal, but they're spinning it in a very, I guess, customer-friendly-ish way to say that these aircraft are bigger and therefore, they can carry more passengers. Where it gets silly is that airBaltic, well beyond how this is already a bit silly, but on the flip side of things, airBaltic is also a provider of wet lease aircraft to other airlines. Over the summer 2023 schedule, they're going to lease 14 of their 39 A220-300 aircraft to other airlines for the season. It is possible that you would be booked on a connecting airBaltic flight, or a connecting flight involving another airline and airBaltic. On the other airlines' flight, you could fly an airBaltic A220. On the airBaltic flight, you could end up on a Cypress Airways A220. Just goes to show you that look out for your tickets.

A couple things to get through and then I will be out of your ears, I suppose. The first flight of the 777-300ER converted freighter, nicknamed The Big Twin – I really wish they'd come up with a better name, but we'll stick with it for now. The aircraft made its first flight out of Tel Aviv late last week. This is N778CK. By the registration, some of you might already know that it's due to Kalitta Air upon its completion. You can check out the flight path of the first flight. I would assume that there will be multiple test flights, given that this is the first aircraft to go through this 777-300ER freighter conversion.

There are other freighter conversions in the works for the 777-300ER by other operators. The interesting thing here is that IAI, Israeli Aerospace Industries that are converting the 777-300ER in Tel Aviv, they've placed the large cargo door in the rear, other conversion units that are converting the 777-300ER, including the ones in Kansas City, they put the main cargo door in front of the engines, which they say reduces the overall weight of the aircraft and then thereby, increasing range.

It's interesting to see that various schemes are placing the cargo door in various places and it'll be interesting to see which is preferred by multiple operators, or if it's just whichever aircraft we can get our hands on first.

Then to close at the show, because I'm based in Chicago, I always like to talk about Chicago things, but these two are one, it just happens to be Chicago, and then one is a special moment in aviation history, at least for me, and perhaps many others depending on how into Microsoft flight simulator you were in the 90s. First, Archer, the eVTOL maker, and United have announced planned O'Hare downtown "service." This is coming in the next couple of years they say. They're trying to integrate this into Chicago's airspace around 2025.

They say the flight to and from O'Hare to Chicago's vertiport on the near west side will take about 10 minutes. That leaves about 20 minutes to get to actual downtown to get to the loop in downtown Chicago. A 30-minute trip all around, one way between downtown and the airport with a car to eVTOL connection. There's not much on there in the release about where the aircraft would go, whether you would have to clear security once you get to the airport, or whether it's a clear in the vertiport and then your air side situation. That'll be interesting to see.

Certainly, something to keep in mind is that this does improve on the 45 minutes to an hour travel time between the airport and downtown that's normally there. But something cool and hopefully, it does go into effect by 2025 and I'm looking to take that.

Finally, this week marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the, I'll say, closure of Meigs Field, but really the midnight mugging of Meigs Field. On the night of March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2003 Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley excavated six giant X's and three trenches across the runway at Meigs Field. Meigs Field may be familiar to you if you played Microsoft flight simulator anywhere from the 90s on up as it was the default airport for the game. It was Chicago's downtown airport along the lakefront.

Chicago's Mayor Daley had wanted to close the airport for years. There had been multiple disagreements in '96. He had tried to close the airport by padlocking the gate shut. That didn't work, because Illinois's governor intervened. They made a deal to keep the airport open. The same thing went on with a later Illinois governor agreeing to expand O'Hare airport or support the expansion of O'Hare airport. In return, Daley would keep Meigs Field open. 2003, Daley said, they still haven't passed the bill that allows for O'Hare expansion. Deal is off and bulldoze the runways, or excavated the giant X's in the runways.

At the time, there were more than a dozen aircraft parked at the airport. They were all stranded there and eventually, had to receive special permission from the FAA to depart the airport using the taxiway, which hadn't been carved up. That's the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that. Meigs Field is also somewhat famous for the final landing of former United Airlines 727, which is now hanging, or suspended and mounted in the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry. If you're ever visiting Chicago, you can go to the Museum of Science and Industry and visit that former United 727.

If you're ever in Chicago, you can come visit what used to be Meigs Field, now called Northerly Island. It is a park/concert venue, which is what Daley had wanted to do all along. He got his way. 20 years later, I don't think I've forgiven him, but not really much I can do about that now.

That's all we had to talk about without Jason today. I'm really hoping that he's feeling better and back next week. I hope you've enjoyed what has been a quick episode of AvTalk. If you haven't checked out flightradar24, the new beta site yet, please go do that. We've taken care of a ton of bugs. We've added a few new features since the first beta release. If you checked it out and then forgot about it, go back and check out some things. When you're using the filters, you can click the link into the blog post that we've got, that explains the filters. In the next couple weeks, we're going to add a few more features that I'm really keen to see released so that we can do even more with the new filters that we already have.

If you've got any feedback on anything podcast related, new beta website related, whatever it is, email us at [podcast@fr24.com](mailto:podcast@fr24.com) and we will be happy to hear from you. In the meantime, I am Ian Petchenik, flying solo, thank you so very much for listening.

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