Hello and welcome to episode 239 of AvTalk. I am Ian Petchenik, here, as always with –

Jason Rabinowitz. Hello, Ian. I'm back. You wouldn't have even known I was gone. It was a very quick trip. But I'm back and it's Wednesday and we're recording. Happy to be here.

Welcome back. Yeah, it's been a week already. Yesterday, I had The Golden Girls episode where I think it's Blanche goes, “It's only Tuesday.” Then today, it being Wednesday, I have the 30 Rock episode where Liz goes, “It's been a week,” and Jack turns it and he goes, “Lemon, it's only Wednesday.” Yeah.

Well, I mean, it hasn't been that bad for me. I hopped over the Atlantic to London for a few days on a nicely priced, let's just call it a well-priced fare on United this weekend, and then London was great for a few days. That was a good time, but now I'm back and it's Wednesday. Had a great pair of United basic economy flights.

Excellent.

Yeah. You probably don't hear that said and soldered all too often.

I mean, I feel like, long-haul basic economy is there really – this isn't a rhetorical question, I'm asking you, because you've just done this. Is there really a difference between basic economy and regular economy on a United long-haul flight?

No. Well –

I mean, other than the seat choice thing.
[0:01:31] JR: The only thing, like I'm not checking a bag. I'm never checking a bag, but that's not an impact and I have the free United card anyway, so I wouldn't be paying for a bag, even if I were checking a bag. The only issue is seat assignment, which is not included as it is not with many international airlines. That is really the norm for most airlines, but in the US, you book in main cabin, you get seat assignment, but in basic economy, you don't. I strategically was okay with booking basic economy on United, because it was a 767. There are exceptionally few seats onboard a 767 in economy that are really not very good.

Yeah, it was fine on the way out. Me and my plus one, we were assigned two aisle seats in the center section, which we negotiated with our neighbor, who ended up in the middle seat. We offered them an upgrade to an aisle seat, so we were able to sit together. On the way back, we actually ended up in the side pair of seats in economy plus. We got a benefit. We were better than regular economy for having book basic economy, so go figure. I feel that that happens half the time, because you get whatever seats are left over. Most people aren't paying extra to book economy plus and that's exactly what we've done.

[0:02:50] IP: So, they got to put you somewhere.

[0:02:52] JR: They put us somewhere and they put us in the side pair in economy plus, and we beat the system.

[0:02:57] IP: There you go.

[0:02:58] JR: It doesn't always work out that way, but –

[0:03:00] IP: But it worked out this time. Well, we have, hopefully, it'll be informative and engaging, but I'm not sure if it's a good show. Hopefully, it'll be a good episode today. The news of the week, not only the aviation news of the week, but news leading the national nightly news in the US and reaching around the world is the story of the off-duty Alaska Airlines pilot who was flying in the jump seat of the Horizon Air flight between Everett and San Francisco. Something happened to make that person attempt to pull the engine cut off and fire extinguisher handles on the E175.
The Alaska Airlines Captain, Joseph Emerson was flying in the jump seat of the E175 and was by all accounts, according to the criminal complaint that has been filed against him, as well as descriptions elsewhere and being reported in local media and national media, was fine getting on the plane, made small talk about the weather, according to the pilots after being interviewed by police and the FBI. Then about slightly southwest of Portland, something happened and he reached up and tried to pull the engine cut off and fire extinguisher system.

For those, and we'll put a link in the show notes to this photo, the blog post that we put together, and that shows this photo. But for those that aren't familiar, let me describe what we're talking about. There are two bright red handles on the flight deck of the E175. One is just up into the right of the captain's shoulder. One is just up into the left of the first officer's shoulder. They are labeled EXTG1 and EXTG2. EXTG, of course, standing for extinguisher. Because what happens when you pull these handles, they're T handles, so they flip down. When they flip all the way down and lock into place, that cuts the fuel flow and the hydraulic pressure to that particular engine, because you're supposed to use these when the engine is on fire. If the engine's on fire, you don't want fuel and hydraulic fluid feeding into that particular engine.

If you pull these down, it shuts off the fuel and the hydraulic fluid. If you turn them, it discharges one of the fire bottles. If you turn it counterclockwise, it discharges the first bottle. If you turn it clockwise, it discharges the second bottle. There are two fire suppression system reservoirs in the engine casing. Thankfully, thankfully, thankfully, the pilots of this Horizon Air flight were able to prevent Emerson from actually engaging the engine cutoffs, or the fire suppression system. Because if he had done so, this would have turned the aircraft into a glider.

I'm still trying to get clarity, and I don't know if Jason, you've seen anyone note this, but at the altitude they were at and how this system fully functions, I'm not sure if it had been fully engaged, they would have been able to restart the engines. I haven't received clarity on that. I've seen pilots being interviewed, saying two separate things. I don't know if there's consensus here, or we have a 100% answer.

[0:06:34] JR: Yeah. Well, in this case, we actually have quite a bit of information coming from the airline. I know we like to point out when airlines do, or do not publish a lot of information after an event of something like this. Alaska really, really proved itself to be quite the expert in
crisis communication, because it came out maybe not ahead of this, because they responded to the initial – they're probably not going to want to jump out ahead of it and say like, “Hey, this thing happened,” that they responded to when the news broke. The amount of detail put out from Alaska is really quite amazing, actually.

On the 23rd of October at 6 p.m., I guess that's Pacific time, local to Alaska Airlines, they actually clarified this for us and said, “If the T-handle is fully deployed, a valve in the wing closes to shut off fuel to the engine. In this case, the quick reaction of our crew to reset the T-handles ensured that engine power was not lost. Our crew responded without hesitation, etc., etc.” What we can infer is that the T-handles were pulled, but not twisted. The fire extinguisher models were almost certainly never actually fired. They were able to reset these before the engines were actually powered off, or the fuel was completely shut off to the engines, which is really, really quite an incredible reaction to something that I'm sure these pilots were not expecting will happen. Part luck that the system is designed this way. Part, of course, skill by these pilots to prevent their aircraft from becoming a very heavy glider.

[0:08:11] IP: Yeah. In fact, the aircraft is back in service. It was back in service the following day. That tells you that whatever happened did not impact the aircraft. It did however impact the 80-some-odd people on board. 84 total, I think people on board.

[0:08:25] JR: Which is impressive for an aircraft that only holds 76 people.

[0:08:28] IP: Yeah, that's an interesting one.

[0:08:31] JR: It was a completely full flight with, I guess, infant in arms as well. A few of those. It was as full as this aircraft can be. Which is why the pilot in question here ended up in one of the flight attendant jump seats, where they were not –

[0:08:45] IP: Yeah, in the back. Yes. He was escorted into the bathroom.

[0:08:49] JR: After the incident, the pilot in question here was handcuffed, or restrained into one of the flight attendant jump seats, either in the front, or the rear of the aircraft where they then attempted to open the cabin door, which did not go well. There wasn't even an empty seat on
board the aircraft to pop this guy down and they had to use a jump seat, which makes it a bit more difficult to actually restrain someone down it to.

[0:09:10] IP: Then he tried to grab the handle of the emergency exit in the back.

[0:09:14] JR: Yeah, you shouldn't do that.

[0:09:16] IP: I mean, granted it would have been impossible to open at altitude, like we've talked about before. But this, not, not good at all. Emerson is charged with currently, as of today, charged with 83 counts of attempted murder in the state of Oregon and then one federal count of interfering with a flight crew and attendance.

[0:09:38] JR: Yeah. This is quickly going to become a federal issue and we'll see how exactly they prosecute this with. What we do know, released from Alaska Airlines is that Captain Emerson has been with Alaska Airlines group since 2001 for literally decades at this point. He joined as a Horizon Airlines first officer. Then in June 2012, he left Horizon to join Virgin America and then ended up back at Alaska. That all came back together. Then he was captain with Alaska Airlines since 2019. Yeah, he has been not only just in the industry, but with Alaska Airlines for decades at this point. He is not new to the industry, not new to any of these aircraft and has been flying for quite some time with Alaska Airlines and then Virgin. By way of that merger, he has been with Alaska Airlines for his entire career.

[0:10:33] IP: Yeah. Here comes the, I guess, rather unusual set of circumstances. According to the criminal complaint, Emerson told police during an interview that he believed he was having a nervous breakdown. Had not slept in 40 hours. He told the interviewing officer that it was his first time taking mushrooms, after becoming depressed approximately six months ago. Jason, there's some new information from Emerson's lawyer today that I don't know if contradicts it, but it includes a wrinkle in this side.

[0:11:16] JR: It's definitely a wrinkle. He had told law enforcement officials that he had taken mushrooms, which of course, would distort his view of reality and clearly, his decision-making skills. Today, Emerson's defense attorney reportedly said that he was not under the influence of
any intoxicants when he boarded the flight and that they will pursue a diligent investigation and all the facts and circumstances surrounding the events. That leads to some sticky questions.

[0:11:49] **IP:** If I'm a lawyer and having dealt with a bunch of lawyers very recently with all the house moving stuff, lawyers are very careful in how they speak.

[0:11:59] **JR:** They are. They're tricky.

[0:12:03] **IP:** The phrase, read it back for me one more time, was not under –

[0:12:06] **JR:** Joe was not under the influence of any intoxicants when he boarded that flight.

[0:12:12] **IP:** When he boarded that flight. Which would seem to jive with the account of the two pilots who said that they were just talking about the weather and he was fine.

[0:12:26] **JR:** As is normal when anyone in the jump seat sits down.

[0:12:30] **IP:** Because these guys on the flight deck seemed to react very quickly to when Emerson became not normal and tried to pull the fire handles. It seems to me that if their reaction to his change was that quick, then they would have perhaps noticed something beforehand if he had been indicating anything that would be out of place. This is a very interesting set of circumstances that I think the investigation will hopefully explain fuller.

[0:13:01] **JR:** There is a lot to learn here.

[0:13:03] **IP:** There's a lot to learn here. Absolutely. One thing that almost immediately, especially after the publication of the criminal complaint, where Emerson discussed becoming depressed a few months ago and now taking shrooms, one of the main things that this brings back to the fore is how regulators, not just in the US, but regulators around the world, treat mental health issues when it comes to pilots and those with flight deck access. Because there are a lot of pilots who don't report mental health issues, because seeking treatment and then reporting that treatment to their medical examiner, their authorized medical examiner for their
FAA medical, or an equivalent medical license in another country, or another jurisdiction can lead to not passing their medical, which basically, renders their pilot's license useless.

Almost immediately, there were calls for pilots – I mean, in the most broad brush strokes, basically, let pilots go to therapy as an umbrella or catch-all term, a bit of back and forth between pilots on social media, especially this week. I think the broad conversation about how regulators treat mental health issues, especially when it comes to pilots, is a big sticking point and topic of discussion that neither Jason nor myself are really equipped to answer. One, we're not pilots. Two, we're not regulators. Three, I don't think either of us have done enough reading on this. But it's certainly something that we're going to come back to in a future episode as we talk to people who know what they're talking about and ask them to please come on the podcast and explain what the issues are and how the industry can move forward and some of the ways that these things can be resolved.

[0:15:03] JR: Yeah, this is a touchy topic. One that we actually discussed before we hit the record button and how we would approach this, which is something that I don't believe we've ever really done. We never really talk about how do we want to approach a topic, we always just dive into it and whatever comes out of our brain comes out. This is truly a difficult topic, one that has come up many times in the past. I mean, we have seen what happens when some sort of mental illness, or mental distress goes untreated when it comes to a pilot. Often, it comes with terrible consequences, where possibly, hundreds of people are lost along with that pilot. This is definitely a topic that needs to come out of the darkness and come into the light in the industry and be discussed for real.

If a pilot needs some treatment for something they're going through, insomnia, or any trauma that's affecting them, it needs to be discussed. It can't be something that they hide and festers and then becomes an issue that erupts, like we saw here that could have terrible consequences. It needs to be looked at globally. This is not just a US FAA thing. This is a global problem that needs to be looked at and is probably far more prevalent than we would like to think. I hope this shines light on not just the negative, look, what happened. This guy is crazy. But I hope it shines some light on, this is a serious problem that the industry as a whole needs to take a very close look at.
IP: Yeah. I agree with Jason. I think that, yeah, this is certainly one of the first times where before we've hit record, discussed how to talk about something. Mostly, because we're not equipped to expertly opine on this. There are a lot of things we talk about where we're not equipped to expertly opine on it, but we can talk from having been doing this long enough and following the industry close enough. This is one of those things where we want to hear from the experts. We'll have a future episode where we do hear from the experts and can get more into the conversation.

JR: Here we are, 20 minutes into the episode, and we haven't even gotten to a mid-air collision. You know it's been a busy week.

IP: It's been a busy week. Yeah. Unclear whether or not this was mid-air, or just mid-movement, or what exactly happened. It needs something. Unfortunately, it looks like, the at fault party, we don't have data from the actual incident itself. We don't have ADS-B data from the incident itself. We're not really sure why, because the Hawker Beechcraft, the 850 XP departed without authorization, and I'll back up in a minute and read through the whole thing. That particular aircraft that did the wrong thing didn't pop up on ADS-B until it had climbed just above the ground. Then when it landed, it was in full coverage. I don't know what happened here with the data.

JR: Let's back up. What happened?

IP: Here is what happened. Let's go to the NTSB and we'll read through there. This is the second day brief. This is the brief that they gave today, midday, as investigators were arriving on scene to investigate. At 3.20 p.m. central daylight time on Tuesday, October 24th, a Hawker 850 XP airplane, I'm glad they clarified that it was an airplane, registered N269AA, was instructed by an air traffic controller to line up and wait on runway 22 at Houston Hobby International Airport.

The Hawker started a takeoff roll on runway 22, and its wing collided with the tail of a Cessna 510 airplane, registered N510HM, that had landed on runway 13 right. The pilot of the Hawker continued the takeoff on runway 22 before returning to land. I'll pause there to provide some color commentary on what happened here.
The Hawker's left-wing tip collided with the vertical stabilizer of the Cessna. The Cessna had landed on 13 right, was rolling out, was passing, and the left-wing tip of the Hawker basically went through the rudder of the Cessna. We'll put a link to some pictures that local Houston news have been able to –

[0:19:27] JR: There's a chunk missing.

[0:19:28] IP: - to capture. There's a big chunk missing. You can see the wing tip of the Hawker is missing as well. Here's the thing, the Hawker gets on the radio and yells at the air traffic controller.

[0:19:42] JR: Hmm. I feel like, the yelling should be going the other way there.

[0:19:46] IP: I think, in the recording, he says, "They cleared somebody else to take off on the crossing runway," which is not what happened at all. I'm not sure what was going on.

[0:19:55] JR: NTSB has already confirmed, listening, I'm assuming to the recordings of air traffic control, that they were never given clearance to take off. They were given clearance to line up and wait on the runway, which to them, apparently, meant line up and just go, just take off.

[0:20:10] IP: This is the same issue that happened in Boston a few months ago, where a private aircraft was given a line up and wait instruction, and they just lined up and didn't wait.

[0:20:24] JR: Yeah. This is not great. I'm not sure what anyone does in this situation to resolve this, because the FAA controller did their job. They issued a command to line up and wait on the runway, but then the private pilot in this case, again, just took off. I guess, in this case, unfortunately, the controller did not notice that the Hawker just did whatever they wanted and took off with that authorization. Who can blame them? They're probably doing a thousand things at once, looking at screens, looking out the window, doing other things. Who knows? It's not unsurprising. It is not terribly surprising that it wouldn't have noticed the Hawker take off.
I don't know what human factors can be put in place to prevent something like this, aside from advanced technologies that can detect, hey, this aircraft is moving when it shouldn't be. I don't know. Do we need traffic lights on the runway, a red light for, “Hey, stop.”

[0:21:16] IP: No. You know what we need? You ever watch with those motocross races with the dirt bikes, where they have that metal fence that drops –

[0:21:24] JR: Oh, the one that drops down and everyone goes really quickly. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Or like, the starting those at a horse race. You are physically constrained from leaving, until you're told to go. Maybe it really is as simple as like, why isn't there a traffic light on the runway right at all times, except it's green when you're issued a take-off command? I don't know. It seems simple enough, but something has got to be done, because some pilots are just not paying enough attention and they are taking off when they're not supposed to do, or landing on the wrong runway. I don't know.

At this point where I can ask ChatGPT to do my job for me and it can do 85% of it fine. Why are we not using more AI, or some computer recognition, or something to indicate to pilots on the runway like, “Hey, it's time to go,” or, “Hey, don't go anywhere.” We are using such few limited technology resources on the ground to aid pilots that it's just incredible. We're not at the point where there's a light on the runway that says, “Hey, it's time to go,” or, “Hey, don't go anywhere.” It just seems like a no-brainer at this point.

[0:22:30] IP: We need to put the people that run the Chick-fil-A drive-through, or the Portillo's drive-through in charge of taxi and runway occupancy.

[0:22:39] JR: Or something. Even simple traffic lights in a lot of areas. They have cameras with recognition that can tell if a vehicle is there, or a vehicle is not there, and it controls whether or not the traffic light turns red, or green, or yellow, or whatever. Why isn't any of this in use in airports to detect, hey, there's an aircraft on the runway and it's moving, but it really shouldn't be, so do something about it. Or, I don't know. It just seems like –
[0:23:05] **IP:** I mean, I don't know if this is nodded. I was going to say, in someone's defense, but I'm not sure whose defense it would be. But there are companies, there are regulators, there are people working on these things.

[0:23:15] **JR:** But they're decades behind. Decades and decades behind, which is not surprising as is everything with this industry. But there's 15 airports in the US that even have lights that warn pilots not to enter a runway, because it's active. That's just telling you not to enter the runway, not whether or not you can actually take off, or land, or whatever. But there's just so much at our disposal that's not even being considered to be used.

[0:23:44] **IP:** We didn't mention if anyone was hurt. Thankfully, no one was. No injuries. There were five people on the Cessna, three people on the Hawker, no one was injured. The NTSB has a team of six people in Houston investigating the accident and they will be on the scene for just under a week. They're going to pick those planes apart, review air traffic control, audio, review interviews with airport personnel and ATC and the pilots and all sorts of things. Then within 30 days, there will be a preliminary report and we'll know more then.

[0:24:21] **JR:** All right.

[0:24:21] **IP:** So, all right.

[0:24:24] **JR:** You know who they should send that report to.

[0:24:27] **IP:** All of us. Just as a way of saying, welcome to the job. How about Michael Whittaker?

[0:24:34] **JR:** Hey, welcome to the job.

[0:24:37] **IP:** Who is now, as of yesterday, the first confirmed permanent FAA administrator in the last 19 months. It's been almost two years without a permanent Senate confirmed FAA administrator. It's about time.
[0:24:54] JR: Yeah. Not for lack of trying. I mean, the Biden administration had, I think, there were two prior nominations put forward. One withdrew from it and one was not –

[0:25:04] IP: The CEO of Denver International Airport, Washington, who his nomination never got off the ground, so to use it.

[0:25:14] JR: This one makes sense. Michael Whittaker was previously the deputy administrator of the FAA from 2013 to 2016. Rising to the ranks of the actual administrator here now, just, this seems like the right person, the right move. He was previously the chief operating officer of Supernal, which, Ian, you tell me, some sort of a Hyundai eVTOL thing. I don't care.

[0:25:37] IP: Supernal. Yeah, an eVTOL.

[0:25:40] JR: Some sort of eVTOL thing. The dime a dozen. But being the deputy FAA –

[0:25:46] IP: Your disdain for eVTOLs is just –

[0:25:48] JR: There are too many of them and I don't care, because none are real right now. What's important, he was previously the deputy FAA administrator for three years, and that's important. He was not doing the job, but he was doing the job under the job. He comes in with the requisite experience and apparently, everyone in the Senate agreed, because the vote was passed 98 to zero. You don't often see a unanimous vote like that these days.


[0:26:14] JR: Get to work.

[0:26:15] IP: And get to work. Yeah. I mean, there's no shortage of things to do.


[0:26:22] IP: Boeing released its third quarter earnings today. As was previewed in everything we've talked about over the past couple of weeks, it was bad. Boeing lost 1.6 billion dollars in
the third quarter, which isn't really surprising, given everything that they've already said has happened. Now, we hear that Boeing will expect to deliver far fewer 737s this year. Guidance is down from 400 to 450, down to 375 to 400, because, and I love the way these things are phrased in financial reports, “A supplier nonconformance was identified on the aft pressure bulkhead section of certain 737 airplanes. Near-term deliveries and production will be impacted.”

That, of course, is the quality issues based on Spirit AeroSystems’ work for the aft pressure bulkhead on a number of 737 frames. They need to inspect more than a 150 stored aircraft to make sure that they're not in need of repair, or if they are to repair them. Boeing also said that there are some aircraft that have already been reworked that need to be reworked again.

**[0:27:52] JR:** Re reworked.

**[0:27:53] IP:** Re reworked. Yes. Fewer 737s will be delivered throughout the year. Boeing delivered a total of 371 aircraft through the end of September, so through the end of the third quarter, including 286 737s. Roughly, a 100 more is the goal by the end of the year, if they wanted to get in between that 375 and 400 number. The air framer delivered one 747, 17 767s and 17 777s, and 50 787s. 787 deliveries really ramping up.

**[0:28:37] JR:** But wait, there's more. Remember the pair of new Air Force One aircraft that the US government ordered seemingly a billion years ago. Boeing wrote off nearly half a billion dollars on that program. Again, 482 million on that program blaming, I don't know, supplier issues, labor stuff, all sorts of things. Seems like, we're never going to see those aircraft delivered, which is crazy, since they already were built. They're just being modified to become the replacements for the VC 25 aircraft. Man, that is, you got to hand it to the Trump administration for negotiating that deal, because it was a real bad one for Boeing.

**[0:29:21] IP:** What's crazy to me is like, who else was going to do it?

**[0:29:25] JR:** Well, nobody was ever going to do it. But the idea to reuse two existing 747-8Is and turn those into the VIP Air Force One aircraft was seemingly, I mean, sounded like a good idea to some, but obviously, that was a terrible, terrible decision. I'm sure it's easier to build
these aircraft from scratch than it is to take a several-year-old already aircraft that was destined for a bankrupt Russian airline and convert them into Air Force One. Doesn't seem like a great idea in retrospect.

[0:29:58] IP: Maybe whoever's president in 2040 will get to get to fly on them.

[0:30:02] JR: Maybe you. I'll vote for you.

[0:30:06] IP: Let's see. By 2040, one of my kids could be president by 2040, I think.

[0:30:09] JR: All right. I'd vote for them.

[0:30:11] IP: There you go. They lost 1.6 billion dollars, but that's actually an improvement on the loss from last year, where they lost more than 3 billion dollars in the third quarter. While things are not great and well, the third quarter is not a happy, happy moment for Boeing, barring any additional quality issues, things seem to be going okay for them now.

[0:30:38] JR: Yeah. Barring any additional quality issues –

[0:30:40] IP: Which I know is a huge caveat these days.

[0:30:44] JR: Mm-hmm. Yup. Sure. Yeah. What's going on with some of the geared turbofan engines? This is not attributable to Boeing and is really more of an Airbus thing that affects only Airbus aircraft, indirectly at least.

[0:31:00] IP: But the engines on the wings of Airbus aircraft. But Pratt and Whitney now says a few things. One, and it's not good, the manufacturing problems affecting the Pratt and Whitney engines, the PW1100s that are powering the A320neo family, those issues could also be potentially detrimental to the A220s and the Embraer E2s. They could also have defective components. Pratt and Whitney says, “That in the first half of 2024, we could see a few A220 and E2 aircraft come out of service, so that they can be inspected and resolved.”
The hits just keep on coming for operators of the 1100Gs, especially operators that took a whole bunch of aircraft in a certain period of time. One of those airlines is Volaris, where more than half of their aircraft will need to be at least inspected for those engine disk problems.

[0:32:14] JR: I believe those engines need to come off the wing, which means those aircraft cannot be flying, obviously, at that point. That's not great. Not great for these airlines. A couple of months ago, I tweeted, maybe it's about time people start thinking about avoiding booking flights with Pratt and Whitney-powered GTF engines. At this point, maybe it's time to think about avoiding entire airlines, where their primary engine is Pratt and Whitney GTF engine, because it's affecting entire airlines. Not just limited to, “Oh, I booked a Volaris A320neo,” well, they might have so many aircraft out of service that it's going to impact their entire operation. Let alone if you booked a neo, or a CO, it's not going to matter.

Yeah, maybe keep that in the back of your mind when you're booking a flight. Maybe only book SAS moving forward. The airline, or not SAS. A Finnair that we talked about. The only airline, the biggest airline still that we know of that doesn't even have any of these newfangled gear turbo fan engines, or whatever.

[0:33:23] IP: I didn't have this on the list, but Finnair today announced that they're going to refurbish their Embraers, because they're just keeping all of the old aircraft around as long as they can, so they don't have to deal with any of these teething issues. They'll have nice new cabins and older engines.

[0:33:37] JR: That's great. Yeah. We have not heard of any airlines outside of Finnair that do have a large fleets, but no plans, or no current aircraft with the new generation engines. I think that still holds true. Only fly Finnair forever.

[0:33:54] IP: Anywhere, wherever you need to go. We'll see how this all, I guess, comes to pass between now and 2026 through the Pratt and Whitney engine problem mitigation plan.

[0:34:12] JR: That keeps on giving.
[0:34:13] **IP:** 3,000 engines in the global fleet will undergo these detailed inspections. Here's the thing. Pratt and Whitney's been laying out these detailed inspection plans and mitigation plans and things like that. The numbers, just the more you learn about this, they just keep getting worse. Here's the thing. It could take up to 300 days to inspect and replace the parts per engine.

[0:34:40] **JR:** Yikes. That's given the lack of personnel to do such inspections, too. This is not going to be a problem that is resolved anytime soon, and it just gets worse every time we look at it. They're ramping up additional lines to take care of this, but the more they ramp up, the more the numbers still go up that they have engines to inspect, so it almost doesn't bring the numbers down at any point. Definitely some airlines in retrospect with hindsight here wishing they maybe picked a different engine.

[0:35:15] **IP:** Finnair just laughing all the way to the sky.

[0:35:20] **JR:** They've got other issues. Let's be clear, Finnair, it's not all roses there. But in this very specific part –

[0:35:26] **IP:** They're not affected by this. We can lean on the bit. All right. Hey, let's go to Germany, shall we?

[0:35:33] **JR:** Do we have to?

[0:35:34] **IP:** Explain this to me. What is happening here?

[0:35:36] **JR:** I can't. You were aware of in the past, there was not just Lufthansa, not just Eurowings, not just whatever Eurowings Discover is now Discover Airlines, but there was also Lufthansa CityLine.

[0:35:51] **IP:** You've taken a CityLine flight before.

[0:35:52] **JR:** I have. One of the long-haul flights, actually. I believe it was Frankfurt to San Jose for some reason. That was a thing.
[0:36:00] **IP:** Weren't you testing the Wi-Fi thing?

[0:36:02] **JR:** Sure. Why not? Lufthansa has determined, it's not enough. It needs another subsidiary doing different things. This time, it will be called Lufthansa City, or City Airlines. I'm not sure.

[0:36:16] **IP:** City Airlines.

[0:36:17] **JR:** We're not really sure. But apparently, it's been around – it was incorporated last year, and I don't know, maybe no one heard of it, but now they're actively recruiting flight and cabin crew for launching flights, I think, out of, was it Munich next year?

[0:36:30] **IP:** Munich and Frankfurt hubs, yeah. It sounds like, Munich's going to come first. This is the interesting thing to me. There was a union agreement to basically, get rid of CityLine, where CityLine could not operate flights with more than 75 seats.

[0:36:45] **JR:** Which basically means, you can't operate anything at all.

[0:36:47] **IP:** After 2026. The CityLine's current fleet of A320s, E190s, and CRJ-900s are all above that number. The union's idea was that they would then get folded back into the main line and take advantage of that. Lufthansa's like, “No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. We're going to come up with City Airlines. It's not CityLine. It's City Airlines. Then, you can switch over to this airline. If you were a former German wings pilot, you could come fly for City Airlines, too. But it's not CityLine. It's City Airlines.”

[0:37:32] **JR:** Then today, Lufthansa news, their Twitter account posted a rendering of the livery, which clearly says, ‘Lufthansa City’. It's not City Airlines. It says, Lufthansa City, member of Lufthansa group, which is interesting, the branding on the aircraft. It's all confusing, but not really. But the way that they're pitching the airline to the public on the City Airlines website is as a new airline in the Lufthansa group, we combine the quality of Lufthansa and the experience of Lufthansa CityLine with the dynamism of a new young company. That's a lot of words to say nothing. It doesn't say anything. There is no experience of Lufthansa CityLine, because
Lufthansa CityLine was just Lufthansa, with the words operated by CityLine in very small font. There was no CityLine. It was just Lufthansa, but paying people less, really.

[0:38:27] IP: This is that, but with new paint.

[0:38:30] JR: Yes. But also, only short and medium haul. They'd be not at least on the onset, do not have intention to borrow any A340-300s and fly to San Jose for some reason. It would only be short and medium haul on Airbus narrow bodies. Yeah, it's a thing. You really need a flowchart for all the various Lufthansa group things and subsidiaries and side hustles and Italian things, ITA. I don't know. There's a lot going on. I don't even think we can name it all.

[0:39:04] IP: I don't think we have to. I think we can move on.

[0:39:06] JR: Great. Let's do that.

[0:39:08] IP: Excellent. Let's go to Amsterdam.


[0:39:12] JR: But it's not allowed to. Maybe. We don't really know yet.

[0:39:15] IP: Maybe. We're not really sure what's going on. Lawyers are lawyering and that makes me laugh.

[0:39:21] JR: Yeah. We've talked about how Amsterdam, or not really Amsterdam, but the Netherlands really wants to kneecap aviation in and out of Amsterdam, which does have its merits. They're claiming all sorts of CO2 emissions and noise concerns. They want to drastically reduce the number of flights in and out of Schiphol annually. JetBlue is not too happy about that, having only started operating in 2023 this year, using a provisional temporary slot provision. Much like a JFK, or LaGuardia here, it's slot controlled in Amsterdam, and JetBlue only has a temporary slot.
If this and it very much seems like the Netherlands is going to successfully drive through this scheme to reduce the number of flights at Schiphol. But doing so would remove almost certainly JetBlue’s access to Amsterdam. Their lawyers want to play the nuclear card here, for if they get banned. Ian, would it be, I don’t know, a similar move here saying, if JetBlue can’t fly to Amsterdam, KLM shouldn’t be able to fly to JFK. Does that seem to make sense to you?

[0:40:37] IP: I mean, no.

[0:40:39] JR: No. Not really, but that's what JetBlue's lawyers are claiming is the only option that makes sense here, that if JetBlue can't use its two slots to Amsterdam, KLM should not be able to use its slots that it's had for decades at JFK. That's the only thing that makes sense. You got to admire the move. The lawyers are going to toss out whatever they can and whatever sticks sticks. I can't imagine that US DOT even entertaining this preposterous ask. But it is certainly an interesting move for an airline that just earlier this year before it launched flights said, “Oh, the slots we were granted at Amsterdam are commercially unviable, or whatever.” Certainly, they're super viable and super important. So important that KLM shouldn't even be allowed to fly to New York anymore.

[0:41:26] IP: That'll be one to follow, if and when the DOT responds, or if and when the Dutch respond. JetBlue also experienced a bit of a seesaw this week, when flight 662 from Barbados to JFK landed, taxi to the gate. Then people got off in the front and then the front went up. I'll quote JetBlue’s description here. “Due to a shift in weight and balance during deplaning, the tail of the aircraft tipped backward, causing the nose of the aircraft to lift up and eventually returned back down.” I like that, eventually returned.

[0:42:06] JR: I mean, I hope so.

[0:42:07] IP: If your nose is in the air for more than four hours, consult a doctor.

[0:42:10] JR: At least this doesn't sound like the aircraft remains that way to this date and we’re working on it. You don't typically see this on a 321, but this is not unheard of before. If you've ever seen more typically, a 737-900ER with a stick up its butt, basically, what is referred to as a
Pogo stick, these longer aircraft have issues with their center of gravity, while being loaded and unloaded. If you're not careful enough and do things in the right sequence, take the right cargo off at the right time, get the passengers off in the right sequence, the aircraft can tip backwards.

I don't know if I've ever seen this on the 321. We've seen it plenty of times on 737s before, but a bit of a miscalculation, maybe some cargo moved when it shouldn't have been moved. I think I was most impressed that the jet bridge moved with the aircraft. We've not have expected that. Usually, something happens like this where the nose tips up and the jet bridge doesn't go with it and it shears off the door. But in this case, the jet bridge moved with it, which I can't imagine is by design. But maybe it should be. If it isn't, maybe it should be. Yeah.

[0:43:24] IP: I didn't really consider that.

[0:43:25] JR: Thankfully, everyone is okay. The aircraft that probably going to need some TLC, because it did tip backwards. It's going to have fuselage damage. This is something that can and does happen to many different aircraft type, be it cargo or passenger. Somebody is going to get a talking to in this situation for not being quite as careful as they probably needed to be.

[0:43:48] IP: There you go.

[0:43:49] JR: But it happens and everyone's okay, and that's what's important.

[0:43:52] IP: That is the important thing. No injuries reported and safety is JetBlue's first priority –

[0:43:57] JR: Of course.

[0:43:57] IP: - is how that quote ends.

[0:43:59] JR: I thought their first priority was acquiring Spirit. But here, we're told it's safety.

[0:44:03] IP: Airlines never miss an opportunity to remind you that safety is their first priority.
[0:44:08] JR: It's true. Everyone's thinking it.

[0:44:10] IP: Speaking of A321s, Air Canada's, or at least a couple of them at first, are about to get a whole lot better if you're an av geek. Or if you just like flying, I guess.

[0:44:19] JR: Particularly one. It's actually coming into LaGuardia right now after a bit of a delay due to a plumbing issue. Air Canada, out of nowhere, has decided, “You know what? We're going to make all our A321s and A321s really nice,” because they're dated. That's not unheard of. What is unheard of is a post-delivery modification to install not one, but two exterior cameras on the aircraft and pumping that into the seatback entertainment system. That is unique.

It's not unique to have exterior cameras on an aircraft. Those are typically reserved for wide-body aircraft. Though, we have seen it on narrow bodies in the past, particularly with our duly departed Mexican airline Interjet. I don't believe I've ever heard of an airline modifying an aircraft to add cameras onboard. I'm going to go ahead and say, that's a first, because I have never heard of that happening before on any aircraft.

[0:45:18] IP: I mean, I don't know of it, but I'm excited about it.

[0:45:22] JR: Yeah. I've never been on an Air Canada 321 before, but maybe I'll go out on my way to find this one now. It's going to be until the end of 2025, where all its 320s and 321s are retrofitted. If you happen to find yourself on one, look for not only the tail, but I guess, there's another camera, maybe a belly cam, or a nose gear camera. Not sure where the second one is, but adding a camera into the tail of the aircraft, either it's been there for 30 years, unactivated, or they have actually modified the tail of the aircraft to add that in, which is not an insignificant amount of work, I'm assuming. Hats off to Air Canada for going the extra mile for the av geeks out there.


[0:46:04] IP: Or Air Canada. But also, good job, Canada. Just in general. Good job, Canada.
JR: Yeah. In general, keep it up.

IP: Over to Pakistan, where this is, I mean, just, I guess we call this the latest round of dire straits for Pakistan International Airlines. What's happened now is they've basically run out of money, and their fuel supplier cut off access, and that led to the cancellation of most of their flights. I think it was 98% of their flights this week.

JR: 77 out of 81 flights earlier in this week were canceled.

IP: There you go.

JR: They managed to squeak out a couple international flights. But if you have a PIA flight scheduled in the very near future, you probably don't anymore.

IP: The government has said, “We're not going to keep giving you money.” What else are they going to do?

JR: Well, at this point, it seems like Pakistan wants to let the airline crumble, fall apart, and then privatize it, which is the Air India approach. That seems to be working out well so far, not sarcastically. Actually, seems to be working out. This is long overdue to do something with PIA, because that airline is just in shambles. It has been a farce of an airline for a long time now. It is time to do something with it and either make it a real legitimate player, or just privatize it, make it somebody else's problem at this point.

IP: You know who could take over as CEO?

JR: Ah, I know a guy who, as of November 5th, very suddenly will be looking for either new employment, or maybe just retire and take it easy for a little bit. Who are we talking about?

IP: We're talking about Akbar Al Baker, who is the current group CEO of Qatar Airways for the next, well, 11 days.
[0:47:55] JR: A couple of days, yeah.

[0:47:58] IP: He announced at the beginning of the week, just out of nowhere, seemingly. Based on the press that came out of Qatar Airways, it seemed like it was a surprise to them, too, that he'll be stepping down, effective November 5th.

[0:48:14] JR: Yeah, this news, I don't audibly gasp out loud when I read a headline, but when I read this, I actually gasped out loud, because this is not expected. There was no real hint. There may have been some hints, but there was no real indication that this would happen. I mean, when other airline CEOs in the region, I'm thinking Emirates, retire, or move on, there is years of transitional periods and notice that this is going to happen. Here's our line of succession. This was, “Hey, we got a new CEO.” It wasn't even a headline saying, “Hey, our 27-year-long running CEO is retiring.” No, the headline said, “Qatar Airways Group announces appointment of new group chief executive.”

Akbar Al Baker retiring, or moving on was almost a footnote in this three-paragraph long, really two-and-a-half-paragraph long release. Something happened here. We don't know what. The man is extremely outspoken. There is no shortage of quotes coming from the man who leads Qatar Airways, but it seems like, there will be in the very near future. This doesn't seem planned. This doesn't seem expected. I am shocked by it. I don't know what happened here, but I will miss my interactions with him in person. We have a long running back and forth over the last 10 years that only I probably know of. He probably doesn't care, or remember any of it, but he was definitely among the most interesting people in the aviation industry.

To just see him almost discarded in a way without any pomp and circumstance, or really, a congratulations on a career well done, something has happened here, and I don't think we'll ever know what. But it is strange, and I'm saddened by it.

[0:50:04] IP: He will move on from the airline and take a position of advisor to the Qatari Prime Minister. What context, in what capacity, that is as yet unknown, but some very interesting moves, as Qatar Airways gets new leadership. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer will take over as the Group Chief Executive from Al Baker, and Al-Meer is the current leader of the Doha Airport, so the Hamad International Airport. That, I mean, good for him. Good for Qatar Airways, I hope.
Yeah, like Jason said, just came out of nowhere and is thoroughly, thoroughly surprising. But that's the news this week, and what a week it's been.

As our regular listeners will know, we often cross our fingers as we hit stop on the record button, to hope that nothing else happens. But if something else happens, we'll be here to cover it next week. This has been episode 239 of AvTalk. I am Ian Petchenik, here, as always with –

[0:51:15] JR: Jason Rabinowitz. Thanks for listening.

[END]