

**EPISODE 255**

[EPISODE]

**[0:00:07] IP:** Hello, and welcome to episode 255 of AvTalk. I am Ian Petchenik, here, as always with –

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

**[0:00:19] IP:** It's going well, Jason. How are you, sir?

**[0:00:21] JR:** I'm good. Thank you.

**[0:00:24] IP:** It's been a quiet week for once.

**[0:00:26] JR:** Shh. Don't say that too loudly. You know how news likes to break moments after we stop. Are you tempting fate?

**[0:00:34] IP:** I don't want to attempt the wrath of the thing, I atop the whatever. All right, so things that we've been talking about for the past few weeks remain unchanged. Most of the 737-9 MAX aircraft with the door plugs are back in service. Alaska still has one aircraft that is out of service –

**[0:00:54] JR:** The one.

**[0:00:55] IP:** I think that's the same update. Well, okay. Let me back up. It has two out of service. One happens to be the accident aircraft that we don't know when it'll come back into service. The other one is N918AK, which is in Greensboro, I assume, for extended maintenance of some kind. Then it will pop back into service when it is ready. There's one non-door blown off aircraft that Alaska needs to put back into service, but everybody else has put theirs back into service. What do we fill our time with this week? Well, we fill it with stupid.

**[0:01:31] JR:** Oh, yeah. We got some prime, prime stupid.

**[0:01:35] IP:** This is grade A stupid.

**[0:01:37] JR:** It is real stupid. It's a good thing it didn't coincide with the other stupid from the 73, because some 73s were actually pulled into – pulled into service to fill in for another aircraft that happened to be grounded, a very minimal grounding at just one airline. We'll get into it. It may be, Ian, I think, the dumbest, the stupidest, the most needless short aircraft grounding in the history of airplanes.

**[0:02:06] IP:** You know what? I'm sure that bar is very high. When we're done discussing this, please, if you can think of another time, dear listener, when something equally, or even more stupid has happened, email us at [podcast@fr24.com](mailto:podcast@fr24.com). Jason, what happened?

**[0:02:24] JR:** Oh, man. At least in the US, the United States, since the year 2000, smoking has been prohibited onboard all commercial aircraft, all passenger commercial aircraft. You have not been able to smoke to this day. All aircraft operating in the US are still required, or all commercial aircraft are required to have either a no smoking illuminated sign, or a no smoking placard. There are rules that, and they're not needless, there are still stupid people out there who will do stupid things. This is why aircraft still have ashtrays in the lavatories, because stupid people will do stupid things, and you need them to put out their stupid cigarette in the proper place, not the trash.

In this case, all aircraft either need to have an operable lighted sign in the passenger service unit, which is the overhead thing right next to the seat belt sign, or really these days. A lot of aircraft have also archaic at this point, no personal electronic device sign. There was a weird period in time where that replaced the smoking sign, but you either need to have a lighted sign, or a placard. In this case, it turned out, United's lighted no smoking signs worked too well, which is just a really weird thing to say.

The deal here is that United and most every other airline has the no smoking sign hardwired. It cannot be turned off. There will still be a switch in the flight deck that someone could go and flip on and off, on and off and it won't do anything. On an older aircraft, it is hardwired. That switch will not do anything. On a newer aircraft, it's software defined, where there's still the switch, but

the software will prohibit it from actually doing anything. There are rules. There are regulations. There are federal standards that still to this day, have not been changed to reflect that smoking is not allowed on board. That no smoking sign, if the airline opts to have a lighted sign, it is treated the same as a seatbelt sign. A seatbelt sign must be able to be toggled on or off from the cockpit.

For some reason, the no smoking sign is still lumped into that rule and regulation. The no smoking sign, even though it will never ever be turned off, must also be able to be turned off, unless an airline files for an exemption, which of course, it files every airline for every aircraft it operates files for an exemption. There's one for the 737, for the 767, the A319. In this case, crucially, there wasn't one for United's A321neo. It seems likely, we don't know this for sure, but somebody at United may have forgotten to file the paperwork to the FAA to exempt the A321neo from having a no smoking sign that can be turned off.

I mean, instead of just treating that never to be turned off 'no smoking' illuminated sign as a placard, United or the FAA were not really sure which took the action of actually grounding United's relatively small, just five strong fleet of A321neo for about half a day, which really came out of nowhere. People jumped to conclusions, because there's a lot of issues with the 321neo and any aircraft with the Pratt & Whitney GTF. United specifically has had all sorts of issues with its brand-new aircraft. But they were pulled out of service very quickly. United's flights status said, for operational inspection, and they were able to eventually swap all of their A321neo flights out for other aircrafts, someone out without delay, some took a few hour delay, and they provided this statement to me.

I quote, "We are removing our five Airbus A321neo aircraft from service while we seek FAA approval for the no smoking sign to remain automatically illuminated, rather than operated from the cockpit. We're working to minimize the disruption for customers, and we expect to cover all of today's A321neo flying with other aircraft types resulting in no cancellations due to this issue today. We hope to have these aircraft flying again shortly." Sure enough, they were flying again shortly. The FAA noted that it was not a safety issue, and I'm not quoting anymore here, but the three A321neos were back in service the very next day. Very, very stupid situation.

Kudos to Seth Miller for putting the pieces together before anyone else really. He has a bot that scours through FAA filings and airworthiness directives, and he spotted this one and said, “Oh, that timing is real suspicious.” It did indeed happen to be that United filed very suddenly to have these aircraft exempted. Yeah, this has got to be – I challenge you listeners to find me a stupider reason to ground a fleet of aircraft than this, because I don't think it's possible.

**[0:07:23] IP:** Long story short, we have to have something that tells people not to smoke. We can either have a sign, or a lighted sign. If we have a lighted sign, we have to, by rule, have a way to turn off the lighted sign, even though the sign has to stay on all the time. We have to have a way to turn it off.

**[0:07:39] JR:** Yeah. But, I mean, there's all sorts of rules and regulations that are very dated. If you want to – well, we'll put a link into the show notes, but David Williams on Twitter, username Stratoduck, put it together, and that the issue revolves, instead of updating the rules and regulations, because we can't do that. They're assuming that all part 121 airplanes must comply with rule 121.317A. However, they overlooked that United Airlines aircraft also comply with part 121.317C, and were certifying compliance with 25.791A, which allows placards. Why not just treat the light as a placard?

Somebody was either very, very insistent that these aircraft must meet specifications until that exemption was awarded, or that someone at United just really dotting their I's, crossing their T's and didn't want to make any waves. The whole situation is just –

**[0:08:36] IP:** Maybe we filed the paperwork for all the other ones, but we didn't file the paperwork for this one, so we should do that, or I don't know.

**[0:08:42] JR:** Yeah. The whole thing is just bizarre. But I never in a million years would have thought an aircraft would be grounded, because they can't turn off the no smoking sign. Like, what?

**[0:08:52] IP:** I mean, obviously they didn't make the announcement to the passengers of those delayed flights. “Hi, folks. We're delaying your flights. We're going to swap out the aircraft, not

because anything was wrong in the plane. We could fly right now, but because the no smoking signs can't be turned off.”

**[0:09:13] JR:** Huh. Yeah. I mean, obviously they didn't say that wisely so. But just, when you make it sound like a passenger announcement, it gets even dumber is what I'm saying.

**[0:09:23] JR:** Yeah. I hope that this is significant catalyst to have the FAA, or somebody, whoever would start this to update the rules, so that it doesn't matter that the no smoking sign can't be turned off and not have to have airlines file for exemptions for every single aircraft type they put in service, because that does not make any sense. It's mind-bogglingly stupid.

**[0:09:47] IP:** On the bright side, at least the FAA doesn't make them file an exemption for every specific aircraft.

**[0:09:51] JR:** Not yet.

**[0:09:53] IP:** Which sounds like something the FAA would do.

**[0:09:56] JR:** Yeesh.

**[0:09:58] IP:** Okay. Let's move on from this. Some follow up to a few stories that we've been talking about recently. When Boeing's CEO, Dave Calhoun, was addressing everyone at the reporting of their financial results, he mentioned that they were moving the supply chain at 38 a month. They were moving the 737 production at 38 a month. It turns out that there's some clarification there needed, because Boeing's 737 suppliers are operating at a rate of 38 aircraft a month.

However, when you look at how many airplanes are actually coming out of the factory in Renton, there's roughly 20 to 25 airplanes being constructed each month. What they've now said is that the second half of 2024 is when they hope to be producing 38 airplanes per month. I'm not sure how that squares with the FAA saying, you can't increase the rate, if they're not actually building 38 airplanes a month, but they're just asking their suppliers to supply them with enough components to build 38 a month.

**[0:11:08] JR:** I guess, it's an aspirational rate, like we aspire to be able to build 38 aircraft, or we have the production, physical capability to do it. But competently, we cannot do that right now, I guess, is the situation?

**[0:11:22] IP:** That's what that they said. I mean, that might be Jason's take on it, but that's actually what they said. Basically, we had to slow things down to get all of these things right that we're figuring out. The question that I have that I don't think Boeing has answered yet is does that mean you can go, or the FAA needs to answer, I guess. Does that mean you can build airplanes at 38 a month, or does that mean you're stuck at 20 to 25 that you're actually building at the moment?

I'm not sure that either the FAA, or Boeing can answer that at the moment, and that's what interests me. Because airlines are already extremely upset that they're not going to be getting the aircraft that they ordered anywhere near on time. That's at 38 a month. If you're actually building aircraft at 20 to 25 a month, then that's where you need to stay, because the FAA says, "No, we're not going to let you increase until we're satisfied." That becomes a much bigger issue.

**[0:12:14] JR:** we still don't know when the FAA is going to allow Boeing to ramp up to their previous target of 40-plus aircraft a month. We don't know what the metrics are for success. When does Boeing get to do that? All we know is that they can't do it. But there doesn't really seem, at least publicly, to be a checklist of here's what you have to do to get to the point where we will take the nanny cam offline, basically. It's just, it is what it is and we don't know how long it will last for.

**[0:12:43] IP:** Yeah. I mean, we'll, I guess, just have to wait and see on that one. Let's see, we covered this slightly, but now there's a bit more information courtesy of the NTSB as they've continued their research into it. I'm skipping ahead. Sorry, Jason. Let's talk about the NTSB, but in a different context. This week, the NTSB came out swinging on the 25-hour CVR rule, because the FAA's proposed rule would put 25-hour cockpit voice recorders in new aircraft only. Not existing aircraft. The NTSB says, "That is just not good enough."

**[0:13:23] JR:** That doesn't make any sense, because as we know, aircraft can be in service for decades. A 737 MAX, or an A320neo, or 787 that you put into service today will be operating 2050, presumably. Why wouldn't a change in the cockpit voice recorder requirements that we make today affect aircraft that are just going into service and have been in service for a year, or two, or five years that will be in service for decades? The NTSB, like you said, Ian, they came out swinging here. They published a list of NTSB investigations hampered by an overwritten cockpit voice recorder since 2018.

The list is, unfortunately, longer than you would want it to be. There's one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 items on this list ranging from the January 5<sup>th</sup> rapid decompression of a 737 MAX with Alaska, to a whole bunch of runway incursions. Some of them, the CVR was overwritten because of delayed notifications. One of them is a hard landing. One of them is a loss of control in flight and others an electrical system malfunction, other turbulence encounter. These are all voice recorders that were lost, literally to time and to nothing else. The two-hour limit that was artificially imposed on these recorders hit and data started to be recorded over the existing data and anything that recorder could have provided in that investigation was just artificially deleted.

**[0:14:56] IP:** Yeah. There are some concerns about the requirement. As part of the comment period on the FAA's proposal, multiple organizations have waited, not just the NTSB. You have manufacturers, like Bombardier, Embraer and ATR expressing concern about how this new requirement could affect smaller aircraft that fly shorter stage lengths. Think like the ATR 42, or ATR 72, where those aircraft are operating one to two-hour sectors, where they're saying, well, this introduces all sorts of complications. Embraer says, that it would take months, months to select one of these recorders.

**[0:15:37] JR:** Oh, man. You better get started today.

**[0:15:39] IP:** They want more time to –

**[0:15:42] JR:** Which is reasonable.

**[0:15:44] IP:** - to be able to select. Yeah. I think, some of these things, they all come out in negotiation about how industry is going to implement that. One of the comments came from Alaska Airlines and Jason, you flagged this particular one, not for so much what it says, but for the date that it was submitted.

**[0:16:00] JR:** Yeah. It was submitted December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023. You might remember – actually, I'm sorry, the letter is dated February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024, just three days later on February 5<sup>th</sup>, as we just noted, the door blew off, or the door plug blew off one of Alaska's aircraft and famously, the cockpit voice recorder was overwritten, because the circuit breaker was not pulled on that. Any information the NTSB would have gleaned from that recorder was overwritten. Just really interesting timing that thankfully, Alaska did not object to this. Alaska said, “Yeah. All right, that's great. It will improve the aircraft accident, or accident investigation process and will put the US airline industry more in line with international regulation.”

**[0:16:47] IP:** Because remember, the EASA in Europe already requires this.

**[0:16:51] JR:** Yes. This is not something that's coming out of left field. There is a bit more of an interesting twist from the NTSB's filing. It states, additional fuel to its fire of this is stupid, it should apply to every aircraft. The NTSB says, the noticeable proposed rulemaking indicates that a retrofit requirement would apply to 29,561 aircraft in the existing fleet, but it doesn't go into the details of what aircraft are in that number. It just seems made up.

The NTSB estimates that it would only apply to 13,500 aircraft. There would be far fewer aircraft to retrofit with these new, or enhanced recorders than apparently, the FAA or whoever came up with the number the NPRM is estimating. Also, and the NTSB comment says, “Well, even for these aircraft, if we make maybe a buffer period of five years, let's say, all of the recorders on existing aircraft will be serviced regularly within that time frame.” You could just pull them out and swap a new one in, and there won't even be any aircraft downtime more than what's already scheduled. They're really coming out swinging that none of what the FAA, or whoever proposed this in the NPRM is making sense, that it's far fewer aircraft than is proposed to be impacted. The impact is actually far less great than is recommended here.



It's just, I'm glad the NTSB not just made this comment, but also publicized that it made this comment on social media and brought attention to the fact that, hey, if this goes through as is, there will be aircraft operating for decades, the same old way that they have for the past few decades, and that just doesn't make any sense.

**[0:18:37] IP:** Right. Let's stick with the NTSB for the moment, because we've got some updates on investigations. Jason, I think you flagged the final report on the crash of the Joby aircraft.

**[0:18:49] JR:** Yeah, that's right. In 2022, one of Joby's eVTOL aircraft was conducting flight testing, flight envelope testing, I believe, in California, pushing above and beyond what the aircraft would ever theoretically operationally see. This investigation concluded that there was a separation of one of the propellers from one of the, I guess you would call, propeller assemblies. I'm not sure what you would call it on an eVTOL. But one of the propellers came detached from the hub and actually impacted one of the other hubs. There was a cascading failure that resulted in the crash and loss of the aircraft.

What's interesting about this is how the NTSB figured it out. There were all sorts of recording devices onboard this aircraft. It's an experimental aircraft doing flight testing, so it had custom recorders from Joby onboard. It had consumer-grade NVMe M.2 SSDs onboard recording information, which unfortunately were lost. Crucially, it had a 360-degree GoPro camera mounted right about where a pilot would sit. This was an unmanned aircraft, by the way, uncrewed aircraft, rather. There was no one on board. There were no injuries. There was a 360 degree, presumably high-definition camera recording everything you would see from the flight deck. The NTSB was able to recover the corrupted data from the GoPro and watch what happened.

Using the camera onboard, they were able to determine, here's exactly what happened. That the propeller just – or the prop connected from the assembly and impacted other propellers, and there was a cascading failure. Maybe they wouldn't have figured that out, but not for the recording capability onboard that aircraft, which is another thing that the NTSB has been hounding for for years and years and years and years to have video recording onboard aircraft, and it makes even more sense when so many aircraft actually already did they have video, or cameras, multiple cameras outside of the aircraft that simply don't record. I thought that was

very interesting that the NTSB really called out, again, like hey, look, here's literal proof that a video recording helped us identify the root cause of a crash.

**[0:21:07] IP:** Yeah. I thought that was really interesting how they went into that. It goes to show that every time they put out the call for people to send video, or email them, whatever they have, who knows, whatever somebody has recorded, or seen, that could be the key. I mean, the fact that they were able to recover this video file and then go, "Okay. There, that's what happened," is pretty incredible.

The preliminary report for the Atlas Air Flight 95 in flight engine fire. I guess, I'm using engine fire loosely here because, well, there wasn't engine fire. There was supposed to be fire. There just wasn't supposed to be fire there. There wouldn't have been fire there if the borescope port plug had been secured properly.

**[0:22:06] JR:** Oh, you got to secure your borescope plugs.

**[0:22:10] IP:** You do. This particular aircraft, N859GT is a Boeing 747-8 freighter operated by Atlas Air. It had flown to Miami and then undergone maintenance. An MRO in Miami had gone into the engine. A technician had done a borescope inspection. A borescope inspection is basically, a camera on the end of a tube that's small enough to fit into very tight spaces. They look around for things like, metal corrosion, cracking, everything's where it's supposed to be. There's no oil where there's not supposed to be oil, things like that.

To allow access to the engine for these borescopes, there are borescope port plugs in a variety of locations around the engine, so that they don't have to snake the camera all the way through the engine. They can access it as easily as possible. Then when they're done, you put these port plugs back. There are maintenance activities for removing, storing, and reinstalling all of these port plugs. In this particular case, that borescope port plug was not reinstalled properly. According to the NTSB was "unsecured from the combustion diffuser nozzle."

The NTSB report also goes on to say that the burn-through observed on the thrust reverser wall was directly above the open plug port. Fire was where it was supposed to be. Fire was coming out of the wrong hole.

**[0:23:46] JR:** I see. When the initial report said something about a softball-sized hole in the engine, there's supposed to be a hole there. Just maybe not when the airplane's in the air with the engines running, because fire out the wrong hole, bad on an airplane.

**[0:24:01] IP:** Fire out the wrong hole, bad.

**[0:24:02] JR:** Yeah. All is well that ends well, they discharged the fire bottles, I think. They went back to the origin and it's fine. I'm sure the final report by the NTSB will dig into where is the engine plug and was never installed after maintenance was done, or did it fall out? Man, this is really like, are we really going down the missing plug situation again here, twice this year already?

**[0:24:26] IP:** Yup.

**[0:24:27] JR:** All right.

**[0:24:28] IP:** Already. And it's only February.

**[0:24:29] JR:** Different kind of plug, very different situation. Almost certainly, not Boeing's fault, so don't look at them. But this is, huh, good, old NTSB.

**[0:24:40] IP:** Definitely, uh-huh. Let's stick with engines. This is probably the theme of the year, if not the next few years. But we're back on the Pratt gear turbo fan. At the moment, things gumming up the works include supply chains, which is a conversation that we've had over and over and over again. At the moment, Pratt & Whitney says that its ability to get spare parts for all of its gear turbo fan engines has slowed things down. They're only going to be able to fix those engines as quickly as they can get pieces for them, which all makes sense. I feel like, John Madden saying, the team that scores the most points is going to win the game. I think it's worth saying that this isn't a knowledge issue. We don't have an idea of what's wrong here, it's just we don't have the things to fix what's broke.

**[0:25:33] JR:** Yes. But it's not all bad news. Reading from an aviation week article here. Pratt says, I believe, they just had – the parent company, RTX, just had an earnings call this week. But Pratt expects the number of grounded A320neos to peak by April 1<sup>st</sup>. Hopefully, not an April Fool's joke, but you never know with this situation. By April 1<sup>st</sup>, the number of grounded aircraft should be going down. But that doesn't mean the situation is really going to be resolved any time soon, unfortunately. It is still taking 300 days, nearly an entire year for an aircraft to be taken off a wing, repaired, and put back on an aircraft.

Removals have only started back in September of last year, apparently, according to the article. Engines are not flowing steadily back into the fleet, which is a real problem. Fortunately, Pratt now apparently has 16 global shops that can do the work of repairing these engines, up from 11 a year ago. That's an actual legitimate, good increase. But the parts, getting the parts and doing the work is taking a very, very, very long time. This may last through the end of 2026, which is not great. But they're hoping to get the number of days in which these engines are off wing down from 300 to about maybe a 150 in the future. Don't really know, but we'll have to wait and see.

**[0:26:55] IP:** Oh, good.

**[0:26:57] JR:** Yeah, great. Only half a year, instead of nearly a full year. We are seeing, again, real impacts caused by this. Spirit Airlines were supposed to fly to Tulum, Mexico's newest airport. They're now having to delay that route, because it has so many aircraft grounded to this issue. Now I'm afraid, my flight in a couple of weeks to Chicago on Spirit, maybe that doesn't happen and we won't be able to have sausages.

**[0:27:22] IP:** Oh, no.

**[0:27:23] JR:** I know. That would be very sad. That would be very sad. But I think I'm booked on a CO, so it should be okay.

**[0:27:29] IP:** All right.

**[0:27:30] JR:** So, hotdogs will be had.

**[0:27:31] IP:** Speaking of Spirit and we'll stay in Florida, because there is a new aircraft in Florida that has not made it to the United States for quite some time. I tried to check our data, and the farthest back that I could easily go with a few clicks was 2018, and I couldn't find anything there. This is the first time a 747-300 has been to the US at least since 2018.

**[0:27:59] JR:** That's a long time. But technically, I mean, what is the Boeing VC 25 built off of?

**[0:28:10] IP:** 200s. Those are 200s.

**[0:28:11] JR:** Is it the 200? It's not the 300?

**[0:28:12] IP:** Yeah. Those are 200s.

**[0:28:14] JR:** Okay. All right. Yeah, it's probably been a very long time. Are there any VIP aircraft that sneak into the country for like, the UN General Assembly? Because there are some very odd aircraft. I think those are mostly gone at this point. There were some SPs. I don't think any 300s. Yeah. If you know the last time a 747-300 has visited the US, definitely let us know, because I certainly can't think of one.

**[0:28:41] IP:** This particular 747-300 was owned by Emtrasur, which is a Venezuelan cargo airline, a subsidiary of Conviasa, which is the state-owned passenger airline. The 747-300, the registration, or was is, I'm not quite sure. Anyway, YV3531. It was seized, or seizure proceedings began in 2022, while the aircraft was in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The Argentinian government acted on the US government's seizure order and the aircraft has been there for nearly two years. This week, all of that paperwork and legal wrangling was wrapped up and the aircraft was flown from Buenos Aires to Florida, because of course, it was.

**[0:29:33] JR:** Of course. Where aircraft go to die. Not to be stored. To die.

**[0:29:39] IP:** It was flown to the Dade-Collier Training and Transition Airport, which Jason, I'm not sure if you're familiar with this particular airport and its history.

**[0:29:47] JR:** I'm not.

**[0:29:48] IP:** But we may have mentioned this airport once or twice on the podcast. The Dade-Collier Training and Transition Airport in the middle of the airport.

**[0:29:56] JR:** Wait, is this the supersonic hub that never happened?

**[0:29:59] IP:** Yes.

**[0:30:02] JR:** Ah. Okay. Yeah. Definitely familiar with that place now.

**[0:30:05] IP:** The airport was originally construction in 1968 as the Everglades jet port. then it's been called variety of things, including the Swamp Port for a while there. The idea was that it would be one of the world's largest airports, actually the world's largest airport at the time. It would have served as one of the bases for the Boeing 2707, the supersonic aircraft that was under development at the time, which Boeing eventually canceled. They thought this would be the best place to put this, because it was in the middle of the Everglades and you could easily get out over water.

The 2707 was canceled, the airport was canceled, and it just sat there. Now, it has one 10,500-foot runway and does some general aviation. It can handle 747s, and so, they brought the 747-300 there. They're reportedly going to use it as a fire training aircraft. It still has some life in it yet, but it will never fly again.

**[0:31:15] JR:** I'm interested to know, who flew it there and who paid to presumably bring it back to life? A 74-300 sitting on the ground for two years, probably needs quite a bit of maintenance to get airworthy again. Do we know who operated it? The call said Tyson 23, but what is that?

**[0:31:37] IP:** I don't know. That's a great question.

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

**[0:31:40] IP:** The US government was basically doing this to make a show of seizing the plane.

**[0:31:45] JR:** Yes. The Venezuelan government, I know, was very upset that Argentina let this happen.

**[0:31:52] IP:** Yes.

**[0:31:53] JR:** I'm just really interested to know, who paid for this and who operated the flight? Was it Steve?

**[0:31:59] IP:** I don't think it was Steve.

**[0:32:01] JR:** Is he typewritten on the 300 like, if anyone, it's going to be him.

**[0:32:06] IP:** I don't know. We'll figure this out, because this is an interesting one. Now the plane will sit. It will be there and they will probably use it as a fire trainer. Maybe they'll chop it up a little bit and you can get a piece of it. There are still 747-300s out there that are available to fly on. You do need to have access to some interesting government contact, I guess, if you want to do that, or you need to be shipped somewhere. What we've got are the MAX Air pair of 747-300s in Nigeria, Transavia Export Airlines in Belarus has one. There's one currently in the Saudi Royal fleet and Mahan Air currently has two, but I don't think those are flying at the moment.

Though, you can fly the oldest 747 in the world if you go to Iran. You might need to talk to their military and ask for a ride politely. I don't suggest you do that if you're coming from a variety of countries, but it's there.

**[0:33:09] JR:** Yeah. Okay. That's the end of that chapter, I guess. That poor aircraft's never going to fly again.

**[0:33:15] IP:** Nope. But you know what older aircraft is going to fly again?

**[0:33:19] JR:** Ah, this is a good one. Good transition. Well done.

**[0:33:21] IP:** Nolinor is bringing back a 737-200 for gravel runways. The 737-200 –

**[0:33:29] JR:** This is exciting.

**[0:33:31] IP:** I'm thoroughly excited. If you haven't been following along with our general obsession, I say ours and mine and Jason's, but also FlightRadar24 in general, because our Gabriel Leigh has been on the hunt for a passenger 737-200 for quite some time. We sent him to Zimbabwe. The president of Zimbabwe took the aircraft to Malawi that week that he was there, so he didn't get to fly in it. We sent him to Venezuela of all places at the beginning of the year, and we're currently airing that series on our YouTube channel. We'll put a link in the show notes to check that out. But he had a bit more success this time around.

Nolinor is bringing back the 737-200 for gravel runways. Specifically, with the gravel kit. The 200 is one of the only aircraft in the Boeing catalog that is certified for gravel operations. That's a very important thing to have when you're flying to runways in Canada's far north, where nothing is paved and runway might be a generous description of what you're landing on.

**[0:34:33] JR:** Yeah. I don't really know what the alternative here, at least for a Western built aircraft. I guess, maybe the Russian and/or Soviet version of this would be the TU-154, I believe, had a gravel kit variant. Obviously, not going to end up in Canada in 2024.

**[0:34:51] IP:** Maybe the Yak-40.

**[0:34:52] JR:** Something like that. Remember, this is not the MAX. This is not the NG. This isn't even the classic. This is the OG, the original version of the 737 and it is of course the 200, not the 100, but it predates the classic, which is the 300, 400, and 500. This is your granddaddy's 73, and it's going to be around, presumably, forever at this rate. There is nothing out there. There is no modern aircraft that replaces, or can do what this particular aircraft with the gravel kit can do. All the modern aircraft that they're very large, low to the ground engines can't even think about doing what the 200, especially with the gravel kit can do. Nolinor and other airlines like it are, maybe not stuck with it. Stuck with it's not the right word, but they're in a place where they need it and it's going to be like that.



**[0:35:46] IP:** They need and they want to. I mean, it's a great airplane.

**[0:35:49] JR:** It's a great airplane. It's great for their marketing. I mean, they love this aircraft. They love to talk about it. But, I guess, it's going to be around until the point where maybe eVTOLs are mature enough, where they could operate into harsh, remote Northern Canadian and likewise destinations. They're not going to run forever, but they're going to keep running for quite a while, and there's just nothing today that replaces it. It's back and that's very exciting.

**[0:36:17] IP:** It is very exciting. Now, we have to figure out a way to fly on it. We close the show this week with a different kind of bird. Jason, what happened?

**[0:36:29] JR:** Flamingos happened. Or more precisely, flamingo eggs happened. This is a follow-up to a story from, I believe, it was last year, where onboard in Alaska Airlines flight, there were Chilean flamingo eggs flying from Atlanta to Seattle. They were on their way to the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle. Zoo official was transporting the flamingo eggs when the incubator stopped working. When eggs get cold, they're not going to be happy anymore and that's a problem. When the incubator failed, the flight crew jumped into action. They filled up some rubber gloves with hot water, I guess presumably from a coffee pot and put the eggs in it and kept the eggs warm and kept them happy.

We have an update that months, months later, the eggs are no longer eggs, they're flamingos and they're happy flamingos and they hatched. The flight attendants onboard the aircraft that helped out the zoo officials were able to meet their flamingos. It's just a very funny story, that was mainstream enough that of all places, I write about this on people, People Magazine's website. This was a pretty mainstream story, but it's just a nice story to read about that, hey, something on board and aircraft happened and flight attendants sprang into action and then flamingos were born.

**[0:37:50] IP:** At least they weren't born on the plane, I guess.

**[0:37:53] JR:** Not on the plane. But if you want to see these flamingos, presumably, you can go to the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle, which I've been to many times and you can go see some new flamingos that you know have flown Alaska Airlines.

**[0:38:08] IP:** Those flamingos have flown Alaska Airlines more than I have.

**[0:38:10] JR:** Yeah. Their names, by the way, Amber and Sunny were the names of the flight attendants onboard that got to meet the baby flamingos, which I'm very jealous of. They got to meet the flamingos and hang out with them.

**[0:38:22] IP:** Oh, all right. That's fun.

**[0:38:24] JR:** That is nice.

**[0:38:25] IP:** I like closing the show on good news.

**[0:38:27] JR:** That is great news. Oh, do we need the name of the flamingos?

**[0:38:31] IP:** I thought, yeah. I mean, what's the number one? Always get the name of the dog? You always get the name of the flamingos.

**[0:38:36] JR:** Gonzo, Bernardo, Rosales, Amaya, and Magdalena, the names of the flamingos. There you go.

**[0:38:46] IP:** The story just got better. It got even better.

**[0:38:48] JR:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**[0:38:49] IP:** I like it.

**[0:38:50] JR:** Head on down to the zoo and go meet the flamingos that flew on a 737. Presumably, I guess, it could have been an e-jet, right? Those would be horizon, or possibly, SkyWest.

**[0:38:58] IP:** Not from Atlanta.

**[0:39:00] JR:** We don't want to get into that.

**[0:39:02] IP:** All right. Before we go down the proudly all-Boeing route, this has been episode 255 of AvTalk. I am Ian Petchenik, here, as always with –

**[0:39:13] JR:** Jason Rabinowitz. Thanks for listening.

[END]