

**EPISODE 256**

[EPISODE]

**[0:00:07] IP:** Hello, and welcome to episode 256 of AvTalk. I am Ian Petchenik, here, as always with –

**[0:00:17] JR:** Jason Rabinowitz. That was a nice lead in, Ian. Thank you.

**[0:00:21] IP:** I'm feeling wound up today. I figured I'd give us a good wind up to get into the show, because we have a lot to get through.

**[0:00:26] JR:** Yeah. We have a whole page of things. None of them individually, or particularly big. Well, one item is kind of big.

**[0:00:35] IP:** One. Yeah.

**[0:00:35] JR:** But the rest of it is just regular news. Remember the before times, before Boeing fell apart and then before COVID, where it was just random pieces of news and that was it?

**[0:00:46] IP:** We would talk about airplanes and the things that were happening in the world.

**[0:00:50] JR:** It feels like that again today.

**[0:00:52] IP:** Almost like that. Yeah. A full show, the Singapore air show is in full swing. There's a few bits and bobs of good news, some bad news. Then the show begins today with a very, very lucky aircraft, and very, very lucky passengers and crew, because this could have been so much worse than it was. I'm referring to the Marathon Airlines Embraer E195 that was operating for Air Serbia on its way from Belgrade to Dusseldorf, that departed not from the end of the runway, but from an intersection takeoff.

Now, intersection takeoffs happen all the time. It's when an aircraft takes off not from the end of the runway, but from one of the taxiway intersections further down the runway, leads to a

shortened runway. What's supposed to happen is you're supposed to depart from an intersection, knowing full well that the remaining runway is perfectly acceptable for all of your takeoff performance calculations. It appears that that did not happen in this particular case. The aircraft departed after overrunning the runway and striking a variety of instrument landing system array, antenna and lights, and who knows what else, before becoming airborne.

The aircraft was substantially damaged on its left side. A large gash in the lower left fuselage, and substantial damage to the wing root area, such that by the time they made it back to the gate, they were leaking a not small amount of fuel.

**[0:02:39] JR:** Yeah. This was one of those incidents where there was a very slim margin between this being something we discuss at the top of the podcast and then move on from, from it being a special show, because something terrible has happened. Very similar to the JAL accident earlier this year with the A350. For the grace of who knows what, this aircraft was able to limp back to its origin, I think 15 minutes later, and touchdown without any injuries. It was, I think as Jon Ostrower put it, there are some crew members, and some passengers who owe engineers in Brazil some drinks. Not Brazil. I'm sorry. No, wait.

**[0:03:18] IP:** No, Brazil. You're right.

**[0:03:19] JR:** Brazil. Okay, I got it. I got it. Thank you.

**[0:03:21] IP:** Yeah. Yeah.

**[0:03:22] JR:** The E190 is a tank of an aircraft and it was proven yet again, in that you have to see the pictures. You have to see the video of this thing just limping back all the way to the gate for some reason. I don't think they stopped on the runway and had any attention there.

**[0:03:37] IP:** I don't think the full –

**[0:03:41] JR:** They didn't know how bad it was. But it was very bad. Very, very bad. This was inches away, who knows, from being an actual disaster on our hands? What happened here is that I understand that the runway they took off from wasn't always a runway. Actually, it was, I

believe, recently converted from a parallel taxiway to another runway to a runway recently. None of this is, we're going to have to, of course, as we always say, wait for the investigation to go through and wait for the official findings, but there is air traffic control audio from this.

Apparently, they entered at the wrong taxiway, the very wrong taxiway to this runway and the air traffic controller on duty noticed, "Hey, it looks like you're entering the runway at intersection D5 and not D6. Are you sure you want to do that? Maybe run some new calculations and make sure you're not accidentally going to kill everyone onboard." Apparently, they did some calculations and they did them poorly, because it did not end well for that flight. It's a very interesting circumstance here where a mistake was made. They entered at the wrong taxiway, and it was noticed by air traffic control, which is exactly what you would want to happen. For some reason, the flight crew was confident that they could take off from that intersection, which was not correct.

What has happened at this point is pretty impressively, Air Serbia has taken pretty decisive action already and has already canceled the wet lease with Marathon Airlines, which I believe, operated three E195s and one E190 on behalf of Air Serbia, already canceled, no longer going to be doing business with that airline, which it's going to have to scramble to backfill, because this coming summer season, they were supposed to operate 30 flights a day for Air Serbia, which is a pretty significant chunk of its overall schedule. It's just nice to see that Air Serbia is taking such decisive action, because I do believe this is Air Serbia's first major incident of any sort, or at least, notable incident. Air Serbia is not a new airline. It's not a startup. It's been around for a very long time. A really spotless reputation tarnished in a way, kind of, sort of, not really. It's lucky, let's say.

**[0:05:56] IP:** Yeah. I mean, this is inches, maybe feet from being a very different story. The takeoff distance between the two taxiways is about 1,100 meters, or about 3,300 feet. I mean, so a significant difference. We're not talking about a few hundred feet here. We're talking about a full general aviation runway of distance between these two taxi points.

**[0:06:25] JR:** A massive mistake was made. Like I said, it was noticed. The mistake was noticed by air traffic control and they just for some reason, the pilots just went with it, which was in hindsight, not a very good idea. To clarify what I said earlier, Air Serbia in one for **[inaudible]**

**0:06:41**] has been around for 96 years. This is the very first bullet point under the accidents and incidents section of its Wikipedia entry. That is, I cannot name another airline that doesn't – didn't even have that section of a Wikipedia page before. That's, yeah, good on them for taking decisive action and ditching the wet least contract with Marathon, because that's a real bad look.

**[0:07:08] IP:** Yeah. Well, they made it back on the ground safely. No one was injured. The ILS for – so they departed runway 30 left. The ILS array for 12 right, so the reciprocal runway was after this accident degraded from category three, down to category one. Whatever it was, it didn't completely take out the ILS, but it took out enough to degrade the category from category three to category one. Keeping an eye on the NOTAMs to see when all of those repairs have been made, but not great. It was great that everyone walked away uninjured. That's a little bit of good news there.

**[0:07:51] JR:** Yeah. We'll take it where we can get it.

**[0:07:54] IP:** This is one of those stories where geopolitics and aviation intersect in a very weird and possibly, very dangerous way, were it not for those involved going. This seems not right. What's happened by way of backstory, if you haven't kept up on Eastern African geopolitics is that the Mogadishu FIR, the flight information region, the area where air traffic controllers are responsible for aircraft in that area covers Somalia and Somalia land, which is a separate country, but not recognized by anybody. Recently, fake air traffic controllers, or at least air traffic controllers who are not authorized to direct the flights, because they've been convincing in their phraseology, in their instructions, and in what they would be telling aircraft if they were, in fact, giving them commands. But these are fake air traffic controllers. They are not authorized to control these flights, have been broadcasting over the same frequencies as the Mogadishu air traffic controllers, telling aircraft to climb or descend.

No one's listened to them. The actual controllers have stepped in. They've also said, "Pilots, if you're given a command, confirm that command with CPDLC, or a SATCOM phone call." The pilot and dispatch community has spread the news far and wide, so I think everyone is aware of the issue at this point. It affected close to a dozen flights so far, but just something to add to the list of threat actors against aviation going, okay, this is a new one and not great.

**[0:09:46] JR:** Yeah. If you're not familiar, CPDLC is a shorthand for a controller pilot data link communications. It's basically rudimentary text messaging between air traffic controllers and pilots, which is probably not something someone on the ground in Africa is going to be able to hack, because if so, we've got a much bigger problem on our hands. But this is more than likely just someone on the ground with a more high-powered, handheld radio than they should have broadcasting on frequencies they should not be, for stupid reasons. Thankfully, it seems like everyone that needs to know about this knows about it. Even if a pilot was to listen to one of these rogue air traffic controllers and modify altitude, there are other safeguards in place that would prevent hopefully, any tragedy from happening. You still have TCAS and things like that.

If you have two aircraft heading in the same direction, or heading in opposite directions at the same altitude, you would think TCAS would alert those aircraft. But you never want to rely on TCAS being the only thing between you and other traffic around. This is scary, but not the first time something like this has happened.

**[0:10:55] IP:** Yeah. It's just, it seems more organized in this particular instance.

**[0:11:02] JR:** Yeah. There's really unlikely to be anyone on the ground to track down these broadcasts and go deal with it. There probably isn't an agency as robust as the FCC, or maybe Ofcom, or whoever in the UK to go deal with this.

**[0:11:16] IP:** Right, right. This next story is one that it was always going to happen. I'm honestly surprised it happened this quickly, but I shouldn't find it funny, because it's – I mean, I guess, the harbinger of things to come, but I find it amusing. Air Canada's chatbot made up some rules about discounts that the airline offers regarding bereavement fares. Just made them up.

**[0:11:47] JR:** Okay. Yeah. AI has been known to do that.

**[0:11:49] IP:** The airline said, well, the chatbot was wrong and resisted providing the refund that the customer was promised by the chatbot. What he asked was, how do the bereavement fares work? His grandmother died. He needed to travel, so he went to Air Canada's website. The

chatbot said that this man should book a flight and then request a refund within 90 days. Elsewhere on the website, Air Canada explicitly says, that's not how it works. Here's the policy. You have to do this before you book a flight. When he went to request a refund, it was rejected. Air Canada said, he should have known that our chatbot was making stuff up and gone to the other part of the website.

**[0:12:44] JR:** How could you possibly know that?

**[0:12:46] IP:** Air Canada said, "We're not giving you a refund. We'll give you a credit and we'll update the chatbot." This gentleman said, "No, I want my refund," and filed a small claims complaint against the airline in – it's called Canada's Civil Resolution Tribunal. It's a small claims court.

**[0:13:06] JR:** Tribunal. That's big time.

**[0:13:08] IP:** I know. Here's where it gets, I think, just ridiculous. Because up until now, I was like, okay, this interesting. Air Canada said that they should not be held liable for the chatbot's misleading information because, "the chat bot is a separate legal entity that is responsible for its own actions."

**[0:13:34] JR:** Uh, no. I'm happy that apparently, the court tribunal did not agree with that, because that would set some pretty dangerous precedent, wouldn't it?

**[0:13:43] IP:** I'm not sure if they're judges, but they're judicial people that are members of the tribunal said, "Air Canada argues it cannot be held liable for information provided by one of its agents, servants, or representatives, including a chatbot." It does not explain why it believes this is the case, or "why the webpage titled bereavement travel is inherently more trustworthy than its chatbot."

**[0:14:09] JR:** Yeah. I mean, I sure would like to know what the chatbot was referencing to come up with that claim that you could do it after the fact, which just doesn't make any sense. Was it referencing outside material off of Air Canada's site, or did it just simply make it up? I don't know.

**[0:14:28] IP:** It made up a reasonable policy.

**[0:14:30] JR:** Maybe that should be the policy.

**[0:14:33] IP:** The policy that the chat bot made up said, "If you need to travel immediately, or have already traveled and would like to submit your ticket for a reduced bereavement rate, kindly do so within 90 days to the date your ticket was issued by completing our ticket refund application form." That seems like a reasonable policy to me.

**[0:14:49] JR:** Yeah. I'm looking for any evidence of a chatbot on Air Canada's site right now, and you know what? I can't –

**[0:14:55] IP:** Oh, they got rid of it.

**[0:14:56] JR:** I can't find one. Clearly, they do agree after the fact that there are some issues with this chatbot, because it is not currently – I cannot find it anywhere. You will have to contact a human to deal with Air Canada right now, which I guess, they also were arguing that any representative of Air Canada, they're also not liable. I don't agree with that at all.

**[0:15:19] IP:** Well, that sounds like the insurance company defense. We can tell you whatever we want and just make things up along the way, because none of it matters. I mean, that's the insurance company defense, or at least in –

**[0:15:30] JR:** Yeah. Pretty much.

**[0:15:31] IP:** - with Jason in the U.S.

**[0:15:34] JR:** Yeah. Yeah. I don't know. I'm happy that the outcome was consumer oriented here. The guy got his money back. Air Canada was reprimanded and say, "Hey, your agent, whether it's a real person, or AI, no matter how stupid, or illogical that AI is, even if it's making stuff up, that's what you told a passenger. That's what you told the customer. Deal with it."

**[0:15:56] IP:** If you file within 90 days, we'll give you a plane.

**[0:15:58] JR:** Okay. I mean, there was that, what? The fake tweet from a couple of months ago about – Oh, that. Yeah, the Harrier. A couple of months ago, someone, I believe they faked a chatbot conversation with a car dealership, a local whatever, car dealership that they tricked it to say, to giving away a free car. Clearly, that did not work. This is believable. This person presumably didn't trick the chatbot to doing anything.

**[0:16:27] IP:** Yeah. I mean, there was no theft. There was no deception. He just asked the chatbot a question.

**[0:16:34] JR:** Look, chatbots have existed as customer service on sites long before the term AI became mainstream in the last year or so. This is not a new thing.

**[0:16:42] IP:** It's just a logic tree. Yeah. This is not like, it's Google search with a reply function.

**[0:16:48] JR:** Yeah. Good for this person for taking it through to a small claims court, or whatever the Canadian version of it is, I don't know. But I'm happy with this outcome.

**[0:16:56] IP:** Tribunal.

**[0:16:57] JR:** Tribunal. Okay.

**[0:16:58] IP:** We all need a good tribunal.

**[0:17:00] JR:** Good outcome.

**[0:17:00] IP:** Yeah. Let's go to Singapore. Because it is, of course, the Singapore Air Show. The Singapore Air Show is back in full forces here. It seems that attendance will be above pre-pandemic levels, or at least at pre-pandemic levels.

**[0:17:16] JR:** Robust.



[0:17:17] **IP:** Robust. And we've got some orders.

[0:17:20] **JR:** Yeah. Not a ton.

[0:17:21] **IP:** Not a ton, but we've got a few interesting ones.

[0:17:23] **JR:** Enough to keep it interesting. Enough to keep it interesting. To lead things off, Comac had an outsized presence at the Singapore Air Show this year, really taking the place of what you would have expected Boeing to have in the past. Since Boeing didn't have any presence at the Singapore Air Show this year, it's focusing on the nuts and bolts of the industry right now. Comac is taking that spot. They came away with an order for 40 C919 orders from Tibet Airlines and Hainan Airlines, I think, but of the interesting plateau variant of the aircraft that does not yet exist. It's a shortened variant of the C919 for hot and high operations, like, think the A319 or the 737-700. Shorter version of the aircraft, same engines, presumably, but for hot and high operations, where you need that extra oomph to get off the ground.

[0:18:20] **IP:** Exactly.

[0:18:21] **JR:** That's exciting. Also, catching my eye and not really getting much attention, but was an order for 10 ARJ21s, which is the MD-80 Chinese knockoff, we'll say, hasn't seen much commercial success.

[0:18:34] **IP:** Is it an MD-80 knockoff? I mean, it seems –

[0:18:36] **JR:** 717 knockoff, or –

[0:18:38] **IP:** DC9?

[0:18:39] **JR:** - CRJ, DC9, CRJ1000, I don't know. It's a Frankin plane. Doesn't matter what it is.

[0:18:45] **IP:** Exactly.

**[0:18:46] JR:** But it's here and now. There were 10 orders, I think, from two provinces in China, I think Hainan and Shanghai provinces. Google Translate is leading me astray here a little bit, saying that they're airlines, but I think they're provinces, because they are ordering not just a regular ARJ21, but experimental variants of it for government operations. One of them would be a fire tanker, which is interesting. I quote again, from a Google Translate version of the press release, "The ARJ21 fire extinguisher can quickly respond to a fire, accurately locate the fire area and extinguish fire efficiently, taking into account daily air quality monitoring and early warning and commuting."

Translation trails off there at the end. But another variant would be for aviation medical rescue and transfer, which can be used for patient transportation, infectious disease transportation and severe emergency treatment. A third variant would be for emergency rescue command, which can, and I quote, "realize the situation, awareness, command decision-making and dispatching of disaster situation." Just like an emergency command aircraft, which is pretty cool.

Then there's another one for emergency rescue and forced transportation. I don't know. The Google Translate's a little iffy, but they're really throwing everything at the ARJ21 to see what it can do in a government capacity, rather than a commercial operation, which hasn't seen all that much success. It's something to keep an eye on, because any – particularly the firefighting variant of the ARJ21 is interesting to me, because that's a variant of any aircraft that is highly sought after and necessary these days, unfortunately.

**[0:20:28] IP:** Yeah. We should also note that the Singapore Air Show is the C919's first visit outside of China. A big debut internationally for Comac.

**[0:20:42] JR:** Other things happened as well. The newest worst kept secret in the industry, Thai Airways's order of 45 787-9 is official. I think there was also a option for 35 more 787. That's exciting. Royal Brunei picked up four 787-9s, which is nice to top off a little bit extra on top of that. Then today, Airbus chimed in with a small order from STARLUX, topping up its A330neo fleet with an additional three. But also, interestingly, five A350 freighters. That's a mighty small airline to have a dedicated wide-body freighter fleet from. I found that one to be quite interesting.

**[0:21:27] IP:** I'm not sure exactly which executive with STARLUX it was, whether it was CEO or someone else. But they basically said, "Hey, we're a huge cargo hub. We're important to the global cargo markets and we are absolutely not going to be left behind. Yeah, let's get a handful of A350 freighters and put them to use."

**[0:21:49] JR:** Yeah. Good for them. A bit unexpected for such a young, small airline to operate a fleet of brand-new dedicated freighters, especially when the freight sector isn't doing too hot at the moment. But hey, maybe they like the fact that Airbus also announced at the Singapore Air Show that the A350 freighter will have an increased max payload from 109 up to 111 tons. Maybe that made the math work.

**[0:22:15] IP:** That's what pushed them over the edge, I bet.

**[0:22:17] JR:** That did it for me. Also, a couple of ATR orders, ATR 46-600s. Two of them being ordered by Maldivian Airways, I believe. I think that's it. At least through today, the end of the day on Wednesday, February 21<sup>st</sup>, not a huge list of orders published, but something is better than nothing.

**[0:22:37] IP:** Yeah. Maldivian. We'll get to Moldova later in the show. We don't want to mix those up.

**[0:22:43] JR:** I said the wrong thing.

**[0:22:44] IP:** One of them might get mad at us, and I'm not sure.

**[0:22:46] JR:** I read the wrong line. Yeah.

**[0:22:48] IP:** That's all right. Let's come back to the US and talk about not breaking news, but it happened today. Today's Wednesday, February 21<sup>st</sup>. Today, Ed Clark, the head of the 737 MAX program, is getting fired. He will leave the company –

**[0:23:07] JR:** Took one for the team.

**[0:23:09] IP:** Yeah. He will leave the company and Katie Ringgold will replace him. Clark took over the 737 MAX program in 2021 as the fifth head of the 737 MAX program in four years. He was at Boeing for 18 years, previously the chief mechanic and engineer for the 737 before being named to head the program. Ringgold is a financial person within Boeing. Her background is in finance within Boeing. However, she began her career in the US Air Force as a maintenance engineer, so knows her way around an airplane.

**[0:23:46] JR:** Okay. That's good. I did see some people discussing how they just replaced an engineer with a financial. There seems to be some background in engineering there, which is good and sorely needed. I guess, that could put those rumors or, I guess, disparagements to bed. That's good. It won't, but it should.

**[0:24:05] IP:** People should actually go and read the article by Dominic Gates at the Seattle Times, who first reported this story. To me, our next story is the most important story of the week. It's not the biggest.

**[0:24:18] JR:** Has to do with some of the biggest checked baggage, though.

**[0:24:20] IP:** It does have to do with the biggest checked baggage. But it's definitely one of those things where this is consistent among changes that I feel this airline has made in the past and continues to make. I'll say that I'm very upset that my hang glider will no longer be allowed in checked baggage on American Airlines.

**[0:24:48] JR:** Oh, man. But it's okay, because you could still bring your javelin, right?

**[0:24:51] IP:** Nope. Can't bring my javelin.

**[0:24:52] JR:** What? Oh, no. That's where I draw the line. I'm not flying American.

**[0:24:55] IP:** I can't bring my pole vault either.

**[0:24:59] JR:** I mean, you'd be surprised about the junk that we have in this industry that is standardized and available for airlines to decide, you can bring this and you can't bring that, because there are what's called industry subcodes for things like this for, you could bring a javelin and you could bring a hang glider and you could bring pineapples and stuff like that. That's an actual thing. If you're flying Hawaii, or I think Alaska, you could bring two pineapples if you're coming back from Hawaii. That's a thing that the industry has had to deal with. This is the least of the news American announced, isn't it?

**[0:25:31] IP:** Yes.

**[0:25:32] JR:** It impacts the fewest number of passengers.

**[0:25:35] IP:** I mean, I would be surprised if it impacts more than a handful per month, maybe. The real story here is that American has – I feel like, you ever – you see the kids getting bullied and the bigger kids hitting the kid in the face with his own fists, saying, “Stop hitting yourself.”

**[0:25:52] JR:** Why hit yourself? Why are you hitting yourself?

**[0:25:55] IP:** Yeah. I feel like, that's what Americans doing to its customers. Because the changes that American is making and how it impacts their customers. Then the language they're using to do it, I mean, it's absolutely along the lines of, “Don't piss on me and tell me it's raining.”

**[0:26:13] JR:** Hey, you said it. You said you were going to say it, but you said it.

**[0:26:16] IP:** But that's the best phrase to describe what they're doing. I mean –

**[0:26:20] JR:** It's a different phrase than what you have written in our show notes, which isn't very friendly.

**[0:26:26] IP:** We need to stay as family-friendly as possible. The phrase that I have written in the show notes is certainly not family-friendly, but you can imagine what it is. Jason, tell me what their actual changes are.

**[0:26:38] JR:** This year, American has been on a rampage against anyone who would dare book a flight not directly on its own website. It wants to make sure that anyone booking a flight on American is doing so on AA.com. It has really clamped down on offering any business travel support, or anything like that. The most recent change was that if you do not book directly through American, or one of its unnamed third-party channels, you will no longer earn AA Advantage Miles, or loyalty points on flights. If you were to book on Expedia, or Kayak, or any of the other things that you can book, or get to book a flight on, you won't earn points anymore, which is a big, big change, not unheard of in the industry, because this is basically the way hotels work these days. If you don't book directly on Marriott's website, or it's app, you're not going to get points, which stinks.

It's the way American went about announcing this and the way it's trying to spin it in its press release. That really doesn't sit with me well. It's like the line from Star Wars, where Darth Vader is saying, "I'm altering the deal and pray I don't alter it any further." Because that's what they keep doing. They keep altering the deal. This one, Ian, what was the line that their chief commercial officer said about this change? Do you have it offhand?

**[0:28:08] IP:** We want to make it more convenient for customers to enjoy the value and magic of travel.

**[0:28:15] JR:** Yeah. It's one thing to make a change. If you want passengers to book directly on American, so you don't have to pay out any commission, or anything, that's fine. If you want people to book on American site, because the lowest fare is probably going to be there, maybe going to be there because of NDC, which is a whole other thing. That's fine. But to go on and say, we're making it more convenient to enjoy the magic of travel. That's just not what this is.

It's the thing you'd expect to see on like, I don't know, if he appeared on the morning TV shows, or something like that and consumers were watching it. But to say that in a press release that they would ostensibly expect media to parrot and to repeat is just ridiculous, because how does forcing people to book on American site directly enable them to enjoy the magic of travel? Who came up with that line?

**[0:29:09] IP:** I just want to point out that all of the news stories that came out this week said, American Airlines raises bag fees.

**[0:29:17] JR:** They didn't even talk about this, which is an interesting point, because the casual passenger who flies once a year and books on [ianscheapflights.org](https://ianscheapflights.org) probably doesn't have an AA advantage account and they don't care about miles, because they will never have enough miles to matter. It is an interesting point that they're making here, that we're only going to give miles to the people who know well enough to book directly. Yeah, the raised bag fees, which we didn't even talk about, because honestly, I don't care. I don't ever check a bag, but it's going up from \$35 to \$40, or something like that. Just the media spin, swinging a miss like – doing something so negative and then saying, “We're doing this, because travel is magical.” It's just not cool.

**[0:30:02] IP:** A United Airlines 757, traveling from San Francisco to Boston, made an unscheduled landing in Denver, because the leading-edge slat on the right-hand wing disintegrated, is a word that I think is applicable here?

**[0:30:18] JR:** Yeah. Not really quite sure what happened there. Judging by the damage and possibly, some of the damage on the wing itself, it was probably, I don't know, probably a bird strike and it took out a bit of a chunk of the wing, or at least the moveable parts of the wing. There was almost certainly no actual risk that this aircraft was in. Just probably reduced efficiency, which I don't know, if **[inaudible 0:30:41]**. Really horrifying. Yeah. It, of course, made the rounds in the news, because it did look quite scary.

**[0:30:48] IP:** Sure. I mean, the average passenger doesn't know what parts of the aircraft are important to remain intact and which parts can slightly disintegrate and remain safely in the air.

**[0:30:58] JR:** As we learned from Air Serbia, you can take a whole chunk of the aircraft out and it won't really matter.

**[0:31:04] IP:** This was more along the lines of a small piece of, I guess, it's the trailing edge of the leading edge, if that makes any sense.

**[0:31:12] JR:** Yeah. Yeah. I get it.

**[0:31:14] IP:** We could put a link in the show notes. The flight landed safely in Denver and things were fine. I was going to bring up a whole thing about eyewitness quoting and local news reporters talking about, asking people, passengers, trying to get that scare quote.

**[0:31:29] JR:** It's not worth it, Ian. It's not worth your time.

**[0:31:31] IP:** I'm just going to leave it. I'm just going to leave it. More surprising, though, is our next story, because Finnair has turned a profit.

**[0:31:38] JR:** Holy cow.

**[0:31:39] IP:** Are you sure?

**[0:31:40] JR:** Didn't see that one coming. I had to double check the numbers. I was pouring over their books and running the math and it's true.

**[0:31:47] IP:** Were you wearing a green visor?

**[0:31:49] JR:** Well, of course, I had one of those little green lamps that only illuminates the paperwork and none of the room around you. Finnair is the little airline that could. It actually turned an operating profit. A small one, 24.2 million dollars in the fourth quarter of last year. Its first profit since 2019. That may not sound all that impressive, but considering the impact of first, we had COVID, and then obviously, that impacted every airline in the world. Then Finnair, in particular, was impacted by the closure of Russian airspace, which had probably impacted Finnair more than any other airline in the world, I would say, as its business model was basically, take people from the US and Europe and get them to Asia via Russian airspace.

When you can't go through Russian airspace anymore, that business model doesn't really work anymore. They had to figure something else out. There were a lot of other airlines that still have not been able to turn a profit since COVID. Here we have Finnair turning a profit with another,



an entirely separate, seemingly never-ending crisis, they figured it out and they turned a profit. Good for them.

**[0:32:58] IP:** Indeed, indeed. I'm very proud, because I enjoy them very much.

**[0:33:02] JR:** Yeah, Finnair is a nice airline and it's good to see, they presumably, figured something out.

**[0:33:07] IP:** The balance of the show, we've got some quick things to move through. Jason, let's begin the beginning of the end and hit up. Let's go to United resuming Tel Aviv Flights next month.

**[0:33:19] JR:** Yeah. This one's hot off the electronic presses. United will resume New York/Newark, as they call it, to Tel Aviv on March 2<sup>nd</sup> of this year. Relatively soon. That's only a couple of weeks from now. However, the flights will spin up on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, and again on March 4<sup>th</sup>, but they will not provide non-stop service from Newark initially. They will make a stopover in Germany, I think it was. Why can't I find this real quick? It's somewhere there.

**[0:33:52] IP:** Munich, I think?

**[0:33:52] JR:** Munich. Yeah, I think it's Munich. They're stopping somewhere along the way and they say, this is after they've conducted a detailed safety analysis in their decision making, blah, blah, blah, blah. After just a few days, on March 6<sup>th</sup>, they intend to resume non-stop service from Newark to Tel Aviv, but they want to tow dip in the first couple of days, where they're only going to operate March 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> and then on the return, March 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. I guess, it's a testament if they see what they like, if they're operating without any issues, they will resume daily non-stop service and I assume, it will be very expensive, because there is still not much capacity to Tel Aviv.

**[0:34:33] IP:** Iberia Express, also resuming flights to Tel Aviv. That'll happen on April 1<sup>st</sup>. They'll also start with a reduced schedule and ramp up as time goes on. Jason, which airline has discovered Mexico's newest airport?

**[0:34:50] JR:** Discover Airlines has discovered Mexico's newest airport in Tulum. This was an interesting one. It's the airport's first long-haul destination and this is quite a long-haul destination. This is quite a long flight. It's the world's hottest new airport right now. Everyone is tripping over themselves to add flights to this destination, except Spirit, who announced and then said, "Oh, wait. We don't have any airplanes to do that with," and then canceled the route before it began. Yeah, what are you going to do?

That's exciting. It doesn't start until December 12<sup>th</sup> of this year, so that's still way off in the future. But hey, anytime a new airport has its first international, not even just the international, long-haul, transatlantic destination, that puts that airport on the map, doesn't it?

**[0:35:34] IP:** Yeah. It's not Cancuneness of the airport is very appealing for a lot of airlines.

**[0:35:41] JR:** Yeah. This is not an airport that's going to be busting at the seams, at least with frequencies anytime. It might be busting at the seams operationally, because it is not a large airport. I don't even think there's an ILS, but pretty sure, as we know from Mexicana's first inaugural flight, which didn't make it there, because it was foggy and they don't have any instrument and landing system that I'm aware of. Could be interesting for long-haul flights.

**[0:36:06] IP:** Now it's time for Moldova. Air Moldova's air operating certificate was suspended in August of last year. The airline was given six months to get its act together. Address deficiencies, remove non-conformities, show that they could operate an airline.

**[0:36:26] JR:** It didn't do any of that. Not at all.

**[0:36:29] IP:** The AOC has been officially revoked by Moldovan authorities. That's another airline that will add to –

**[0:36:36] JR:** Will not be coming back. Will not be resuming operations, as they said they might. As we know, and we mentioned every time this happens, once an airline stops operating, it is a very uphill battle to resume operations. This is another example, where it just isn't going to happen.

**[0:36:53] IP:** This airline is done. Korean Air is also mulling whether or not they will keep their A220s in the fleet post-merger with Asiana, which is fascinating to me.

**[0:37:08] JR:** It makes sense. This is actually one of the few A220s I've ever flown on. I flew on a year, I think a 2019, a Korean A220. But the airline only has 10 of them. Asiana doesn't have any. It makes sense to cut out the A220, because it would be too small of a sub-fleet for the combined Korean-Asiana, which feels like a merger that's been in the works forever at this point, and still isn't a done deal. Still not happening yet. Will happen eventually. But it makes sense, but it's just odd again to see. Second week in a row, we're talking about a large airline possibly giving up a fleet of A220s. I don't know if these in particular have been overhauled and have quite functioning engines, like Egyptian airline ones do, the Egypt aircraft do.

**[0:38:00] IP:** They might not be as attractive to a new lessor.

**[0:38:03] JR:** Yeah. I think two of them, I guess, two out of 10 is 20%. 20% of them are not even in operation right now. Yeah, it's just not – maybe the lease that they have on these aircraft wasn't particularly attractive. A lot of reasons it doesn't make sense, but it's just interesting to see such a new aircraft be discarded from airline fleet.

**[0:38:23] IP:** Qantas is moving eight of its A321 XLR orders over to the domestic side of things. Seems to fit, because the 321's been successful on a number of long domestic routes. Why not make the XLR down in Australia, one of those successful aircraft?

**[0:38:44] JR:** Few countries would you actually need an A321 XLR to do domestic operations on. Yeah, that's a long, long transcon fight for Qantas. In announcing this, they did reveal some delivery delays. Did you see that coming, Ian? Would you have expected that?

**[0:39:04] IP:** I can't say that this is shocking news to me.

**[0:39:07] JR:** No, it is not shocking. Boeing has issues, but so does Airbus. Qantas has said, its first A321 XLR for domestic operations is delayed by three months to early 2025. But more significantly, its first Project Sunrise A350, is delayed by approximately six months to mid-2026. A lot can change between now and then. I think it's quite interesting that Airbus is already

predicting that an aircraft that won't be delivered for a couple of years from now will be delayed by six months. At least, they're giving Qantas a bit of a heads up that that's happening.

**[0:39:46] IP:** I can only imagine that the fit and finish for the Project Sunrise A350s is going to be a lot more work than, say, an A350 for KLM, or Air France, or somewhere like that, where it's, okay, just paint the aircraft, make sure the right seats get put in, and we're all set to go.

We'll close the show with a hearty congratulations to Hawaiian Airlines, which after some delay, has finally taken delivery of its first 787. Happy Valentine's Day Hawaiian. N781HA went home on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February, from Charleston all the way to Honolulu.

**[0:40:26] JR:** All right. Well, the future Alaska Airlines Group's first 787 looks pretty nice.

**[0:40:34] IP:** There you go. This has been episode 256 of AvTalk. Thank you all so much for listening. We always appreciate you making it to the end of the episode. If you've made it this far, why not go a little bit further and leave us a rating, or a review? Let us know what you like about the podcast. Let us know what you don't like about the podcast. Wherever you get your podcasts, let the other people listening on that platform know how you feel about this one. I am Ian Petchenik, here, as always with –

**[0:41:06] JR:** Jason Rabinowitz. Thanks for listening.

[END]