

**EPISODE 257**

[EPISODE]

**[0:00:07] IP:** Hello, and welcome to Episode 257 of AvTalk. I am Ian Petchenik here, as always with –

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

**[0:00:17] IP:** It's going well, Jason. How are you, sir?

**[0:00:20] JR:** I'm well, it sounds like you've had a busy week though, a lot of reading this week.

**[0:00:26] IP:** I've been reading a lot this week. I've been doing so much reading so that our listeners don't necessarily have to, which that's part of our job, oftentimes is distilling a large document, like the Section 103 Organization Designation Authorizations for Transport Airplanes Expert Panel Review Report.

**[0:00:47] JR:** Rolls right off the tongue.

**[0:00:49] IP:** Rolls right off the tongue, doesn't it? I love how they named these names.

**[0:00:52] JR:** It doesn't. But with a name like that, the report better be damning, and complete, and comprehensive. You know what? It was all of those things.

**[0:01:01] IP:** It is all of those things. Yes. So, this report, well, it's exactly what it is. It's the Section 103, I'm not reading the whole thing. The moral of the story is that this is a report that was mandated by the 2020 law passed by Congress that an expert panel would be formed under the 2020 Aircraft Certification, Safety, and Accountability Act. That act said that this expert panel that would be constituted based on their expertise in aviation safety, and processes, and manufacturing, and all of these other things. They would review the Organization Designation Authorization that the FAA gives to Boeing, which allows Boeing to have a subset of employees who work for Boeing, but act on behalf of the FAA to certify the aircraft. One of the initial findings

after the crashes of the two 737 MAX aircraft, was that perhaps this system needed to be reviewed.

So, the Act was passed in 2020. The panel takes a while to get constituted, and they've finally released their report. The report itself is about 50 pages long, and identified 27 findings, and 53 associated recommendations. We're not going to go through all of them, but we are going to hit the highlights. The first among them, the disconnect between Boeing's senior management and other members of the organization of safety culture. Interviewees, including ODA unit members, so the people who are technically Boeing employees, but are designated by the FAA to conduct certification of aircraft.

Those people also question whether Boeing's safety reporting systems would function in a way that ensures open communication and non-retaliation. This is one of the things that multiple whistleblower complaints against Boeing, have called attention to, is that anything that could possibly be seen as detrimental to moving an aircraft program forward would be met with a negative response on behalf of management.

So, the second point they raised is Boeing's SMS, safety management system procedures reflect the ICAO framework and the FAA frameworks. However, the Boeing SMS procedures are not structured in a way that ensures all employees understand their role in the company's SMS, and the employees lacked awareness of safety-related metrics at all levels of the organization, had difficulty distinguishing the differences among various measuring methods, their purpose, and outcomes. So, even though they have a safety management system in place, this expert panel says it's not doing its job.

The third one was Boeing's restructuring of the management of the ODA unit decreased opportunities for interference and retaliation against UMs. That's good. And provides effective organizational messaging regarding independence of UMs. Also, good. However, the restructuring, while better, still allows opportunities for retaliation to occur, particularly with regards to salary and furlough ranking. This influences the ability of UMs to execute their delegated functions effectively.

Finally, the expert panel also found additional issues at Boeing that affect aviation safety, which include inadequate human factors consideration commensurate to its importance in aviation safety, and lack of pilot input in aircraft design and operation.

**[0:04:56] JR:** Wow, you really did do your homework this week. That's a nice summary.\

**[0:05:01] IP:** I read the full report. If you want, I'm not going to tell anybody not to read the full report. But there are helpful examples throughout the report, and there's a lot of additional reading. The panel did a fine job here. But there's nothing really beyond the top-line summary of Boeing is not where it needs to be on the safety front, in order to ensure that things like missing bolts on mid-cabin exit door plugs don't happen.

So, what's the report worth? Why do we care what's going to happen? It's just another thing. Well, within six months of the report, according to the expert panel, Boeing should review the recommendations contained in this report and develop an action plan that includes a milestones-based approach to comprehensively address each recommendation. Boeing should then share that plan, including implementation dates with the FAA.

Well, this report came out earlier in the week. Yesterday, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February, Boeing leadership met with the FAA and the FAA administrator, Mike Whitaker, in Washington, DC. Following that nearly eight-hour-long meeting, Whitaker says this, "Boeing must commit to real and profound improvements. Making foundational change will require a sustained effort from Boeing's leadership. And we are going to hold them accountable every step of the way with mutually understood milestones and expectations."

**[0:06:33] JR:** Oh, and by the way, you've got 90 days to do it.

**[0:06:37] IP:** You've got 90 days to explain how you're going to get your act together.

**[0:06:42] JR:** We don't know what happens once 90 days elapses. If Boeing does not turn in its homework, I don't think the FAA is going to go to and shut the line down. But presumably something negative will happen. I can't imagine Boeing not coming through within its 90 days, but that is a much shorter window than the six months that the expert panel identified. Boeing

should review the recommendations and make an action plan. The FAA is cutting that time significantly.

**[0:07:10] IP:** Well, and the other thing is that the FAA says that Boeing needs to take into account the results of the ongoing safety audit, that the FAA is still conducting of Boeing's activity.

**[0:07:22] JR:** Yes. So, this is all quite well-timed. I mean, yes, it took four years, give or take, to put this report together. This Section 103 report. But the timing really coming now in early 2024 is really quite good. I think it nicely coincides with the absolute electron microscope focus on everything that is Boeing's safety. The timing is good. If this had come out next year, or even last year, the impact probably would have been less substantial. But right now, all eyes are on Boeing. The clock is quite literally ticking, at this point, a 90-day clock. Really interesting to see what Boeing puts together and if it follows through with something that's actually meaningful, actionable, and followed through by not only line employees, but management all the way up to the C-suite. Because if anything here, the report shows that, yes, there may be the theory of process and safety management system at Boeing, but in reality, it is not having the intended actions and the intended results that it's in place for.

**[0:08:28] IP:** Exactly. I should mention that the FAA's safety audit that's still ongoing, is looking not just at Boeing's activities, but also activities at Boeing suppliers, and Boeing's oversight of those suppliers. I mean, that's almost as important, or perhaps just as important.

**[0:08:48] JR:** I'd say it's more important, if anything.

**[0:08:50] IP:** Yes. Or even more important as what's happening at Boeing. So, I think that this renewed or newfound, vigorous oversight, that the FAA is conducting. I think, A, long overdue, but B, I mean, still very welcome. I think that not only do I feel better already about the future of Boeing, based on what seems to be a very strenuous commitment to making sure that they get this right on part of the FAA. But I also think that other organizations are saying, "Okay, maybe we should be paying attention to this as well." Certainly, Boeing and Boeing suppliers are paying very close attention to this. So hopefully, hopefully, hopefully, this is kind of the crest where Boeing really starts to get its act together.

**[0:09:49] JR:** I hope so, because I don't think there is much lifeline left in the rope here for Boeing. If it doesn't get its act together, I don't know, within these 90 days, there are going to be some serious implications, I think. Some serious questions that will be asked of Boeing, is this a competent company? Can leadership and management and anyone involved and getting its act together? Can they do it? I think the answer is yes. Now, they're being forced to do it. They don't have a choice. Everyone is watching at this point. So, like you, Ian, I'm hopeful, but it should not have come to this. They shouldn't need to have this electron microscope focused on their safety management system. But here we are, fingers crossed. No more snowmen, drill holes. No more missing bolts. No more missing cables or whatever for the rudder system. Hopefully, it's all uphill from here.

**[0:10:40] IP:** Yes. I think that's the case. Let us turn our attention to a few important safety investigation reports that have come out in the past week or so since we recorded. We're going to cover the final report into Pakistan International Airlines Flight 8303, which was the gear-up landing, go-around, and subsequent crash of the aircraft. The Danish Investigation Commission has released its report on an incident involving a TAP aircraft at Copenhagen. And then we received the Marathon Airlines E195 preliminary report that's all in Serbian. But we got the gist. We were able to get that.

So, let's dig in to the PIA report, which I mean, 160 pages of everything that the pilots could have done wrong, they did.

**[0:11:41] JR:** You probably forgot about this one. I did. This happened way back in like June 2020. So, we're coming up to three and a half years at this point. If you can have some spare time, flip through the report that the Pakistani authorities put together. There were other reports, I think, some of the European agencies put together a report last year. But this is the Pakistani final report, because this was a Pakistani aircraft. It is unequivocally the worst accident report I have ever read. Everything this crew did, from top of descent, down to preparing to land, to the go around, to coming back to the airport to land again. Everything they did was wrong. The most alarming thing was they were told they were doing wrong. Multiple times along the way, air traffic controllers opened communication to them and said, "What are you doing? And why are you doing that? You can't do that. That's not how this approach works."

Throughout the report, you can see the crew was noted to be overconfident, underprepared, not paying attention, not doing the right things. The cockpit wasn't sterile. It's just really, really alarming, eye-opening, of course. This accident led to the investigation into, what was it, the alleged good Pakistani or PIA flight crews, like a third of them not being properly licensed. Then, the airline being banned from in US airspace. So, it triggered a whole bunch of events. But this is, I think, the worst crash report I have ever read.

**[0:13:16] IP:** Yes. I mean, it's just mentioned at every occasion, and there are numerous occasions where the flight crew did something that was abnormal. The air traffic controller said, "Are you sure you want to be doing that? You can do something else if you'd like. Why don't you do this? Are you sure you don't want to hold and maybe try this again?"

To refresh everyone's memory on what happened, the aircraft was approaching Karachi, and the pilots were, I guess, unprepared. I'm not even sure kind of what the precipitating factor here was. But the flight was cleared to land on the ILS for runway two five left in Karachi. They were very high. They were 6,000 feet instead of 3,000 feet, 15 nautical miles from touchdown. They had extended the speed brakes and the landing gear. They were well above the vertical approach path. They were trying to get down, and as they were five nautical miles from the runway, they stowed the speed brakes and raised the landing gear.

**[0:14:38] JR:** When no one can quite figure out why that happened. It's just noted in the report, the landing gear was raised. It was locked and no one really knows why.

**[0:14:48] IP:** There were warnings about overspeed. There were warnings about terrain. There were warnings from air traffic control. They disregarded the air traffic control instructions and the approach was absolutely unstabilized.

**[0:15:05] JR:** I think, that's what's the most concerning part about this, is a lot of people commented, why didn't the aircraft warn them that the landing gear was up? Well, this flight crew was doing so much wrong, the master caution and master wash warning was already activated for something else. I believe it was ringing for a terrain warning that they were too low, the aircraft was not properly configured, and there was a text alert on screen saying landing

gear up. But there was so much other nonsense going on in that flight deck. So much other things done improperly, that the audio warning for a landing gear never went out because other stuff still has not been cleared. That's really – I can't believe it. You have to read this report. The full effect for yourself because it just like, it doesn't make any sense. None of what they did made any sense.

**[0:15:54] IP:** So, they continue the approach for reasons still unknown. They land or not land, but –

**[0:16:03] JR:** I wouldn't say the land. They contacted the ground.

**[0:16:07] IP:** They touched down on both engines, well down the runway, 4,500 feet down the runway, with the landing gear retracted. Then, they initiated a go-around after damaging both engines. The engines are leaking oil. The oil eventually, enough oil goes out of the engine, both engines stop working. But before that, they retarded thrust on the working engine, because one of them, basically, stopped working right away, and the other kept working. The other advanced to fullback, but they retarded the thrust lever on the working engine.

**[0:16:53] JR:** I feel like we've heard that before. That seems to be a thing that unfortunately happens, doesn't it?

**[0:16:58] IP:** So, it just maddening to read. Absolutely maddening to read this, and how this all transpired. There were so many opportunities, so many opportunities for either one or both of the pilots to not do this. I mean, they initiated the approach at 9:15. The crash was at 9:40. There was almost a half hour of constant bad decision-making, and it's just maddening.

**[0:17:28] JR:** Yes. None of this should have happened. I have read that there was some investigation into that the crew was fasting during this flight. I don't know if it coincided with Ramadan. I'm not completely sure.

**[0:17:42] IP:** Yes.

**[0:17:43] JR:** There you go. It coincided with Ramadan. So, they were fasting, but there's no direct link to maybe fasting equals bad piloting. That conclusion was never reached. It's a question I'm certainly asking. But unfortunately, that's not the kind of thing anyone can discern.

**[0:18:01] IP:** There were no conclusions in the report. But it's certainly something that I think is

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**[0:18:04] JR:** It's a question worth asking, but there is no answer. But this is really unfortunate. I believe there were 99 deaths as a result of this. Just everything wrong. It's not something that should be possible. But I feel like with as much warning as was going on, maybe the aircraft should have taken over. No, no, no, we're going to go back up to 10,000 feet. You're going to sort this out and we're going to try again. Really unfortunate that the aircraft itself was trying everything it could do to stop flow was happening. But there's only so many alerts, warnings, lights and bells that the aircraft can put out, that if there are two people up front that just don't seem interested in doing the right things, that's what's going to happen.

**[0:18:48] IP:** Yes. Okay. Let's move on to Copenhagen. Because this one's interesting. So, what happened was is a TAP A320 was flying from Lisbon to Copenhagen. It was a windy and wet day in Copenhagen, as it often is. It's early April. So, spring, windy, wet, of course. There's turbulence, there's rain, there's gusting conditions, and the aircraft's coming in. Stable approach, everything's fine, but they get down onto the ground. The thrust reversers deploy. After the thruster versus deploy, the captain decides that the aircraft drifted a little bit and doesn't like what he sees, advances the thrust levers to TO/GA power and begins a go-around.

**[0:19:46] JR:** That's a no, no. I believe that also came up in the Pakistani report that once you're on the ground and you apply reverse thrust, you are committed. You do not cancel that and conduct a go-around. That's exactly what happened here. Go on, Ian. There's more.

**[0:20:03] IP:** It gets interesting. The aircraft successfully climbed into the air. But –

**[0:20:08] JR:** That's good.

**[0:20:08] IP:** – the thrust reversers on one of the engines remained deployed.



**[0:20:13] JR:** That's bad.

**[0:20:15] IP:** That's bad. The thrust in the engine with the deployed thrust reversers, this was the left-hand engine. So, the left-hand thrust reversers remained deployed. But because the thrust reversers were deployed, the engine stopped producing thrust. It went to idle. So, it wasn't producing reverse thrust. It just wasn't producing any thrust. That confused the crew, because that's not what they were expecting, and they conducted a safe go-round taxi to the gate after landing, and saw that the thrust reversers were still open.

So, the report lays out kind of the timeline of what happened. The left-hand main landing gear makes contact with the ground, that provides the squat switch in the landing gear, airplane goes, "Oh, I'm on the ground reverse thrust." Maximum reverse thrust activates two seconds later after the wheels are on the ground. But the A320 bounced and that canceled out the weight on wheel signal on the left-hand gear. And at that same moment, the captain didn't like what he saw, and advanced the thrust levers to go around power.

Because of the loss of the weight on wheels signal, at the moment the thrust levers were pushed forward, it interrupted the stowage of the left-hand engine's reverser doors. The right-hand gear lost its weight on wheels signal during the bounce, but the right side of the aircraft bounced after.

**[0:21:51] JR:** So basically, the timing wasn't exactly perfect for the left side to confuse the airplane.

**[0:21:58] IP:** Yes. It was just long enough that the right-hand engine reverser stowed properly. So, they needed to apply the right rudder to have the aircraft climb away, and then they were very confused about why the aircraft was operating or behaving the way it was. Then, they figured out what was happening because they observed the reverser unlocked alert on the left-hand engine. They confirmed it was operating at idle thrust. They shut down the engine as they were supposed to, and then landed on the single engine not long after. Nobody was injured. All's well that ends well. But here's an interesting point.

**[0:22:37] JR:** How could it get more interesting than that exactly perfect timing? And basically, a single engine go around, which was one of the scariest things a pilot could have to do. What could possibly get weirder?

**[0:22:49] IP:** As part of the inquiry, the investigators determined that this captain had previous experience with this same exact situation.

**[0:23:04] JR:** No.

**[0:23:05] IP:** Yes.

**[0:23:08] JR:** Go on. Tell me more.

**[0:23:09] IP:** In 2019, after activating reverse thrust prior to applying go-around power. I'm going to read from the operator's flight crew manual. The pilot flying must not initiate a go-around after the selection of the thrust reversers. If the pilot flying initiates a go-around, the flight crew must complete the go-around maneuver. So, don't do it. But if you do it, you better do it.

**[0:23:36] JR:** You better do it. Okay. So clearly, the pilot flying here is a bit cautious, which is not a bad thing. The approach or the landing, if it's unstable, they don't feel right about it, going around is a good thing. But going around after you activate reverse thrust is a bad thing. You are not supposed to do that. So, it seems like this is a repeated behavior of this pilot, which is again, not procedure. Not good. Shouldn't be doing it, but better than the opposite, I guess? But just wild that the same pilot would have the same incident occur. Then, seemingly not realize it. But maybe – I mean, they would have had to know it that it happened the first time in order to know that it repeated. So curious, isn't it?

**[0:24:19] IP:** Yes. An interesting report, you learn as much as you could possibly want to know about thruster reversers on the A320. So, if that's your thing, by all means, check out the report. But it's really interesting to read about the interaction between human inputs, machine inputs, and how those two come together in an airplane.

**[0:24:43] JR:** Yes. I wonder if there might be some sort of software update issued by Airbus as a result of this one pilot's action twice.

**[0:24:52] IP:** This one specific pilot.

**[0:24:53] JR:** There might be some sort of logic change that Airbus can make to the 320 family to prevent this from happening. I bet we do end up seeing that.

**[0:25:01] IP:** Yes. We'll have to keep an eye out for that. We now return to Belgrade, where we have the preliminary report from Serbian investigators on the Marathon Airlines' E195 that was operating for Air Serbia. They confirmed basically, everything we already knew but they have more detail from the air traffic controller, which is basically the air traffic controller saying, "I told them not to do this and they did it anyway."

**[0:25:34] JR:** Yes. Kind of sounds like a report we just talked about further up where pilots were doing something very, very odd that they should have been doing. Air traffic control says, "Hey, should you be doing that?" And then they do it anyway. So, I don't know. Maybe that's the lesson. Pilots, listen to air traffic controllers a little more. Maybe give it some consideration. If ATC tells you, "Hey, you're halfway down the runway and you're not going to make it." Maybe think twice about what you're going to do.

**[0:25:59] IP:** Right. So, the aircraft was given a Delta 6 intersection departure, which has 2,349 meters of runway. Delta 5 intersection has 1,273 meters. Not good.

**[0:26:18] JR:** Not good. Not good at all.

**[0:26:19] IP:** They line up on D5. The air traffic controller says, "Hey, about that you shouldn't take off from there." They say, "No, we ran the calculations in the iPad. It'll be fine." Through 80 knots, everything was okay. By 100 knots, they realize they have the end of the runway fast approaching. So, they decide that it's safer to continue rather than abort the takeoff. They opted to use maximum thrust and delay the rotation of the aircraft in order to use all the available runway. They delayed quite a bit, as they couldn't climb away as quickly as they thought. They felt the aircraft "shake and heard an impact", which we now know was the ILS array. And they

started running checklists because they had alerts for a number of systems including the flaps and bleed air. Seeing the photos of the aircraft, we know exactly why they had problems with flaps and bleed air.

**[0:27:15] JR:** Yes. There was a giant hole in the plane.

**[0:27:16] IP:** Yes. I mean, the nose wheel hit the control boxes for the runway one two right approach lights. The fuselage and left-wing route plowed through the ILS antenna support and just tore a gaping gash in the left side of the aircraft and a big hole in the wing route. Just incredible that this airplane was able to climb away and land safely.

**[0:27:44] JR:** Good stuff.

**[0:27:45] IP:** Just wow.

**[0:27:47] JR:** Good airplane.

**[0:27:47] IP:** But Jason, we have some good news to report.

**[0:27:51] JR:** Okay, go on.

**[0:27:53] IP:** Don't we?

**[0:27:53] JR:** Yes, we do.

**[0:27:54] IP:** Oh, you've changed the order of the show notes, my friend.

**[0:27:56] JR:** Yes, because we're not done with the bad.

**[0:27:59] IP:** Okay fine.

**[0:28:00] JR:** We're not done with that bad. One more.

**[0:28:03] IP:** Okay. So last week, we talked about aircraft in the vicinity of Somalia, receiving basically pirate radio instructions from Somaliland “controllers”, providing climb and descent instructions that would cause aircraft to conflict with each other. Well, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February, a TCAS incident happened off the coast of Somalia that didn't rise to a resolution advisory. So, it wasn't a, “You need to do something right now”, and the aircraft was told to climb or descend or anything like that. This was a traffic advisory so they were further apart. This was Ethiopian Flight 602, flying from Addis to Dubai, and Qatar Flight 1383 flying from Doha to Entebbe.

The Ethiopian flight was at 39,000 feet. The Qatar flight was at 38,000 feet. The Qatar flight was told to climb to 40,000 feet, and they began to climb and climb through 38,500 feet when there was a traffic advisory. The Qatar flight descended back down to 38,000 feet. They passed without incident, and then the Qatar flight climbed up to 40,000 feet. They were both on the same airway traveling in the opposite direction, but they were both SLOPed. Longtime listeners of the program will know that SLOP is a standard lateral offset procedure. So, you've got yourself an airway, and you fly to the right of that airway, or the left of that airway. In this case, both aircrafts to the right of the airway in order to increase the safety margin. So, the aircraft were not in immediate danger. But this does kind of call home about what we've been talking about in the airspace over Somalia.

So, IATA is working together to convene a group of people to understand and mitigate these issues. I know ops group has been really on top of that, which is a collection of dispatchers, pilots, other operations folks that really have an eye on safe airspace. Hopefully, this is one of those things where everyone's aware of this and the pilots, dispatchers, and other folks are knowing what's going on. But this, thank you, TCAS.

**[0:30:29] JR:** Yes. TCAS didn't exactly saved the day that day, because there was no resolution advisory presented, but it was ready, willing, and able to save the day, which is exactly how we like TCAS to work.

**[0:30:42] IP:** Exactly. So now, for the good news, Jason.

**[0:30:45] JR:** The good news. Hot off the presses from IATA. Headline, 2023 safest year for flying by several parameters. Isn't that nice?

**[0:30:55] IP:** I love several parameters.

**[0:30:58] JR:** Parameters are great. And I'll quote here, "There were no whole losses or fatal accidents involving passenger jet aircraft in 2023." Hey, that's great.

**[0:31:09] IP:** That's fantastic news.

**[0:31:09] JR:** As soon as the odometer rolled over to 2024, things took a left turn and there was almost immediately a whole loss with JAL at Haneda. But we're talking about 2023. So, old news here. They do note that there was a fatal accident involving a turboprop with 72 fatalities. But by many metrics, as we said, it was one of the safest years for flying **[inaudible 0:31:34]**, which is fantastic. The number of fatalities at 72 in 2023 was lower by far than the five-year average of 2019 to 2023, which is 143.

So overall, a pretty spectacularly safe year, at the end of the day for flying. There were some scary incidents, and near accidents along the way, and close calls, and things that shouldn't have happened in 2023. But thankfully, none of those resulted in a whole loss or any significant accident with loss of life. But statistics are funny that way. We know that there were a lot of very close calls in 2023. But the statistics will forever and always show that it was one of actually the safest years. So, that's fun.

**[0:32:19] IP:** All right. Well, good. I mean, yes, I think one of the things about doing this podcast is we often talk about the bad things that happen. I mean, because they're important to discuss and learn from and talk about. But I think there is value to saying, "Okay, yes. It is a safe form of transportation and it continues to get safer. I think that should not be lost in all of the discussions about the not-so-safe things that we talk about.

**[0:32:48] JR:** Yes. There may be scary things that may sound like unsafe things are happening. But hey, the numbers don't lie unless you make them lie. But in this case, the math is what it is, and there were no whole losses and 2023, and no fatalities on commercial jets, which is good news.

**[0:33:05] IP:** We'll take it.

**[0:33:05] JR:** Back to bad news.

**[0:33:07] IP:** Some less good news. Over the weekend, Lynx Air, the ultra-low-cost Canadian airline shut down, grounding its fleet of nine 737-8 MAX aircraft. Lynx had gotten started in 2022, so they weren't around very long. They didn't really gain as much traction as we thought they would. Brett Snyder over Cranky Flier has an interesting piece about the Canadian market that I'll toss in the show notes, because it's worth reading for its analysis of basically, can the Canadian market support more than three airlines?

**[0:33:50] JR:** Seemingly not.

**[0:33:50] IP:** And the answer seems to be not really.

**[0:33:54] JR:** Maybe not. It is an exceptionally difficult country to operate an airline and there are all sorts of rules about who can own an airline and among the highest fees in the world to operate at Canadian airports. Clearly, there are too many out there. Between the few low-cost and ultra-low-cost airlines in Canada, it seems there are still too many. So, I wouldn't expect Lynx Air to be the last domino to fall at this point. But it is disappointing, mostly because of how sudden it was. Lynx Air just kind of overnight said, "Yes, at the end of the weekend we're done." And that came over spring break or winter break for many people. So, it disrupted a lot of travel plans. Obviously, all employees are now out of a job which is not great. But yes, never good when an airline just all of a sudden without really any warning just disappears overnight.

**[0:34:46] IP:** Came out of nowhere and then came quickly. This came out of the kind of waning days of the Singapore Airshow last week. Vietjet has a wide body order for us, which is interesting.

**[0:34:59] JR:** Yes. Twenty A330neo. Those are going to be some dense airplanes. Vietjet is the only airline that I have ever flown on where I actually did not fit in the seat. Thankfully, I was in an exit row. But if I were in a regular aisle, a regular row, I probably would not fit in the seat because I'm tall. I'm six-foot, give or take. I would have fit, but it would have been horribly

uncomfortable to the point where they were shuffling around other Americans on the flight because we just did not fit in those seats. We are not large people. But those A330s, they are going to be packed, but I assume they intend to fly to Western Europe with those aircraft. Maybe the West Coast of the US? That'll be interesting. But if they can bring down fares to Asia, I'm sure people will endure the pain for a couple of hours.

**[0:35:49] IP:** Now, we get into some interesting stories that are a little on the lighter side, I guess. But I don't really know much about this one. So, Jason, take us to Austin.

**[0:36:01] JR:** Okay. British Airways celebrating a decade of flying between Austin and London Heathrow, a route, I think somewhat famous for being enabled by the Boeing 787. It's one of those long and thin routes that just wasn't economically feasible before that. British Airways is celebrating a decade of flying to Austin. When you think of Austin, a lot of people think about barbecue. There are a number of airlines. I studied very diligently last week on what airlines offer their own exclusive beer on board and British Airways is one of them. They have topped that. They now have their exclusive barbecue sauce or as they call it BA-B-Q. See what they did there in BA-B-Q?

**[0:36:44] IP:** I get it. I get it. I get it.

**[0:36:46] JR:** But they have partnered with Franklin Barbecue which this press release tells me is a well-known, renowned barbecue joint in Austin to have their original barbecue sauce available for the month of March where they will have a barbecue-centric menu on board, in business and premium economy.

**[0:37:05] IP:** What could possibly go wrong?

**[0:37:06] JR:** What could go wrong? I'm sure it will be fine. But here's some menu items. Customers will have the option to enjoy a lightly smoked and succulent beef brisket dish served with sweet corn pudding, lightly spice beans, pickled cucumber, red onion and vegetable slaw capturing the heart of Texas barbecue culture, catered at some kitchen in Heathrow. I'm sure it'll be great. But interestingly, the airline will be distributing many bottles of the BA-B-Q sauce to passengers in the club's suites.



Actually, this route is operated by A350 now. So, forget everything about what I said about the 787. It's the A350 now.

**[0:37:44] IP:** The initial beginning was –

**[0:37:45] JR:** Yes. The route was initially proven by the 787. But pretty interesting that passengers will get their own five-ounce bottle of BA-branded Franklin Barbecues, original barbecue sauce. Sort of ended with that piece of news. That's just fun.

**[0:38:01] IP:** All right. Well, fair enough. Let's go elsewhere and talk about what happens when storms cancel four 737 flights.

**[0:38:14] JR:** Okay. I have an idea. I'm an airline. I've got this big, big A380 hanging around on standby. Let's use it.

**[0:38:23] IP:** I think that's great idea.

**[0:38:26] JR:** Someone at Qantas said, "We've got a bunch of flights canceled because there are storms." It wasn't in Melbourne or Sydney. I don't know. Either way, on one end of –

**[0:38:33] IP:** It was in Sydney.

**[0:38:33] JR:** In Sydney. There were storms, there were flow control issues, they couldn't send all the flights that were scheduled. So instead, they said, "Let's take what is basically three or four 737s, throw all those people on an A380 and we only need one slot." And that's exactly what they did. Notably, I think it was funny that the press release they issued said, "Don't worry. Anyone go into the Taylor Swift concert in Sydney is probably already there because this flight was supposed to get in at four o'clock. So, it's fine." But somehow, against all odds, Taylor Swift gets mentioned even in an airline operational press release. That's just something but good old A380 scooping up a couple 100 people.

**[0:39:12] IP:** I love it. I love it. And I'm glad that everyone who is going to the Taylor Swift concert made it there beforehand, that they were not affected by this.

**[0:39:19] JR:** Sure.

**[0:39:20] IP:** Jason, you flagged this one early in the week and now obviously, I'm making it my life's mission to go. So, if anyone from United is listening, your expanded training center in Denver is looking very nice.

**[0:39:33] JR:** Yes. They opened up yet another new wing of the Denver area flight training center bringing the facility up to 46 full-motion flight simulators with space to go up to 52. I believe this is the largest facility in the world. So, I'm going to have to check my math on that. Lesley, feel free to write in. But that is a massive facility. It is open 24 hours a day. Interestingly, open 362 days a year, yet United did not specify which three days of the year it is not open. But one can assume it is probably Christmas Day, Thanksgiving Day, and I don't know, pick another one, Ian.

**[0:40:14] IP:** New Year's Day? I don't know.

**[0:40:15] JR:** Sure. Why not? I don't know. No flight training on those three days. But that is just a massive facility. These are machines that cost roughly double-digit millions each, 10 plus, 15 million-dollar pieces of equipment and now they have space for up to 52 of them. That's just impressive.

**[0:40:34] IP:** I mean, when you've got, what, 800 aircraft in your fleet and thousands of pilots, that checks out. This is just one training center.

**[0:40:43] JR:** Yes. The facility is also open to non-United employees. I'm sure you pay a pretty penny. But I think Steve Giordano was out there somewhat recently doing some sort of recurrent training. So, it is open not only to United employees, but they probably get that 4am Christmas Eve slot. I don't know.

**[0:41:02] IP:** There you go. Let's retire this episode with a few retirement announcements. Asiana has set a date for their last 747-400 flight. The aircraft HL7428 will operate its last flight on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March. It's currently on the Sapporo-Seoul route, but the airline has not yet specified if it will remain on that for the last flight, or if there will be special dispensation for being on the aircraft. Hopefully, they do some fun stuff. Then, there's a Delta pilot retiring, and usually, when a pilot retires, we hear about it in the context of they operated their last flight. They got a water cannon salute. Their family was on board. Not this delta pilot.

**[0:41:50] JR:** No. This delta pilot said, "What if I took some of my newfound retirement cash and just chartered an A330neo, and invited 100 of my friends and family on board, and flew it to Hawaii?" That's exactly what they did. None of this is confirmed at this point. This is all speculation and rumors, but it seems pretty solid. I cannot wait to hear the details that Delta will inevitably put out probably in a press release or blog post tomorrow.

**[0:42:18] IP:** I'm sure we'll get pictures.

**[0:42:19] JR:** That is one way to go out. I don't know if this pilot operated the flight. I think they did. But I'm not totally sure. But what a way to go.

**[0:42:29] IP:** Everybody, hop in the back. We're going to Hawaii. Good for them. Well, congratulations on your retirement and congratulations to us for making it to the end of episode 257. If you liked the episode, or didn't like the episode, let us know. Leave a rating or a review wherever you get your podcasts so more people can either find the podcast, or you can tell them not to listen. But don't do that, because you enjoyed the podcast because you made it all the way to the end. This has been episode 257 of AvTalk. I am Ian Petchenik. And I'm here, as always with –

**[0:43:03] JR:** Jason Rabinowitz. Thanks for listening.

[END]