EPISODE 329

[EPISODE]

[0:00:08] IP: Hello, and welcome to episode 329 of AvTalk. I am Ian Petchenik, once again, here as always with –

[0:00:17] JR: Jason Rabinowitz. Welcome back, Ian. I hope your vacation was good and calming and that's definitely the case with your whole family in tow.

[0:00:26] IP: Absolutely. Yes. I dragged my entire family to London and then over to Ireland for our first international family vacation. It was relaxing and not stressful at all.

[0:00:40] JR: Everyone survived. You're back. We didn't know what to do without you, so we didn't do anything at all. I'm happy you're back, because I don't know how to do this podcast without you. It's a good thing you came back.

[0:00:52] IP: Jason just sat in a room by himself and talked for an hour.

[0:00:54] JR: Truly, truly.

[0:00:55] IP: It all worked out.

[0:00:56] JR: Just sat here. Yup. You're back.

[0:00:57] IP: We're back.

[0:00:58] JR: How were airplanes?

[0:01:01] IP: Airplanes were good. I had a lovely time. My kids are now – this is their first international trip and they are now harsh airline critics.

[0:01:09] JR: Ooh.

[0:01:11] IP: I'm waiting for my daughter to start pitching me credit cards and asking for referral links at this point.

[0:01:17] JR: Tell me more. What did they like? What did they not like?

[0:01:20] IP: We flew United, from Chicago to London, and they were not impressed.

[0:01:26] JR: Ooh. What is that? A 763?

[0:01:29] IP: That is a 763. That is the High J 763.

[0:01:31] JR: Oh, but that's like the luxury liner of the modern day. What's there not to like?

[0:01:36] IP: I liked it. I was comfortable. It's not that they were uncomfortable, but they were not impressed by the overall, shall we say, vibe of the aircraft? It was fine. Then we did a Ryanair flight from London to Dublin. I actually really enjoyed it, because it was quick, it was clean, everything just worked the way Ryanair works when you –

[0:02:01] JR: That really is what you can hope for.

[0:02:04] IP: - that low-cost experience where you know what you're getting and that's it. Then we flew home on Aer Lingus and everyone there was lovely. The kids had a great time, because they had better programming on the back of the seat. That was fine.

[0:02:18] JR: Huh. That's interesting. I would have expected very much the opposite. Usually, United has some very good content, and Aer Lingus I feel like is one of those airlines that has 12 movies.

[0:02:28] IP: No. Aer Lingus had a ton of stuff and a lot of games and all sorts of good, fun stuff to keep them busy, not that they didn't already have all of their own stuff, but it was good. They're harsh food critics, which I totally get. It was airline food and not very good at that. I think overall, the bug has bitten them and they'll want to do it again.

[0:02:50] JR: Well, I look forward to their YouTube reviews –

[0:02:52] IP: Exactly.

[0:02:53] JR: - each flight.

[0:02:53] IP: Exactly. Coming up soon. Let's see, what else are we doing this week before we get to what has happened over the past couple weeks? I want to let everybody know that I will be up at Oshkosh on Saturday. That is the 26th of July at 11.30 a.m. on forum stage three. We are having an aviation podcasters round table. A few folks from Midwest Aviation centric and then some wider aviation podcast, we're all getting together. We're going to chat a bit about, well, podcasting and aviation and we'll be hanging out throughout the day on Saturday. If you're at Oshkosh, if you're listening to the podcast on Friday, perhaps you're driving up to Oshkosh, then by all means, stop by and come say hello. We would love to see you.

[0:03:45] JR: Neat.

[0:03:46] IP: Let's talk about what has happened in the past couple of weeks. Right before we went on break, there was a report from Jon Ostrower at The Air Current that said, investigators of the Air India crash were focusing on the fuel cutoff switches on Air India 171 on the Boeing 787. We talked about that, what it might mean, what they were and everything like that. Then, the preliminary report came out and that was in fact correct. That is a main focus of the preliminary report. Now, the question becomes, how did that transpire? Why did that transpire and what's happening there?

We're not going to go through all of that again, mostly because the preliminary report just lays out in more detail. There's a link in the show notes, if you want to go look at our analysis of the preliminary report and the data that we have thus far. But in the intervening two weeks, there's been a renewed discussion among analysts, investigators and folks like Jason and I about what additional recorders, if any, are necessary on the flight deck. This is a discussion that comes up a few times a year. The NTSB is on record saying that they believe that video recorders on the flight deck would add a large safety component and assist with investigations. But the

conversation that I want to talk about comes from an interesting person and that's Willie Walsh, who is the head of IATA.

I was surprised by his comments where he said, “There is a strong argument for the inclusion of video recorders to “assist in accident investigations.”” He went on to say, “Based on what little we know now, it's quite possible that a video recorded in addition to the voice recording would significantly assist the investigators in conducting an investigation.”

[0:05:55] JR: Hmm. This is significant, because IATA essentially speaks for the airline industry. IATA is the lobbying arm and leg and every other body part of the airline industry. You could really take anything Willie Walsh says as the word of the entire industry, basically. If you have IATA, the head of IATA saying, “Hey, video recording of this incident would help a lot in the investigation,” this changes the conversation around video recording quite a bit.

I would expect, of course, every single pilot union to dispute this and continue the campaign against including video recording on the flight deck. The fact that Willie Walsh and IATA, I don't know how official the stance is on IATA's end, but the mere fact that they even uttered significant.

[0:06:50] IP: Exactly. This was him speaking at a roundtable event, just an IATA roundtable event in Singapore. This was not him addressing the issue directly. There was no media briefing called, or anything like that. I don't think this is the official speak of IATA yet. But as Jason mentioned, the fact that he would say this at all is very interesting, as far as the conversation that we've had thus far about adding video recording into the flight deck.

[0:07:23] JR: Yeah. As he said, it would help. It's not going to answer every questions. It will never answer things like intent, but we would be able to, of course, get to the conclusion that yes, the sounds that we hear overlapped with the data that the aircraft is telling us, that these switches, the electrical connection of these switches was moved at the same time, we heard a clunk over the audio recording. It sure would be a lot better to actually see those switches being moved, rather than inferring and concluding that that is probably what happened. There are plenty of ways that video recording can be introduced in privacy-minded ways. We'll see if IATA, or Willie Walsh continues on this path, or if this was just an off the cuff statement that doesn't

really capture IATA stance on this, if they even have a stance at all. Because I haven't seen a statement at all, but maybe we should reach out and ask about that.

[0:08:21] IP: Sure.

[0:08:22] JR: Does IATA have a new stance? I doubt it.

[0:08:26] IP: How far can they walk back the comments? Let's go to Mexico, where this is not the first time this particular type of incident has occurred. Earlier this week, an Aeromexico Connect Embraer E190 over flew a Delta 737 that was lined up for takeoff as the Aeromexico Connect Embraer was landing.

[0:08:52] JR: As the Delta 73 started to roll for its takeoff, which is even worse. Much, much worse.

[0:09:00] IP: The way that the runway is set up – So, this occurred on runway 05 right at Mexico City. The way that 05 right were – actually, both runways 05 left and 05 right, but 05 right has an even longer displaced threshold. There are multiple taxiways upon which an aircraft can enter the runway for departure, but there is a long-displaced threshold. Aircraft land beyond where aircraft can line up for departure.

[0:09:42] JR: Quite a ways down. I think that displaced threshold is quite a bit. I think it's 1600 feet, so it's almost the length of a short runway.

[0:09:51] IP: General airport runway. Yeah. It's a good general aviation runway. The Delta flight was lined up in the displaced threshold. If this had been a standard runway, it would have been so much closer than the few hundred feet that it already was. The Aeromexico Connect aircraft was coming in, over flew the Delta flight as it had begun its departure. Well, thankfully, it wasn't moving very fast, was able to reject the takeoff at a relatively low speed and move off the runway. Went back to the gate and was able to depart later.

The Aeromexico Connect landed seemingly without incident, though overlaying the granular track, and you can look at this image in the link in the show notes to the blog post that we have on this incident. It looks like the Aeromexico Connect flight swerved slightly.

[0:10:44] JR: Ever so slightly.

[0:10:46] IP: They didn't go around, but it looks like they swerved.

[0:10:50] JR: Yeah. I mean, it may be a little cork in the data, but if they swerve, it raises even further questions if you saw the aircraft on the displaced threshold and you knew they were there and they shouldn't be there, what are you doing not going around? Why are you just swerving around them? All sorts of questions raised, but we don't have the full story, I don't think, and we probably never will. Ian, you said this happened before here.

[0:11:17] IP: This happened before.

[0:11:18] JR: Tell us more.

[0:11:20] IP: I don't know if it was the same situation, but the same occurrence in 2022.

[0:11:28] JR: Yes. With video.

[0:11:31] IP: Yeah. That's a whole other thing. With video taken by pilots who could have radioed, “Hey, there's a plane on the runway.”

[0:11:41] JR: Yes. It raises all sorts of questions of, why were you recording video on the flight deck of a commercial flight when they're not supposed to be doing that? Why were you so prepared to take that video of something bad happening instead of, like you said, Ian, doing something to prevent that bad thing from happening? All sorts of questions. But that happened in 2022. I believe that was back when Mexico as a country had its safety rating lowered by the FAA, which has since been improved. Now they are back to, what is it? Category –

[0:12:12] IP: Category one.

[0:12:13] JR: Category one. Yeah, still some room for improvement down there, Mexico City. That airport has got its troubles, though, not to say we don't have our own troubles here in the US, and we'll get to that in a moment.

[0:12:27] IP: Yeah. Indeed, we do have some problems of our own. Big, ugly, I won't finish the acronym there, but –

[0:12:35] JR: Where were we going with that?

[0:12:38] IP: Oh, if you know what aircraft I'm talking about, you know. Let's just say, it's buff. There was an incident last week, where a Delta Connection operated by Sky West E175 had to conduct what the pilot called an aggressive maneuver as they were on approach to Minot, North Dakota.

[0:13:01] JR: Oh, yes. A hot spot of traffic and all sorts of issues.

[0:13:05] IP: Well, it's a hot spot of certain kind of traffic, and that certain kind of traffic is B-52s. There was, in fact, a B-52 in the way. This particular B-52 was participating in a flyover near the airport, had been according to the Air Force, in contact with air traffic control, was following directions from air traffic control and had been coordinating as they had waited for the flyover, conduct the flyover and were returning. Apparently, there was some miscommunication and the FAA is now investigating why that E175 had to conduct those “aggressive maneuvers.” The pilot was angry. There's a video from onboard during the pilot's announcement about what happened from their perspective and why they were going around and very angry.

[0:14:10] JR: Yeah. Kudos to the pilot of the Sky West flight for telling it like it is. There are certainly situations and where he could have just said, “Yeah, we had to go around, because there was another traffic.” But he went into detail, and the passengers onboard clearly appreciated that as there was a round of applause given before the announcement was even ended. This seems to be becoming a reoccurring theme here in the US, where there is military aircraft doing something, whether they are just doing a mission of their own, or doing some flyby, or something, where they have become dangerously conflicting with passenger aircraft on

multiple occasions. We saw, unfortunately, at the beginning of the year, what happens when things get too close.

In this case, it looks like the B-52 was transmitting ADS-B, until it wasn't. Another situation where I'm just not sure why they would have turned off ADS-B, or why it was stopped tracking, but it –

[0:15:12] IP: No, it's MLAT only.

[0:15:13] JR: I mean, it's pretty good MLAT until it just stops.

[0:15:16] IP: Well, thank you.

[0:15:17] JR: Yeah. Until it stops about 30 minutes before the incident.

[0:15:21] IP: I mean, but below certain altitude, the MLAT in Minot, North Dakota is not perfect. Yeah, it highlights an area of improved coverage for us.

[0:15:33] JR: Wow, there you have diplomatic. Overall, the sentiment is still the case where we saw after the DCA crash that if this aircraft does have ADS-B out and it's not on a mission of any sort and it's just doing the flyby, or whatever it was doing, why isn't it transmitting ADS-B? How do we end up in this situation where it was conflicting with a civilian commercial flight? One thing I do want to point out is I don't think any conclusion should be drawn from the fact that the local airport there was using a contract FAA tower. That is basically the only thing the FAA has said about this incident so far is that this airport in North Dakota uses a contract tower, which is fine, because half of the ATZ towers in the US use a contracted tower and don't use FAA personnel. But according to the FAA itself, these people are trained just as any other FAA controller would be. That really shouldn't have any impact. I'd love to hear from the FAA some more about what happened here.

[0:16:35] IP: Yeah. Most of the information about this incident has come from the Air Force. The FAA has said, they're investigating, but they haven't said much more than that.

[0:16:45] JR: Yeah. Hopefully, this trend corrects itself and we can stop having military helicopters and B-52s come in conflict with commercial aircraft, because this trend is not good.

[0:16:56] IP: Yeah. It's quarterly report time, and let's start with the fact that United lost a couple hundred million dollars, because of everything going on at Newark.

[0:17:05] JR: Ah, I mean –

[0:17:07] IP: Or, they didn't lose a couple hundred million dollars. They would have made a few hundred million dollars more, had Newark not been terrible.

[0:17:14] JR: Yes. United is still in the black, they are still making money. But they're making less money than they could have, if not for Newark, Newark, Newark, Newark, Newark, Newark. United claims the situation has been stabilized and they even have a whole ad campaign here in New York on the top of yellow cabs. If you call an Uber to a LaGuardia, or JFK, they will serve you an ad saying, “Hey, stupid. You should have used Newark, because Newark's really great and it's the most on-time airport in New York.” Unless, it's not.

[0:17:46] IP: Yeah. There's a bit of an interesting point the other day. Tell me more about that. No, no, no. You were the one that made the interesting point. I want you to make it again.

[0:17:52] JR: Oh, okay. I wanted to hear you tell me about the interesting thing I said, but I can assume what I said was Newark isn't operating fine, until it's not. Then when it's not, it's really bad. While you were away and blissfully unaware of all this stuff, we had some weather here in New York, as you might have in July. That created situations at Newark where inbound aircraft had tarmac delays of five-plus hours. Not just one, but a couple. A three, four, even five-plus hour tarmac delays getting to a gate after landing.

This is the situation we see at Newark where it's not just overall, yeah, things have improved by means of the schedule being paired back quite a bit, and some improvement in the air traffic control situation. But when things go sideways at Newark, they go sideways, while JFK and LaGuardia, they pretty much for the most part, they limp along. You might have a two-hour delay taxiing out to the act of runway at JFK, but you'll probably get out at Newark. When weather

comes, it hits Newark hard. There's a couple shades of gray to what United says is a good operation at Newark. It's good if it's good. But when it's bad, it's real bad.

[0:19:09] IP: Yeah. I think that's an important point to make, especially when you're factoring in where you want to fly from in the middle of the summer.

[0:19:18] JR: Yes. I mean, I don't recommend New York at all at this point, between mid-May and October. You shouldn't fly here at all. Don't fly here. Don't come here. Take a train if it's an option, because it's terrible. Even on good days, we still have pretty gross flight delays, or not. It's very unpredictable. It's very hard to understand what goes on here. But Newark is by far the most impacted of the three airports when things don't go according to plan, or if there's a cloud somewhere.

[0:19:47] IP: All right. Then good luck. Just keep an eye on the weather.

[0:19:50] JR: Mm-hmm.

[0:19:52] IP: Things are not going to plan for Ryanair, or Boeing, but in a good way for once.

[0:19:59] JR: What? No.

[0:20:01] IP: I know.

[0:20:02] JR: You lied. Nobody said that in the last 10 years.

[0:20:05] IP: Michael O'Leary is happy about something. O'Leary has said that –

[0:20:10] JR: CEO of Ryanair.

[0:20:12] IP: CEO of Ryanair, the quality and the timeliness of Boeing 737 MAX deliveries has “improved dramatically.” They are getting ready to take five MAX ahead of schedule for the first time. I don't say this lightly, literally years.

[0:20:32] JR: Wow. How did that happen?

[0:20:35] IP: Boeing's getting its act together. Akasa Air in India and United Airlines here in the US are also very, very happy with the way things have improved on the 737 MAX line.

[0:20:49] JR: All right.

[0:20:49] IP: Certainly, United would love to see additional MAX certified, sooner rather than later, but we're taking what we can get at this point, and that's more deliveries more often. That's really something for Boeing to be proud of.

[0:21:05] JR: Could we say that Boeing has gotten past its rock bottom phase?

[0:21:10] IP: It's on the ascent for sure. 787 deliveries are still lagging. There are still some issues lingering there. But overall, everything seems to be looking up for Boeing.

[0:21:24] JR: All right. It's funny, someone had asked me the other day, “Hey, one of those new United really premium 787 is coming into service. The airline says October of this year. Is that real?” I'm like, okay, well, if the airline's saying October of this year, maybe by summer 2026 realistically. I feel like, that's using my barometer of Boeing past. If things are truly better, maybe December.

[0:21:47] IP: It might be by spring.

[0:21:50] JR: Yeah. Ooh, oh. You are way more negative on that one than I did. Yeah, we have become so accustomed to saying, anything Boeing says is nonsense. If it says 2025, it's going to be 2027. But hey, there's proof to the contrary, which we have not had in a very, very long time.

[0:22:07] IP: Things are moving in the right direction.

[0:22:09] JR: Just don't say it too loudly. It might not –

[0:22:11] IP: Yeah, exactly, yeah. And knock on wood. On the order front, Gulf Air is placing an order for 12 plus six options for 787s.

[0:22:22] JR: And they're bringing them to New York.

[0:22:24] IP: Yeah. Yeah. This comes on top of the 10 that they already operate. That's in addition to the fleet. Condor also adding to its fleet of Airbus A330-900s with an order for four plus four options. Then, there's the couple orders that we had talked about by Vietjet Air, because we had talked about how they were having problems.

[0:22:52] JR: Then, they ordered a bunch of airplanes. Were like, “Uh, maybe it's overblown. Maybe it's not actually a problem.” Then there was some news today where like, “Oh, those problems are actually maybe worse than we had thought initially.” And things are getting bad, and some people want their money, a lot of money back from Vietjet. Maybe those orders don't go through, but we'll link in the show notes to a Bloomberg law article post about how FitzWalter Capital Limited in, I think, the UK is trying to reclaim 217 million dollars from Vietjet, including assets like seats and in-flight entertainment systems, which I didn't even know it had.

If they are literally clawing back the seats from inside the planes that it also wants to recoup, which haven't even yet been delivered, still very confused how Vietjet plans to order new airplanes and take delivery of them. I don't know. But hey, some orders may pop up near-term availability on the production line. May pop up, just like if you're Aegean Air.

[0:24:01] IP: Yeah. When you can find a pair of a 321 XLRs just seemingly lying around.

[0:24:07] JR: Weird.

[0:24:09] IP: The airline has orders for a 321 LRs, a fleet-sized order, and they found a pair of a 321 XLRs that they can get at the end of this year and beginning of next year and they're going to send those to India. They'll be able to begin flights to Delhi and Mumbai sooner rather than later, and they've got all sorts of plans to expand to other Indian cities beyond that. These 321 XLRs will have just 138 seats, including 24 business class seats and 112 economy seats.

[0:24:45] JR: Weird. A layout that just happens to exactly mirror the layout of JetBlue's A320 XLR planned fleet, an airline who was also deferred its delivery of the A321 XLR. There have been JetBlue 321 XLR spotted out the production lines that suddenly no longer have any JetBlue paint on them. I feel like Aegean is going to – they're going to feel a little minty coming up in the near future.

[0:25:15] IP: Maybe.

[0:25:16] JR: Which is great for Aegean, because those are fantastic airplanes.

[0:25:18] IP: I mean, the color is roughly the same.

[0:25:21] JR: It's close enough. But if you are an Aegean passenger flying to India, apparently on one of these, you're in for a treat.

[0:25:28] IP: Then there's a few deliveries that aren't necessarily deliveries in so much as they are, oops, the plane accidentally landed here.

[0:25:42] JR: Five times.

[0:25:44] IP: Five times. Yes. Although at this point, it's not even like, "We're declaring an emergency and we have to land in Iran." It's just a fly into Afghanistan, where there's no air traffic control anymore, descend below our VSM airspace and then just fly to Iran. Put your transponder off.

[0:26:01] JR: Oh, it's that easy, folks.

[0:26:03] IP: It's apparently that easy.

[0:26:04] JR: It used to be a lot more of a thing, like Ian said. There was this whole thing where aircraft would have flights filed that happened to go very near Iran. Then when they approached Iran, "Oh, no. 7700, something's terrible – something has gone terribly wrong." Then they emergency divert to Iran. Then suddenly, it's in Mahan Air Aircraft. That's how the legacy of the

A340-600s, how those ended up in Iran. Yeah, this time it just seems like, they turned off the transponder and, “Op, now we're in Iran.” Okay. These were all previously Singapore Airlines 777-200ERs. Then most of them were at NokScoot and/or Scoot, so these are not exactly the most luxurious aircraft on the interior. If you're an Iranian passenger, 777-200ER is a pretty good deal.

[0:26:57] IP: It will be the first example, if confirmed as having landed and become part of a fleet of an Iranian airline, it will be the first 777, or 777s to be part of any Iranian airline.

[0:27:12] JR: Very strange situation.

[0:27:13] IP: Very strange. Speaking of strange situations, 30% of the Pratt & Whitney geared turbofan global fleet remains grounded. That is a steady figure. Slightly we're rounding to 30%, so it's slightly down quarter over quarter, but it's roughly 30% of the global fleet remains grounded for maintenance and upgrades of those engines.

[0:27:42] JR: Which is good?

[0:27:44] IP: It's not getting worse.

[0:27:45] JR: I guess, that's good. I feel like we've been burned on this before, where every time we say, oh, things are getting better, they don't. But hey, number not changed is good.

[0:27:56] IP: We'll take it. Southwest is going to begin selling tickets for its first assigned seating flights next week. Tickets will go on sale the 29th of July for flights that begin January 27th, 2026. I can't believe we're talking about 2026 already. Yet, here we are talking about Southwest assigning seats in 2026.

[0:28:18] JR: Yes. Southwest is making up very quickly for a lost time. It's basically doing everything every other US airline has done over the last 20 years in six months. People who were left there, at least are working very, very hard as I work with a few of them. It has been no small feat to outfit hundreds of airplanes with USB ports, and half of the fleet already, I think, has the extra legroom seats installed. They are moving very, very quickly to make up for

decades of lost time. It seems to be going okay and mostly positive. I think most passengers, as I said, want assigned seats and want the option of extra legroom. The change to charging for bags has seemed to have come and gone without much public rioting, I guess. Yeah, Southwest probably should have been doing this a long time ago.

[0:29:13] IP: Good luck to them. A court hearing has been scheduled for August 28th in the Northern District of Texas. That hearing will be conducted by Judge Reed O'Connor, and will decide the fate of the non-prosecution agreement, as well as whatever happens next between the United States government and Boeing. This could be the end of the case against Boeing that was originally brought by the US. They accused Boeing of fraud. Boeing said, "Yeah, we did that."

[0:29:58] JR: We did fraud.

[0:29:59] IP: They reached a deferred prosecution agreement. That was what the government said after the January door plug blowout on Alaska Air and said, "Wait a second. You didn't live up to your end of the bargain. We're now going to prosecute you." That was under the Biden administration. Then Trump administration comes in and the administration reaches a non-prosecution agreement with Boeing, and family members of the victims of the two MAX crashes object. Where we are now, and we talked about this a couple of episodes ago, is those family members, lawyers for those family members, are asking the court to appoint a special prosecutor.

The question is, and the Department of Justice is arguing, there's no constitutional way to do this. But the question is, can the court compel the government to continue to prosecute the case, even after they have reached a non-prosecution agreement? The families are arguing that they should throw out the non-prosecution agreement, because it's unprecedented to reach a non-prosecution agreement before the judge in the case has ruled on the dismissal of the case. Some interesting and thorny legal questions. We'll get into that on the 28th of August and then see where this case goes from there. It may be the end of the line, or it could go onward. Then it would be very interesting to see what happens next. We'll keep an eye on that and report back in the end of August.

[0:31:39] JR: All right.

[0:31:41] IP: The NTSB released a final report on a crash that occurred in Alaska and –

[0:31:49] JR: It caught our eye.

[0:31:52] IP: General aviation crashes in Alaska are unfortunately not rare. They happen at a much higher rate than general aviation crashes elsewhere, and they are often full of special circumstances. This particular flight was very special in a few ways. We also learned a lot about general aviation investigations generally, and a few things caught my eye. Jason, let's start with just the cause of the crash.

[0:32:26] JR: Too much moose meat. Pause for a dramatic effect. They were 117 pounds over their maximum takeoff weight, overladen with moose meat. Had they taken off, they still would have been 180 pounds over the maximum landing weight. It gets somehow impossibly weirder. Yeah, people have over the years, of course, put too much weight on their airplane. These things happen. But Ian, what else happened? This has got to be the most unusual weird thing we have ever read ever.

[0:33:02] IP: This was a bull moose. Apparently, this happens a lot. There are FAA approved guidelines for this particular thing. But they had secured the antlers to the right-wing strut.

[0:33:16] JR: Wait, like the outside of the airplane wing strut?

[0:33:19] IP: Correct.

[0:33:21] JR: And there are FAA approved procedures for this?

[0:33:25] JR: Yes. They were not followed in this particular circumstance. But there are, in fact, FAA procedures. I will read the relevant paragraph from the NTSB.

[0:33:33] JR: Please. Enlighten us.

[0:33:36] IP: “Although carrying antlers externally is a common practice in Alaska, it requires formal FAA approval with a notation in the airplane's airworthiness and maintenance logbooks. There was no evidence that such approval have been granted for the accident of airplane.”

[0:33:51] JR: Basically, you just put in the logbook, “Hey, I strapped some antlers onto the outside of the airplane.” That's really it? Did I hear you say, they have to get approval or no, right? It's just, you got to put it in the logbook?

[0:34:03] IP: It sounds like you need to call the FAA and say, “Hey, I'm going to strap some moose antlers to my wing strut.” It's unclear to me.

[0:34:12] JR: I don't see how this would change things, unless they're also like, “Well, okay. But did you make sure you didn't put too much moose meat inside the plane? Otherwise, you're going to be overweight.”

[0:34:21] IP: Maybe that's the conversation that needs to happen.

[0:34:23] JR: That could be. Man, Alaska's a trip. It's just such a different, different world there.

[0:34:29] IP: It really is. This is not necessarily Alaska specific, but it is generally aviation specific. It was really interesting to me that the NTSB noted this in the report. I feel like, this paragraph is worth reading. Let me point out that this is a Piper PA 18. “The aircraft was manufactured 70 years ago.” Not uncommon. General aviation aircraft last forever if they are well maintained. This particular aircraft had undergone “dozens of major repairs and alterations, such that at the time of the accident, almost none of the original airplane existed.” That's also not uncommon.

[0:35:11] JR: No. I mean, that could be a Delta 757 for all we know.

[0:35:15] IP: Quoting again. “Although the repairs and alterations were approved through supplemental type certificates, at the time of those alterations were performed, the FAA did not provide guidance for installers to determine the interrelationship between all STCs incorporated into the aircraft. Therefore, the airplane's true flight performance characteristics under normal

conditions and particularly when the airplane was flying outside of its weight envelope were unknown."

[0:35:40] JR: Basically, you've done so much to this airplane that it's not anywhere near original and we have no idea how it performs. Good luck.

[0:35:48] IP: Yeah, basically. I thought that was a really interesting thing to note, and something that I'm not sure how the FAA would even begin to mandate interoperability tests, or how that would work across the entire GA fleet.

[0:36:06] JR: Yeah, not so much. It would be very hard to have a list of those component from 1962 work with this new component from 2025. We're going to find out one way or another.

[0:36:16] IP: Yeah. Just a very interesting short final report. The report does include a photo of the aircraft carrying the moose antlers mounted to the wing strut. I grew up around moose, so I know how big they are. We will definitely include the photo initial notes. For those who don't know how large moose are and by extension, moose antlers, they're not small items. It's not like somebody put a small thing on the side of the aircraft. They're very large.

[0:36:52] JR: It's going to create some drag that wasn't there before.

[0:36:55] IP: Yeah. Link in the show notes. Jason, I don't think we talked about the closing of Wizz Air's Abu Dhabi division, but they're done. They've said, "We don't want to do this anymore." They cited weather, regulatory conditions, all sorts of reasons, just to say, "Okay, we're out." Then Etihad and Air Arabia said, "All right, we're in." It seems not to have made much of a difference as far as connectivity is concerned, but Wizz Air said, "We're done with that now." Air Arabia, which had partnered with Etihad, has now begun backfilling capacity based on Wizz's exit.

[0:37:38] JR: Yeah, didn't last all that long. Started in 2019 ending in 2025. A whole bunch of stuff, as we all know, along the way in 2020, 2021. Yeah, I'm sure they will just redeploy these aircraft elsewhere in the Wizz Air Empire and things will be fine.

[0:37:55] IP: So many AOCs to figure out which one to put them on.

[0:37:58] JR: As long as it still work.

[0:37:59] IP: Yeah. I mean, seemingly. I think that the reason is they want them to keep working. These are, in fact, GTF-powered aircraft.

[0:38:06] JR: Harsh conditions there in Abu Dhabi.

[0:38:09] IP: Pakistan International Airlines is set to make its return to the United Kingdom after a five-year ban has been lifted. The ban went into effect following the European Union Aviation Safety Agency's ban on PIA, in part because of the investigation into the crash in Karachi and in part due to the fact that it was then discovered that a large portion of Pakistani pilot licenses were fraudulently obtained. It's taken them five years to increase their aviation security and safety. The UK has finally said, “Okay, good enough for us. You can restart flights.” PIA is set to launch Manchester once again, I believe, in August. Relatively quickly getting things back up and going again.

[0:39:01] JR: Good for it, I guess. As it looks for a suit or two to privatize the airline, which every time I think about that I laugh.

[0:39:10] IP: Good luck. Let's close the show with a couple of notes where we've talked about some things before. We talked about the aircraft that had been destroyed in Kyiv at the onset of the Russian invasion. Now we get to talk about one that was not only not destroyed, but improved. Antonov recently flew out in upgraded and modernized An-124. They moved it from Kyiv to their new operating base in Leipzig, and it sports all sorts of things; upgraded electronics, communications, upgraded engines. They spent a lot of time working on it and they decided, “Eh, we can fly it out now.” I thought that was pretty cool, and looking forward to seeing that one flying around.

[0:40:01] JR: That's awesome. Good for them.

[0:40:02] IP: Yeah. Hey, Jason.

[0:40:04] JR: Hey, what?

[0:40:05] IP: There's a bunch of customs and border protection facilities that have windows.

[0:40:11] JR: That's great, but do they have windows as nice as the new JFK terminal one?

[0:40:16] JR: Apparently, not. That's the distinct we're drawing. Airports, including Seattle and Minneapolis all have windows. Jason, I think you even said that the current JFK one might have some windows?

[0:40:27] JR: Yeah, but they're so dirty. I'm not even sure if any –

[0:40:29] IP: Ah, okay.

[0:40:30] JR: - tons can get through it. I want to worry about that one.

[0:40:34] IP: A few weeks ago, we talked about a cat that had gotten out of the bag. This week, we end the show with a reader supplied memo of a turtle being smuggled on to the flight and getting out of where it had been smuggled in. A turtle on an LL Flight that wasn't supposed to be there, because it's a red-eared slider and they're considered invasive in Israel, was on a flight to Israel from the US. It escaped whatever packaging it had been smuggled in on and bit a passenger before being captured by the group.

[0:41:10] JR: That's an interesting one to explain to your doctor. “Why are you here?” “A turtle bit me on an airplane.” Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

[0:41:16] IP: Mm-hmm. That's a new one. But they captured the turtle and handed it over to wildlife authorities upon landing. No word on yet what charges the turtle smuggler might be facing.

[0:41:30] JR: Mm-hmm. What a story.

[0:41:32] IP: What a story, indeed. We'll call that a full episode. This has been episode 329 of AvTalk. We'll be back next week with another new episode. But before then, after you listen to this episode, you can come see us at Oshkosh Reminder. I'll be up there on Saturday at 11.30 on forum stage three. You can find us by emailing us at podcast@fr24.com anytime, or on social media. We will talk to you next week. I am Ian Petchenik, here, as always with –

[0:42:07] JR: Jason Rabinowitz. Thanks for listening.

[END]