



WASHINGTON AVIATION SUMMARY

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CONTENTS

I.	REGULATORY NEWS	1
II.	AIRPORTS	5
III.	SECURITY AND DATA PRIVACY	7
IV.	TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT	8
V.	ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT	9
VI.	U.S. CONGRESS	10
VII.	BILATERAL AND STATE DEPARTMENT NEWS	12
VIII.	EUROPE/AFRICA	13
IX.	ASIA/PACIFIC/MIDDLE EAST	14
X.	AMERICAS	16

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The Kirstein & Young law firm specializes in representing U.S. and foreign airlines, airports, leasing companies, financial institutions and aviation-related companies before U.S. Government agencies, Congress, the courts and in commercial and financing matters.

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I. REGULATORY NEWS

1. IATA Forecasts \$36.6 Billion Net Profit in 2025.

“We’re expecting airlines to deliver a global profit of \$36.6 billion in 2025, said Willie Walsh, Director General of the International Air Transport Association (IATA). “This will be hard-earned as airlines take advantage of lower oil prices while keeping load factors above 83%, tightly controlling costs, investing in decarbonization, and managing the return to more normal growth levels following the extraordinary pandemic recovery. All these efforts will help to mitigate several drags on profitability which are outside of airlines’ control, namely persistent supply chain challenges, infrastructure deficiencies, onerous regulation, and a rising tax burden.” Total industry revenues are expected to be \$1.007 trillion, up 4.4% from 2024 and the first time that industry revenues top the \$1 trillion mark. Passenger numbers are expected to reach 5.2 billion in 2025, 6.7% over 2024 and the first time that number of passengers exceed five billion; the number of flights will reach 40 million. Among geopolitical and economic uncertainties ahead are wars in Europe and the Middle East, and tariffs and trade wars promised by the incoming U.S. Administration. However, said IATA, “should the business-friendly stance of the first Trump administration continue into this term, gains from deregulation and business simplification could be significant.” All regions are expected to show improved financial performance in 2025, compared to 2024, and to deliver a collective net profit in both 2024 and 2025.

2. FAA Administrator Mike Whitaker Resigns.

Mike Whitaker plans to step down from his role as Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on January 20, 2025, when the Trump Administration begins. Deputy Administrator Katie Thomson will leave on January 10, and Mark House will step in as Acting Deputy Administrator. House, who currently is Assistant Administrator for Finance & Management, has 20 years of executive experience at FAA and “is uniquely qualified to guide the FAA and ensure a smooth transition,” said Whitaker.

3. DOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg Prepares to Step Down.

In an interview with The New York Times, Department of Transportation (DOT) Secretary Pete Buttigieg said, “What the next few years will hopefully prove is a change in the practice and culture of how airlines treat passengers. I think that should be something that will last, but will require constant tending.” . . . “I know that our world continues to face evolving challenges,” Buttigieg said, in remarks at the celebration of the 80th anniversary of the signing of the Convention on

International Civil Aviation (the Chicago Convention), which created the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). “So let me end with this: a strong global air transportation system depends on our fidelity to the commitments that we have made to one another, the trust that we have built, and the extraordinary potential we have unlocked by means of that trust. This is the real significance of the rules, protocols and standards established by this body and by our member states. As we go forward, we must all remember the strength of our commitments and values, remain ready to support other nations, and seek always the basis for common ground. The work we do together, as this body collectively has made possible for 80 years, will continue to open up great possibility for all of us in the skies and closer to home.” . . . Former Wisconsin congressman Sean Duffy has been tapped to serve as DOT Secretary in the Trump Administration.

4. DOT Issues Final Rule Protecting Wheelchair Users.

DOT issued a final rule that requires airlines to meet more rigorous standards for accommodating passengers with disabilities, especially those who use wheelchairs. The rule, which takes effect on January 16, 2025, mandates hands-on training for airline employees and contractors who physically assist passengers with disabilities and handle passengers’ wheelchairs, and specifies actions that airlines must take to protect passengers when a wheelchair is damaged or delayed during transport. Provisions in the final rule have varying implementation timelines, ranging from January 16, 2025 to June 17, 2026 for training requirements. DOT data shows that for every 100 wheelchairs or scooters transported on domestic flights, at least one is damaged, delayed or lost. . . . In related news, key priorities for improving global air travel accessibility were established at a joint symposium held by ICAO, Airports Council International (ACI) and IATA. “While current regulations address accessibility within individual jurisdictions, achieving significant progress requires a cohesive framework on an international scale,” said officials.

5. DOT Rule Would Compensate Passengers Stranded by Disruptions.

DOT launched a rulemaking to protect passengers stranded by airlines canceling or significantly changing their flights. The Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking seeks public comment on requiring airlines to pay passengers at least \$200 in cash compensation, rebook them for free on the next available flight, and cover meals, overnight lodging, and related transportation expenses when a disruption is airline-caused, such as a mechanical issue or an IT airline system breakdown.

6. **U.S. Airlines Gained \$2.1 Billion in Third Quarter 2024.**

U.S. scheduled passenger airlines reported a third-quarter 2024 after-tax net gain of \$2.1 billion and a pre-tax operating profit of \$3.1 billion, reports DOT. In third quarter 2023, the airlines reported an after-tax net gain of \$1.6 billion and a pre-tax operating gain of \$3.3 billion. Total 3Q 2024 operating revenue of \$63 billion included fares at \$47.6 billion, 75.5% (76.3% in 3Q 2023); baggage fees at \$1.9 billion, 3.0% (2.9% in 3Q 2023); and reservation change fees at \$254 million, 0.4% (0.4% in 3Q 2023).

7. **DOT Fines Ethiopian, Etihad for Code Share Violations.**

DOT fined Ethiopian Airlines \$425,000 for operating flights carrying United's designator code, and Etihad Airways \$400,000 for operating flights carrying JetBlue's designator code, in regions where an FAA flight prohibition was in effect for U.S. operators.

8. **Drug, Alcohol Testing Required for Foreign Repair Stations.**

FAA issued a final rule requiring certificated repair stations outside the U.S. to implement drug and alcohol testing for workers who perform safety-sensitive maintenance functions on certain air carrier aircraft; to send testing data electronically to DOT; and ensure that employees receive all necessary anti-drug and alcohol abuse training. FAA proposed the rule in December 2023 and the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 required implementation. Around 977 repair stations in 65 countries are affected.

9. **FAA Expands Air Traffic Controller Training Program.**

The University of North Dakota will participate in FAA's Enhanced Air Traffic- Collegiate Training Initiative (AT-CTI), joining Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Tulsa Community College and the University of Oklahoma as the first schools to offer the curriculum and advanced technology of the FAA Air Traffic Controller Academy in Oklahoma City.

10. **IATA: \$1.7 Billion in Airline Funds Blocked by Governments.**

IATA reported that \$1.7 billion in airline funds were blocked from repatriation by governments, as of end of October 2024, compared to \$1.8 billion at end of April. About \$1 billion of the blocked funds is in African countries. Over the last six months, there were significant reductions in blocked funds in Algeria (\$193 million from \$286 million in April) and Ethiopia (\$43 million from \$149 million in April). Pakistan continues to top the list at \$311 million, mainly due to system delays. IATA Director General Willie Walsh urged governments to remove barriers for airlines to repatriate revenues from ticket sales and other activities in accordance with international agreements and treaty obligations. "No country

wants to lose aviation connectivity, which drives economic prosperity. But if airlines cannot repatriate their revenues, they cannot be expected to provide a service,” said Walsh.

11. IATA’s Turbulence Aware Platform Expands.

IATA’s Turbulence Aware Platform continues to expand, with over 25 airlines contributing and consuming data through more than 2,600 aircraft. Turbulence Aware pools anonymized turbulence data from flights operated by participating airlines. This real-time, accurate reporting enables pilots and dispatchers to choose optimal flight paths, avoiding turbulence and flying at optimum levels to maximize fuel efficiency and thereby reduce CO2 carbon emissions. Along with growing airline participation, the data transmission scope of Turbulence Aware is expanding through agreements concluded with The Weather Company, Lufthansa Systems, PACE TXT, APiJET, BCI and Storkjet over the past 12 months. Through their existing data solutions for cockpit instruments, flight planning, and flight tracking systems, these companies now offer access to Turbulence Aware data. This enables pilots, dispatchers and flight planners to receive turbulence data directly in their main workflows, without relying on multiple screens or tools. IATA launched Turbulence Aware in 2018 to help airlines mitigate the impact of turbulence which remains a leading cause of passenger and crew injuries. In 2023, a total of 38 million reports were generated. Data from IATA Turbulence Aware is also made available to meteorological offices for turbulence modeling validation and development as well as academic institutes for research purposes.

II. AIRPORTS

1. IATA Releases White Paper on Slot Regulation.

Slot regulation should push airports to squeeze more capacity from existing infrastructure, said IATA in a White Paper. Nearly 400 airports worldwide are unable to fully meet demand for air connectivity and if current trends prevail, this number could grow by 25% over the next decade. IATA is calling for modifications to slot regulations that will hold airports to account if they are not doing enough to create more capacity. This would include requiring airports to regularly review their capacity declarations and reveal where potential capacity increases are being neglected, and consequences if declared capacity is not delivered as promised. “Stronger regulation is needed to close the enormous gap between the best and the mediocre airports in delivering capacity,” said IATA. . . . Airports Council International (ACI) World said IATA’s White Paper ignores airline activities that lead to inefficient slot allocation and usage. “Meeting future capacity demand requires collaboration among all aviation stakeholders,” said ACI World.

2. DOT Awards Slot Exemptions at Reagan Washington National.

DOT finalized an order to award two slot exemptions at Reagan Washington National to each of five carriers to operate new nonstop roundtrip service, as follows: Alaska to San Diego; American to San Antonio; Delta to Seattle; Southwest to Las Vegas; and United to San Francisco.

3. New Terminal Construction Begins at John Glenn Columbus.

Construction has begun on a multi-billion-dollar terminal at John Glenn Columbus International, with completion expected by 2029. The new terminal’s 36 gates, including two international, will center around concessions featuring local food and beverage options. Passengers will have access to the terminal through two curbside levels (departures and arrivals) and via a pedestrian bridge linking the Ground Transportation Center which will include the Rental Car Facility and a new 5,000-space parking garage. A centralized security checkpoint will be near the entrance.

4. San Antonio Breaks Ground on New Terminal.

San Antonio International broke ground on a new terminal, which will have “up to 17 gates, more than 800,000 square feet of new terminal space, 35,700 square feet of concessions space, and 29,000 square feet of club lounge space.” The construction is part of the Terminal Development Program (TDP), which will guide future development of the airfield, terminal facilities, ground access and support infrastructure over the next 20 years. TDP is the

cornerstone of Elevate/SAT, a \$2.5 billion expansion and capital improvement plan. The terminal is scheduled for completion in 2028.

5. **SFO Offers Complimentary Remote Bag Check.**

San Francisco International is offering complimentary remote bag check by Bags, Inc. at its long-term parking garage and rental car center, for domestic flights on Alaska, American, Delta, JetBlue and Southwest. Bags, Inc. also operates airport bag drops at Denver, Tampa, Orlando, Boston Logan and Louis Armstrong New Orleans. . . . In other news, Port of Oakland filed a Notice of Appeal challenging a November court order blocking it from changing its name to San Francisco Bay Oakland International Airport. The city of San Francisco had sued Port of Oakland, saying the name change is confusing and violates copyright infringement.

6. **FAA Awards \$20 Million to Modernize Airport-Owned ATC Towers.**

FAA is awarding \$20 million to be used to upgrade existing or build new air traffic control towers at 20 smaller and regional airports. The funding comes from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

7. **American Airlines Cargo Expands London Heathrow Operations.**

American Airlines Cargo expanded facility and digital capabilities at London Heathrow, its largest operation in Europe. A new building offers a total of 120,000 square feet, a 15,000 square foot increase compared to the original combined facilities, and enables greater flexibility for the carrier and its cargo handler, Worldwide Flight Services (WFS). American also updated how it transmits operational updates digitally with WFS. The combined effort enables a new digital connection between the WFS system, CargoSpot, and American's iCargo platform.

III. SECURITY AND DATA PRIVACY

1. **Trump Picks Gov. Kristi Noem to Lead Homeland Security.**

President-elect Donald Trump tapped South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem to be Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Noem earlier served in the South Dakota legislature and in the U.S. House of Representatives. If confirmed, she would succeed current DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

2. **Strange Lights in Night Sky Cause Alarm.**

Amid concerns and speculation about strange lights in the night sky over civilian airspace in the northeast U.S., DHS, FAA, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Department of Defense (DOD), in a joint statement, said the sightings include a combination of lawful commercial drones, hobbyist drones, and law enforcement drones, as well as manned fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, and stars mistakenly reported as drones. “We have not identified anything anomalous and do not assess the activity to date to present a national security or public safety risk.” The federal government sent advanced detection technology and trained visual observers to the region, and Congress was urged to enact counter-Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) legislation when it reconvenes. . . . Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), who chairs a Senate Homeland Security panel, requested a briefing on how the agencies plan to address safety and security concerns. “Incidents involving drones interfering with aircraft operations have increased, posing a real and substantial risk to passengers, crews, and others in the vicinity. And, I am particularly concerned about the potential for these unmanned aerial vehicles—many of which are as large as a car—to disrupt air traffic and, more alarmingly, to be used maliciously to threaten national security,” wrote Blumenthal. . . . At the request of federal security partners, FAA published Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFRs) prohibiting drone flights over critical infrastructure—30 for New York and 22 for New Jersey. . . . FBI Newark and New Jersey State Police warned of an increased number of pilots of manned aircraft being hit in the eyes with lasers, because people on the ground think they see a UAS. There is also concern about people firing weapons at what they believe to be a UAS but could be a manned aircraft.

IV. TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT

1. Sabre, American Extend IT Partnership.

Sabre and American resolved litigation in connection with a 2011 lawsuit initiated by US Airways, and renewed their technology partnership, including the provision of the SabreSonic® Passenger Service System (PSS). American also extended its subscription with Sabre PRISM, a corporate travel contract management solution. American's NDC offers are available through Sabre's Global Distribution System (GDS).

2. IATA Launches Air Cargo Device Assessment Program

IATA launched the Air Cargo Device Assessment Program to validate air cargo tracking devices, data loggers and sensor-equipped devices for compliance with industry safety standards. "The fastest-growing segments of air cargo are pharmaceuticals, perishables, electronics, and high-value goods. Shippers rely on various battery-powered electronic devices to monitor these sensitive shipments to ensure their integrity," said Brendan Sullivan, IATA's Global Head of Cargo.

3. JAL, NEC Test AI Powered Carry On Baggage Analysis Solution.

Japan Airlines and NEC jointly conducted a trial of the NEC Baggage Counting Solution, which uses artificial intelligence (AI) to automatically analyze the quantity and types of carry-on baggage at boarding gates. The solution enables measures to be taken for carry-on baggage, which is one of the causes of flight delays, aiming to improve on-time performance and ensure smooth boarding. Based on results of the trial, JAL is exploring methods for implementing the solution in the future.

V. ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

1. Fuel Bill for Global Airline Industry.

The global average jet fuel price for week ending December 13 was \$89.23 per barrel, down -1.4% on prior month's average, and down -20.6% on prior year's average, according to the Jet Fuel Price Monitor, a joint IATA-Platts initiative.

2. IATA: Disappointingly Slow Growth in SAF Production.

New IATA estimates show that Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) production volumes reached 1 million tons (1.3 billion liters) in 2024, double the 0.5 million tonnes (600 million liters) produced in 2023. SAF accounted for 0.3% of global jet fuel production and 11% of global renewable fuel. Previous estimates projected SAF production in 2024 at 1.5 million tons (1.9 billion liters), as key U.S. facilities have pushed back their ramp up to first half 2025. In 2025, SAF production is expected to reach 2.1 million tons (2.7 billion liters) or 0.7% of total jet fuel production and 13% of global renewable fuel capacity. "SAF volumes are increasing, but disappointingly slowly," said Willie Walsh, IATA Director General. "Governments can accelerate progress by winding down fossil fuel production subsidies and replacing them with strategic production incentives and clear policies supporting a future built on renewable energies, including SAF."

VI. U.S. CONGRESS

1. Senate Hearing on Airline Fees.

The Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations held a hearing on “The Sky’s the Limit – New Revelations About Airline Fees.” Prior to the hearing, Chair Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) wrote to the Departments of Transportation and Treasury regarding PSI’s “findings from its investigation into airline junk fees and urging the agencies to take action to protect consumers.” In their testimony, executives from American, Delta, United, Frontier and Spirit defended their fee practices. In closing, Blumenthal called for action to lower costs for consumers, increase price transparency, and review the state of competition within the airline industry. “More must be done to address the rising cost of air travel and to empower passengers, beginning with greater transparency,” he said.

2. Senate Hearing on ATC Systems, Personnel and Safety.

The Senate Subcommittee on Aviation Safety, Operations and Innovation convened a hearing titled “U.S. Air Traffic Control Systems, Personnel and Safety” to examine the impact of FAA’s aging air traffic systems and facilities essential to air traffic control operations and related challenges among the technical air traffic workforce. Testimony from the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA) emphasized budget constraints, noting that ATC facilities across the U.S. range from two to 82 years of age, some “plagued by leaking roofs, flooding basements that contain electronic systems, broken-down elevators and HVAC systems, and chronically backed-up bathroom toilets.” Regarding the controller staffing shortage, FAA is meeting hiring targets, including 1,500 and 1,800 respectively in the past two fiscal years. As for the continued development and rapid proliferation of commercial space operations, advanced air mobility, unmanned aerial systems (drones), and other new entrants, safety and efficiency of the National Airspace System (NAS) could be jeopardized if they are not properly integrated into the existing system. “FAA is lagging behind in its efforts to sustain and modernize” the NAS and in the coming years “will face unprecedented safety and technological challenges,” said NATCA.

3. Hearing on Implementation of FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024.

In a hearing convened by the House Aviation Subcommittee, aerospace industry representatives shared their perspectives on progress made by FAA and DOT in implementing the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. Among many provisions, the law addresses modernization of safety and technology infrastructure, integration of new entrants into U.S. skies, the shortage of air

traffic controllers, and consumer issues. “As we begin the 119th Congress in January, this Subcommittee will conduct ongoing oversight of the FAA, and we look forward to ensuring full compliance with the law,” said Ranking Member Steve Cohen (D-TN). “We will also work to provide the resources necessary for the FAA to carry out its statutory authority and to enact any additional legislation necessary to ensure the safety and efficiency of our nation’s airspace.”

4. Committee Assignments for the 119th Congress.

Ted Cruz (R-TX) will serve as Chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, and Maria Cantwell (D-WA) as Ranking Member, during the 119th U.S. Congress; incoming Senate Majority Leader John Thune will continue to serve on the Committee. Jerry Moran (R-KS) is expected to chair the Senate Aviation Subcommittee, with Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) as Ranking Member. Rand Paul (R-KY) will chair the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. . . . In the House, Sam Graves (R-MO) is expected to continue as Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman, having gained a waiver that allows him to extend his tenure beyond the Republican three-term limit. Rick Larsen (D-WA) is expected to continue to serve as Ranking Member. Aviation Subcommittee Chair Garrett Graves (R-LA) did not seek re-election; Steve Cohen (D-TN) is Ranking Democrat.

VII. **BILATERAL AND STATE DEPARTMENT NEWS**

1. **U.S.-Dominican Republic Air Transport Agreement Enters Into Force.**

The U.S.-Dominican Republic Air Transport Agreement has entered into force, with provisions that allow for unrestricted capacity and frequency of services, open route rights, a liberal charter regime, expanded all-cargo rights, and code sharing opportunities. . . . Santo Domingo-based Arajet received DOT approval to enter the U.S. market in second quarter 2025, with flights to New York, Miami and Puerto Rico. The low-fare carrier launched in September 2022 and operates a new Boeing 737 MAX fleet to 23 destinations. Victor Pacheco is CEO and founder.

2. **FAA Extends Haiti Flight Restrictions.**

FAA extended flight restrictions for U.S. aircraft operating in Haitian airspace until March 12. The Notice to Air Missions (NOTAM) prohibits flight operations below 10,000 feet in certain sectors of the sky over Haiti. Restrictions initially were announced in November, after planes operated by JetBlue, American and Spirit were struck by gunfire in Port-au-Prince. The U.S. State Department continues to post a “Do Not Travel” advisory for Haiti. Port-au-Prince’s Toussaint Louverture International Airport reopened with an Ecuadorian charter flight to Brazil.

VIII. EUROPE AND AFRICA

1. Azerbaijan Airlines Crash Suggests Weapons Fire.

An Azerbaijan Airlines Embraer 190 enroute from Baku to Grozny, in the Russian republic of Chechnya, crashed while attempting to land; 38 people were killed and the 29 survivors were injured. U.S. officials and others suggested that a Russian missile caused the crash. Russian President Vladimir Putin, in a telephone conversation with Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev, “apologized that the crash occurred in Russian airspace.” At that time, said Putin, “Grozny, Mozdok and Vladikavkaz were attacked by Ukrainian combat unmanned aerial vehicles, and Russian air defense systems repelled these attacks.”

2. JetBlue Adds Boston to Madrid, Edinburgh.

JetBlue will launch daily nonstop seasonal Airbus A321 service from Boston to Madrid Barajas, marking its debut in Spain, and to Edinburgh, on May 22.

3. Lufthansa Group Purchases Additional A350-1000s.

Lufthansa Group is purchasing additional Airbus long-haul aircraft, increasing its firm orders for the A350-1000 from ten to 15. Of 75 A350-900s and A350-1000s ordered, 28 are in scheduled service; 47 more to be delivered by 2031.

4. FAA, EASA Pledge to Strengthen Global Air Travel Security.

FAA and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) signed a Declaration of Intent to continue their partnership to support safe and secure civil aviation activities, at the ICAO 80th Anniversary of the Chicago Convention. They agreed to share knowledge and best practices on safety data and risk management, cybersecurity and emerging technologies, innovation, research and sustainability, and seek regulatory alignment where possible. They will also collaborate to provide technical assistance to regions across the globe. “Emerging technologies are transforming the global aviation system and require constant collaboration to reevaluate and adapt our strategic direction as new challenges and opportunities present themselves,” said FAA Administrator Mike Whitaker.

IX. ASIA/PACIFIC AND MIDDLE EAST

1. Jeju Air flight 7C 2216 Crashes at Muan International Killing 179

On December 29, 2024, a Jeju Air flight operating a Boeing 737-800 from Bangkok crashed as it was making its landing at Muan International Airport in southern South Korea. After an initial failed landing attempt, the plane received a bird strike warning from the ground control center. The pilot issued a distress signal before the plane came down with its front landing gear closed, overshot the runway, slammed into a concrete fence and burst into a fireball. The crash is the nation's deadliest aviation disaster in decades. . . . South Korean Transport Ministry officials said they will examine whether the fence the plane hit should have been made with lighter materials that would break more easily upon impact and were also trying to establish whether any communication problems between air traffic controllers and the pilot were factors in the crash. The plane's flight data and cockpit audio recorders were moved to a research center at Seoul's Gimpo International Airport for analysis. Ministry officials indicated it would take months to complete the investigation of the crash . . . Representatives from Boeing and the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board are planning to travel to Seoul to participate in the South Korean investigation. . . . Only two people out of 181 onboard the plane — both crew members — survived. They were rescued from the plane's tail section, the only part of the aircraft that remained relatively intact after the crash.

2. Alaska Air Group Announces Nonstops from Seattle to Tokyo, Seoul.

Alaska Air Group will offer daily nonstop service with Hawaiian's Airbus A330-200 aircraft from Seattle to Tokyo Narita on May 12, and Seoul Incheon in October. Hawaiian's Honolulu to Tokyo Haneda service will increase from 12 to 14 flights a week. Hawaiian will also continue to offer nonstops between Honolulu and both Osaka and Fukuoka for a total of 24 weekly roundtrips between Hawai'i and Japan. The newly combined Alaska/Hawaiian domestic network will begin to see adjustments in late March and continue to roll out through the second quarter. Alaska and Hawaiian continue to work on obtaining a single operating certificate from FAA, a process expected to be completed by October 2025. Each airline will operate separately until the certificate is issued.

3. Korean Air Completes Acquisition of Asiana Airlines.

Korean Air completed its acquisition of Asiana Airlines, after winning approvals from numerous authorities including the U.S. Department of Justice. Asiana will be a subsidiary of Korean Air. "The merger aims to strengthen national aviation industry competitiveness, enhance Incheon Airport's hub capabilities and expand global network reach," said officials; "integration will proceed without

workforce restructuring.” South Korea's Transport Ministry is addressing competition concerns.

4. China Reports Record Passenger Numbers for 2024.

Chinese airlines recorded a record 700 million passenger trips in 2024, according to Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC), driven by domestic routes, which logged 640 million passenger trips, representing a 14% increase compared to 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. International routes also showed remarkable growth, with more than 60 million passenger trips reflecting a year-on-year surge of 130% as global travel restrictions eased and demand rebounded.

5. Tokyo Haneda Fatal Collision Due to Human Error.

A Japan Transport Safety Board report finds that a fatal collision of a Japan Coast Guard Bombardier DHC8 and a Japan Airlines Airbus A350, at Tokyo Haneda, on January 2, 2024, was due to confusion about clearance to enter a runway. The two planes burst into flames. Five of the six people aboard the Coast Guard plane died. All 379 people aboard the Airbus were evacuated and survived.

6. Malaysia Plans Renewed Search for MH370.

Malaysia's government is negotiating a new agreement with marine robotics firm Ocean Infinity for a renewed search for Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370. The Boeing 777 vanished from radar shortly after takeoff from Kuala Lumpur on March 8, 2014. The plane carrying 239 people was bound for Beijing. Transport Minister Anthony Loke Siew Fook said the search operations will be conducted in a new area in the southern Indian Ocean. A joint search for MH370 conducted by Malaysia, China and Australia after its disappearance ended in January 2017.

7. IATA Opens Abu Dhabi Training Center.

IATA has opened the Abu Dhabi Training Center which will offer over 60 courses, such as safety, security, sustainability, airline operations, airport management and operations and cargo management. The center will cater to aviation professionals from airlines, airports, regulatory bodies, and other stakeholders.

X. AMERICAS

1. Michael Rousseau Named Chair of Star Alliance.

Air Canada President and CEO Michael Rousseau is the new Chair of the Star Alliance Chief Executive Board. He succeeds United CEO Scott Kirby, who held the post since December 2020. . . . Star Alliance opened its first lounge in Asia at Guangzhou Baiyun International. Located in a dedicated space on the upper level of the existing airport lounge in the Terminal 1 international area, the lounge was created by the airport in cooperation with Star member airlines and is operated by an airport unit. A Star Alliance lounge is planned for Terminal 3, which is under construction.

2. Delta Resumes Daily Seasonal Rio De Janeiro-New York Flight.

Delta resumed a daily seasonal flight between Rio de Janeiro and New York Kennedy; the Boeing 767-300ER service ends March 28. Service between Rio and Atlanta increased from three B-767 flights a week to daily, on the Airbus A330-300. Delta and joint venture partner LATAM offer three daily frequencies between Brazil and New York, including flights from São Paulo, as well as Brazil to Atlanta, Boston, Los Angeles, Miami and Orlando.

3. American, Citi Extend Co-Branded Card Partnership.

American and Citi extended their 37-year co-branded partnership with a 10-year agreement. Citi reached an agreement to acquire the Barclays American Airlines co-branded Card portfolio and will become the exclusive issuer of the AAdvantage® co-branded card portfolio in the U.S. in 2026. . . . Separately, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau said some credit card companies operating rewards programs may be breaking the law, including by devaluing rewards points and airline miles, and announced actions “to protect consumers from illegal credit card practices and help people save money on interest and fees.”

4. United Confirms Body Found in Wheel Well of Plane at Maui.

A body was found in the wheel well of one of the main landing gears on a United Boeing 787-10, upon arrival at Kahului airport in Maui from Chicago O'Hare on Christmas Eve. The wheel well was only accessible from outside of the aircraft, said United, which is working with law enforcement authorities on the investigation.

5. Frontier to Roll Out Premium Options in 2025.

The ‘New Frontier’ is rolling out in 2025, with “more premium options, like first class seating, attainable seat upgrades, more free travel for their companions,

and the ability to use miles on more than just airfare,” said CEO Barry Biffle. The Denver-based, ultra-low fare carrier operates 148 Airbus A320 family aircraft and has nearly 200 new Airbus planes on order.

6. **GOL Filing Reorganization Plan with U.S. Bankruptcy Court.**

GOL received three new Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft in December and in January expects to receive another, “consolidating a total of 53 Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft by early 2025.” The Brazilian carrier, part of the Abra Group, is filing a proposed reorganization plan with the U.S. Bankruptcy Court.

7. **JetBlue Adds Boston to Madrid, Edinburgh.**

See Section VIII, item 2.

8. **FAA, EASA Pledge to Strengthen Global Air Travel Security.**

See Section VIII, item 4.

9. **Alaska Air Group Announces Nonstops from Seattle to Tokyo, Seoul.**

See Section IX, item 1.