



## WASHINGTON AVIATION SUMMARY

### MARCH 2026 EDITION

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For further information, including documents referenced, contact:

Joanne W. Young  
Kirstein & Young PLLC  
1750 K Street NW  
Suite 700  
Washington, D.C. 20006  
Telephone: (202) 331-3348  
Fax: (202) 331-3933  
Email: [jyoung@yklaw.com](mailto:jyoung@yklaw.com)

<http://www.yklaw.com>

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. **FY26 Appropriations Signed into Law Without DHS Funding.**

After a brief shutdown, most of the federal government was funded through a five-bill, full-year appropriations package. The Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2026 provides \$22.209 billion in total budgetary resources for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), \$1.22 billion above FY25 enacted level. The bill includes \$10.341 billion to fully fund air traffic control (ATC) operations and hire 2,500 air traffic controllers, \$4 billion for facilities and equipment, and \$514 million for Essential Air Services. Funding of \$145 million is provided for the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). . . . Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l (ALPA) applauded provisions that: Direct FAA “to ensure a minimum of two qualified, fully rested pilots on commercial airline flight decks at all times.” Provide additional resources to improve FAA's aeromedical process, reduce the backlog of pilot and controller medical certificates, and offer new flexibility to hire and retain skilled medical professionals for these purposes. Urge the Department of Transportation (DOT) “to review its outdated Statement of International Air Transportation Policy, internal guidance that in the past has been used to justify detrimental labor policy for international aviation, including air service agreements, joint ventures, and licensing cases.” Deliver funding for the National Mediation Board, which promotes collective bargaining in the airline and rail industries. . . . Allied Pilots Association (APA), the union for American Airlines pilots, noted that the bill creates an internship program to benefit students and early-career participants in aviation, including pilot-related roles, and creates a veterans' pilot training program that supports transitioning military aviators into civilian pilot roles. . . . Agreement was not reached on funding for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), due to Congressional concerns about activities of DHS units, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). DHS briefly halted then resumed the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) PreCheck operations, but the Global Entry program remained suspended.

### 2. **FAA Abruptly Closes El Paso Airspace Over Suspected Cartel Activity.**

FAA abruptly announced the immediate closure of air space around El Paso and Southern New Mexico for 10 days, amid confusion about a mid-air object thought to be a security concern, then rescinded the order the next day. What officials thought was a drone from a Mexican cartel, actually was counter-drone technology deployed by DHS and the Department of Defense (DOD) without coordinating with FAA. Members of Congress have asked for briefings about

the event and how systemic failures in the counter-drone deployment process will be addressed.

3. **U.S. Airlines To Resume Flights to Venezuela.**

FAA removed Notices to Airmen (NOTAMs) related to Venezuela and advisories affecting airspace over Curaçao, San Juan and the Piarco Flight Information Regions. . . . DOT rescinded a 2019 order that barred U.S. airlines from flying to Venezuela, and American was the first to propose service. Flights from Miami to Caracas and Maracaibo will be operated by regional subsidiary Envoy Air under the American Eagle brand, pending government approval and subject to TSA security assessments at Venezuelan airports.

4. **FAA Steps Up Drone Enforcement.**

FAA fined and suspended or revoked licenses of many drone operators in 2025 for unsafe and unauthorized operations, including flights near major sporting events, emergency response activities, and in restricted airspace. In 2026, FAA updated enforcement policy to require legal action when drone operations endanger the public, violate airspace restrictions, or are conducted in furtherance of another crime. Drone operators who fly unsafely or without permission can be fined up to \$75,000 per violation, and the pilot's license suspended or revoked.

5. **Fee Disclosure Rule Vacated.**

A rule proposed during the Biden Administration, "Enhancing Transparency of Airline Ancillary Service Fees," was vacated by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, which found it was not issued in compliance with the Administrative Procedure Act's notice-and-comment requirement. The rule was contested by airlines. The current Administration has said it is creating a new rule.

6. **FAA Orders Airlines to Affirm Merit-Based Pilot Hiring.**

FAA ordered all commercial airlines to formally commit to merit-based hiring for pilots; failure to do so will subject airlines to federal investigation. "Safety of passengers is our number one priority," said FAA Administrator Bryan Bedford. "Someone's race, sex, or creed has nothing to do with their ability to fly and land aircraft safely."

7. **DOT Inspector General Conducts FAA Audits.**

The DOT Office of Inspector General (OIG) is conducting an audit to assess FAA efforts to address instructor shortages at the Controller Training Academy, training capacity limitations, and trainee failure rates (30% in FY2024), as well as progress with updating the curriculum. A DOT campaign to "supercharge"

controller hiring closed in March 2025 and attracted more than 10,000 applicants, of whom 8,300 were referred for initial testing, resulting in approximately 600 trainees entering the Academy in one month—the largest number in history. DOT plans to hire at least 8,900 new controllers by 2028. . . . An audit to assess FAA oversight of United Airlines’ maintenance practices found “inadequate inspection resources, ineffective workforce planning, and impediments to accessing air carrier data.” Six recommendations were made; five made earlier remain open.

**8. ICAO Urges Government Support for Air Crash Victims, Families.**

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) urged governments and air transport partners worldwide to accelerate implementation of comprehensive support systems for air crash victims and their families, and to implement recent enhancements to ICAO’s accident investigation standards. ICAO Council President Toshiyuki Onuma underscored the need for urgent and collaborative action, a provision in a resolution adopted last year that “set clear expectations for every State and operator to adopt effective family assistance plans.” This includes “prompt and respectful treatment of families at every stage, from the immediate aftermath of an accident to the provision of long-term care and support networks,” and emphasizes “the necessity of timely notification for families, the accurate recovery and identification of victims, and the implementation of modern legal frameworks, seamless information-sharing, and mechanisms for advance financial support when tragedy occurs.” ICAO forums have spurred major advances, including harmonized compensation regimens, psychological and trauma care guidance, and the integration of family needs into national aviation preparedness planning.

## II. AIRPORTS

### 1. Port of Seattle, Alaska Airlines Complete Gateway Project.

A \$546 million facelift was completed at Seattle-Tacoma International's main terminal north end. The SEA Gateway Project "adds Alaska Airlines innovation technology" with automated bag drops, efficiency upgrades, Bridge Level check-in, upgraded baggage claim devices, digital monitors, new art displays, a redesigned security checkpoint, upgraded restrooms, and accessibility ramp accommodations. Upcoming project completions include the C Concourse Expansion, which will add four new floors of amenities and services, and roadway improvements that will add two lanes and efficiencies to the airport garage and drives, said Port of Seattle.

### 2. Florida Legislature Moves To Rename PBI for Trump.

A bill moving through the Florida legislature would rename Palm Beach International (PBI) to President Donald J. Trump International Airport, subject to certain approvals and execution of certain agreements. The bill preempts to the state the naming of major commercial service airports, including Orlando, Miami, Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood, Tampa, Southwest Florida and Jacksonville. PBI offers 200 daily arrivals and departures to destinations in the U.S., Canada and the Caribbean on 13 airlines.

### 3. Dutch Government To Open Lelystad to Commercial Traffic.

The Dutch Government plans to open Lelystad Airport to commercial holiday/leisure traffic, beginning in 2027, to relieve Amsterdam Schiphol. There will be a maximum of 10,000 commercial flights per year initially, an average of 14 takeoffs and landings per day, with no night or cargo flights. Lelystad Airport, centrally located in the Netherlands, is owned and operated by Royal Schiphol Group, as are Schiphol and Rotterdam.

### 4. Airlines Call for Annual 4.9% Reduction in Spanish Airport Charges.

Spanish airport operator AENA proposed an annual increase of 3.8% in charges over the 2027–2031 period. International Air Transport Association (IATA) and Spanish Airline Association (ALA) rejected the proposal, citing AENA's "consistent underestimation of traffic growth and the excessive regulated returns it has earned during previous regulatory periods." Airlines called for an annual reduction of 4.9%.

### III. **SECURITY AND DATA PRIVACY**

#### 1. **TSA ConfirmID Implemented.**

The Transportation Security Administration implemented an alternative identity verification system, TSA ConfirmID, “resulting in a promising increase of REAL ID compliance.” Passengers without REAL IDs or other acceptable forms of identification have the option to use TSA ConfirmID by paying a \$45 fee for a 10-day travel period. The new system is designed to strengthen identity verification and close gaps in ID standards.

#### 2. **Enhanced Passenger Processing Launched at JFK.**

The New Terminal One at New York Kennedy, in partnership with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, announced that Enhanced Passenger Processing (EPP) will be available in the all-international New Terminal One. EPP uses auto-capture cameras and biometric facial comparison technology for U.S. citizens arriving at U.S. airports, preclearance airports, or seaports. Travelers do not have to enroll in advance or pay to participate in EPP, and may opt out. New Terminal One construction is taking place in phases with full completion in 2030, with 23 gates. The first phase, including new arrival and departure halls and first set of 14 new gates, is expected to open in 2026.

#### 3. **Airports, Airlines Urge EU Entry/Exit System Implementation Review.**

Stating the EU Entry/Exit System (EES) is causing wait times of up to two hours for passengers during the rollout, Airports Council International, Airlines for Europe and IATA called for immediate action to provide sufficient flexibility to avoid wait times of up to four hours or more over peak summer months. They cited chronic border control understaffing, unresolved technology issues, and limited uptake of a pre-registration app by Schengen states. Progressive implementation of the EES will last until April 9, and from April 10 will be fully operational at all external border crossing points of European countries using the system. The European Commission said Member States will be able to suspend EES operations where necessary after completion of the roll-out. The EES electronically registers non-EU nationals’ entries and exits, or entry refusals, and is meant to combat identity fraud, terrorism and serious organized crime.

## IV. TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT

### 1. January U.S. Travel Agency Ticket Sales Top \$10 Billion.

U.S.-based travel agency air ticket sales totaled \$10 billion in January 2026, up 7% from January 2025, according to data released by Airlines Reporting Corp. (ARC), the first time monthly travel agency air ticket sales eclipsed \$10 billion since ARC began tracking data. Passenger trips issued through leisure-focused travel agencies increased 6% year over year, while those issued through corporate agencies and online travel agencies decreased 3% and 4%, respectively.

### 2. Travel Brands Testing Agentic AI.

More than 60% of travel businesses surveyed are experimenting with or scaling agentic artificial intelligence (AI), defined by Phocuswright Research as “generative AI that can accomplish real-world tasks rather than simply outputting content.” . . . Sabre, Mindtrip and PayPal have partnered to develop an AI-powered travel assistant to roll out in phases, initially supporting flights with hotels added later. The tool will be able to describe destinations in natural language, provide personalized recommendations for flights and hotels, ask follow-up questions and complete bookings. Users will pay directly within the experience. Sabre’s travel platform powers real-time shopping, pricing, availability, booking and servicing, while PayPal’s digital wallet enables identity verification. After booking, the tool can oversee itinerary changes.

## V. ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

### 1. Fuel Bill for Global Airline Industry.

The global average jet fuel price for week ending February 13 was \$93.88 per barrel, up 4% from prior month's average, and up 4.3% on prior year's average, according to the Jet Fuel Price Monitor, a joint IATA-Platts initiative.

### 2. SAF Progress Falters.

We are not making sufficient progress on sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), said IATA Director General Willie Walsh, at the Changi Aviation Summit. SAF output reached 1.9 million tons in 2025, representing just 0.6% of total jet fuel consumption, a downward revision from earlier estimates. Planned production has faltered. Mandates have pushed prices higher, which have discouraged voluntary demand and reduced output. SAF prices exceed fossil-based jet prices by a factor of more than two, while evidence shows that in markets with mandates, that factor can increase to four times.

### 3. Neste, World Fuel Extend Relationship.

Neste and World Fuel Services signed a five-year agreement that will expand availability of Neste-supplied SAF at more than 100 airports across World Fuel's UK and European network. The extended agreement helps support World Fuel's ability to secure SAF supply and comply with regulatory requirements.

### 4. "Securing America's Fuels (SAF) Act" Introduced.

See Section VI, item 8.

## **VI. U.S. CONGRESS**

### **1. FY26 Government Funding Averts Prolonged Shutdown.**

Congress passed a five-bill appropriations package that included funding for FAA and other agencies, ending a brief partial government shutdown. Funding for the Department of Homeland Security was not approved, due to concerns about immigration enforcement activities. . . . At a House Appropriations Committee Oversight Hearing, TSA Acting Administrator Ha Nguyen McNeill said “shutdown and funding uncertainties have real and measurable impacts on recruitment, retention, and employee morale.” Around 1,110 Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) separated from TSA during the 2025 shutdown, in October and November. . . . “Congress must act with urgency to ensure TSA is fully funded to carry out its critical aviation security mission and pursue permanent solutions to guarantee pay for essential federal workers,” stated U.S. Travel, Airlines for America, and the American Hotel & Lodging Association. They called for the “Keep America Flying Act” to be taken up immediately by Congress; the bipartisan proposal would ensure that TSA officers and air traffic controllers receive pay during funding lapses.

### **2. Hearing: NTSB Testifies on DCA Midair Collision Investigation.**

The Senate Commerce Committee convened a hearing on NTSB’s final report on its investigation into the midair collision of American Airlines Flight 5342 and a U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopter over the Potomac River, on January 29, 2025. All 64 aboard the CRJ700, operated by PSA Airlines, and the three crewmembers on the helicopter died. Among investigation findings, FAA’s route design failed to provide procedural separation between helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft operating on approach and departure paths at Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA). The Army lacked a flight data monitoring program for helicopters operating near major airports and had limited participation in safety reporting systems. Neither aircraft was equipped with technology capable of providing effective alerts in a low-altitude environment; had the CRJ700 been equipped with an airborne collision avoidance system that used Automatic Dependent Surveillance–Broadcast In, the crew would have received the first alert regarding the helicopter 59 seconds before collision. NTSB found that FAA failed to respond appropriately to safety data pointing to over 15,000 near misses between helicopter and commercial aircraft at DCA during the three-year period prior to this accident. NTSB issued 33 safety recommendations to FAA, eight to the U.S. Army, and additional recommendations to other agencies that call for comprehensive reforms to helicopter route design, ATC procedures, safety management systems, data sharing, and collision avoidance technology. “We’ve investigated eerily similar midair collisions, going back decades,” said

NTSB Chair Jennifer Homendy, and “issued safety recommendations, like ADS-B In aimed at preventing just these kinds of collisions, that have been rejected, sidelined, or just plain ignored.”

**3. Congress Fails To Pass ROTOR Act; ALERT Act Proposed.**

The House failed to pass the Rotorcraft Operations Transparency and Oversight Reform (ROTOR) Act, which would mandate installation of situational awareness technology known as Automatic Dependent Surveillance–Broadcast In (ADS-B In) on most aircraft. The Senate passed the legislation in December, but DOD withdrew support prior to the final House vote citing security and cost concerns. . . . An alternative bill, the “Airspace Location and Enhanced Risk Transparency Act of 2026” or ALERT Act, was introduced by bipartisan leaders of the House Transportation and House Armed Services Committees, who say their bill “would require certain aircraft to be equipped with collision mitigation technology to improve helicopter route safety and separation around airports, update ATC processes and procedures, and address national airspace system safety in DOD activities,” as well as address each of the 50 safety recommendations issued by NTSB in its investigation of the 2025 midair collision at Reagan Washington National Airport. . . . “The ROTOR Act would’ve saved lives,” said NTSB Chair Jennifer Homendy. The ALERT Act, in its current form, does not implement our most critical safety recommendations, she wrote on social media. “In fact, it provides exemptions to lifesaving technology, technology that provides pilots and flight crews with information they need and deserve to ensure safety.”

**4. “FAA SMS Compliance Review Act of 2026” Introduced in Senate.**

The “FAA SMS Compliance Review Act of 2026” was introduced by Senate Democrats to improve FAA’s oversight of its safety management system (SMS). The bill directs FAA to establish an independent expert review panel to make recommendations for a comprehensive, integrated and effective FAA SMS to better predict, manage and mitigate agency-wide safety risks.

**5. FAA Administrator Gives Congress ATC System Progress Report.**

FAA Administrator Bryan Bedford gave Congress a progress report on the ATC system overhaul. As of January, 40% of all copper wires were replaced and 178 radio sites converted, and 612 radar systems will be installed by June 2028, with three already installed. Bedford said the contract with project manager Peraton includes a “No Excuses” requirement, with fees based on achieving schedule, quality, cost control and management metrics.

**6. Senators Call for Accountability as Bedford Violated Ethics Agreement.**

Democratic Senators asked DOT for information and accountability regarding FAA Administrator Bryan Bedford's "refusal to comply with his ethics agreement and divest his shares in Republic Airways" before completion of a merger with Mesa Air Group, which, according to SEC filings, "turned his 16,733 shares of private Republic stock into more than 652,470 shares of stock in the newly-combined, public company." In their letter, Tammy Duckworth, Maria Cantwell and Edward Markey called for "appropriate disciplinary or corrective actions if Bedford, formerly Republic CEO, "benefitted financially due to his flagrant noncompliance."

**7. Democrats Demand Briefings on El Paso Airspace Closure.**

In a letter to DOT Secretary Sean Duffy, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem and Department of Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, House Democratic leaders demanded a classified briefing on the abrupt closure of public airspace in the El Paso area stemming from deployment of a counter-unmanned aircraft system (C-UAS). Conflicting reports on the cause ranged from an alleged 'cartel drone incursion' to a shoot-down of a party balloon, they wrote, and we understand that DHS and DOD deployed complex C-UAS technology without required coordination with FAA, which introduces unnecessary and dangerous risk into U.S. airspace. We want "to gain clarity into what led to the closure of airspace in the El Paso area and how your Departments plan to rectify the systemic failures in your C-UAS deployment process," continued the Ranking Members of the House Transportation, Homeland Security, and Armed Services Committees. . . . A separate letter "concerning the significant impact of the closure of air space in and around El Paso, Texas and Southern New Mexico" was sent by House and Senate members from those areas to DOT, DHS and DOD Secretaries. "In conjunction with on-going operations and activities along the southern border, these unprecedented Temporary Flight Restrictions . . . created widespread fear, uncertainty and chaos in the region while disrupting commercial, medical, private, and military aviation activities," they wrote, requesting an urgent classified briefing.

**8. "Securing America's Fuels (SAF) Act" Introduced.**

The "Securing America's Fuels (SAF) Act" was introduced in the Senate to strengthen the sustainable aviation fuels industry, provide new markets for farmers and lower emissions in the transportation sector. The bipartisan legislation would reinstate the SAF bonus credit to allow qualifying SAF producers to receive up to \$0.35 or \$1.75 per gallon, and it would extend the 45Z Clean Fuel Production Tax Credit for all clean fuels through 2033. Companion legislation was introduced in the House.

**9. “Aviation Innovation and Global Competitiveness Act” Introduced.**

The “Aviation Innovation and Global Competitiveness Act” was introduced in the Senate. Meant to streamline the FAA type certification process for Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) aircraft, the bipartisan legislation sets timelines to prevent gridlock; updates delegation guidance for type certification to cover new and novel technologies, including electrical vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft; and directs FAA to establish specific criteria to support innovation and to report to relevant congressional committees on the status of implementing certification regulations. Companion legislation was introduced in the House.

**10. House Committee Approves Aviation Bills.**

The House Transportation Committee approved the Pilot Certificate Accessibility Act, which allows a pilot to present a digital copy of certain certificates (e.g., airman or medical) when required by an FAA inspector or other official. The Committee also approved the Military Air Traffic Control Transition Act, which directs the Joint Aviation Employment Working Group to focus on ATC career opportunities for military personnel and to identify barriers for transition into the civilian workplace.

**11. Bills Would Boost Tourism Between U.S., Mexico, Canada.**

The “USMCA Travel and Tourism Resiliency Act” was introduced in the Senate. The bilateral bill would require the U.S. Trade Representative to advocate for establishment of a Travel and Tourism Trade Working Group as part of the Joint Review of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). The USMCA, which entered into force in 2020, established joint working groups for other industries, but tourism and travel are not currently represented. Companion legislation was introduced in the House.

## **VII. BILATERAL AND STATE DEPARTMENT NEWS**

### **1. State Department Advises U.S. Citizens in Mexico To Shelter in Place.**

Airlines briefly suspended service and some airports closed, amid severe violence in parts of Mexico triggered by the murder of a drug lord on February 22. The U.S. Mission to Mexico issued daily security alerts advising American citizens to shelter in place, and on February 25 said flight schedules had returned to normal, and “all restrictions related to these events were lifted.”

### **2. U.S.-India Trade Talks.**

The United States and India reached a framework for an Interim Agreement regarding reciprocal and mutually beneficial trade, reaffirming their commitment to broader U.S.-India Bilateral Trade Agreement negotiations, launched in 2025. India intends to purchase \$500 billion of U.S. aircraft and aircraft parts and other products over the next five years. The United States agreed to remove tariffs on certain aircraft and aircraft parts.

## VIII. EUROPE AND AFRICA

### 1. Lufthansa Group, Air India Expand Partnership.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed that establishes the framework for a future Joint Business Agreement between Lufthansa Group airlines and Air India and Air India Express, subject to regulatory and antitrust approvals. The Star Alliance partners currently offer code share flights on 146 routes to 22 countries. Carsten Spohr, Lufthansa Executive Board Chairman and Lufthansa Group CEO, and Campbell Wilson, CEO of Air India, said the agreement is specifically designed to capitalize on new growth opportunities arising from a recently concluded free trade agreement between India and the European Union (EU).

### 2. Air France Adds Service to New York.

Air France will offer up to 11 daily flights between Paris Charles de Gaulle and New York (Kennedy and Newark), from June to October, in cooperation with transatlantic joint venture partner Delta. Special direct flights between Kennedy and Nice will be added in June for the Cannes Lions Festival, also operated daily by Delta.

### 3. Groups Call for Suspension of EU-Qatar Aviation Agreement.

European civil aviation groups are calling for immediate suspension of the EU-Qatar Air Transport Agreement, citing allegations of corruption and compromised negotiations. A dissenting voice is ACI Europe, which said such a move would undermine air connectivity, consumer choice, and EU credibility on the international scene, adding that there is no tangible evidence that the agreement has resulted in Qatar gaining a dominant or unfair market position at the expense of European airlines.

### 4. Airports, Airlines Urge EU Entry/Exit System Implementation Review.

See Section III, item 3.

### 5. oneworld Names Ole Orvær CEO.

See Section X, item 2.

## **IX. ASIA/PACIFIC AND MIDDLE EAST**

### **1. Boeing Asian Sales.**

Air Cambodia finalized an order for up to 20 Boeing 737 MAX airplanes during the Singapore Airshow, with U.S. and Cambodian officials present at the signing ceremony. This is Air Cambodia's largest narrowbody purchase, said CEO David Zhan. The flag carrier operates domestic and regional routes across Southeast Asia, China, India and Japan. . . . Air India ordered 30 more 737 MAX jets. . . . Vietnam Airlines finalized an order for 50 737 MAX airplanes at a ceremony in Washington, D.C., witnessed by General Secretary To Lam and U.S. government representatives. Vietnam-based Sun PhuQuoc Airways ordered up to 40 787 Dreamliners; the startup is a unit of Sun Group. . . . Air Astana finalized an order for up to 15 Dreamliners. Separately, Wizz Air executive Johan Eidehagen was named President of Air Astana's low-cost unit FlyArystan, effective March 1. . . . India and South Asia's passenger air traffic will rise an average of 7% annually over the next 20 years, creating demand for 3,300 new airplanes, predicts Boeing's Commercial Market Outlook for South Asia. Single-aisle jets will account for nearly 90% of projected deliveries. Expansion will drive demand for 141,000 new aviation professionals in the workforce. . . . In its latest Global Services Forecast for Asia-Pacific (including China and India), Airbus anticipates total services demand will grow at a 5.2% compound annual growth rate through 2044, reaching an estimated market value of US\$138.7 billion.

### **2. Saudi Arabia, Syria To Launch flynas Syria.**

Saudi Arabia and Syria signed an agreement to establish flynas Syria. The new commercial airline will be a joint venture, with 51% ownership held by the Syrian General Authority of Civil Aviation and Air Transport and 49% by Saudi low-cost airline flynas. Operations are scheduled to begin in fourth quarter this year, with flights planned for destinations in the Middle East, Africa and Europe. "The establishment of flynas Syria represents a strategic step within a comprehensive national vision aimed at rebuilding and developing Syria's civil aviation sector on modern economic and regulatory foundations," said officials.

### **3. oneworld Names Ole Orvér CEO.**

See Section X, item 2.

## **X. AMERICAS**

### **1. Cuba Runs Out of Aviation Fuel.**

Government advisories warned that as of February 10 aviation fuel would not be commercially available at Cuban airports, after the Trump Administration took control of Venezuela's oil industry, stopped shipments to the island, and threatened tariffs for countries that provide oil. Cuban officials said fuel resources would be redirected to essential services. Canadian airlines suspended services to Cuba, operating empty flights southbound to pick up stranded customers and return them home with refueling stops. U.S., Mexican and regional airlines loaded enough fuel for return flights or flights to refueling destinations. The United Nations warned of potential humanitarian collapse in Cuba, if oil needs are not met.

### **2. oneworld Names Ole Orvér CEO.**

Ole Orvér was named CEO of oneworld, effective April 1. The Swedish national has held executive positions at Finnair, Qatar Airways, Air Berlin, LOT Polish Airlines and SAS. Orvér replaces CEO Nathaniel Pieper who recently took on the chief commercial role at American Airlines.

### **3. American's Flight Attendants, Pilots Seek Decisive Change.**

"Our airline is on an underperforming path and has failed to define an identity or a strategy to correct course," wrote the Allied Pilots Association Board to the American Airlines Group Board. Pilots requested an opportunity to formally present concerns, saying they "stand ready to support a future built on results, accountability, operational excellence, service to our customers, and respect for the frontline leaders who make this airline run." . . . Association of Professional Flight Attendants Board issued a unanimous vote of no confidence in American CEO Robert Isom and "is demanding accountability, improved operational support and leadership change."

### **4. Southwest Announces Board Departures.**

Southwest Directors David Cush and Gregg Saretsky resigned as of February 23, reducing Board size from 13 to 11 members.

### **5. Spirit Nears Emergence from Chapter 11.**

Spirit Aviation Holdings reached an agreement in principle on key terms of a restructuring support agreement with DIP lenders and secured noteholders, which will provide financial support to finalize its restructuring and complete remaining changes necessary to optimize the company's fleet, network and cost

structure. Spirit intends to emerge from Chapter 11 in late spring or early summer “as a strong, leaner competitor that is positioned to profitably deliver the value American consumers expect at a price they want to pay,” said President and CEO Dave Davis. . . . Spirit agreed to sell 20 Airbus planes and is recalling 500 flight attendants. . . . Spirit will offer 18 peak-day departures from Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta from April to destinations across the U.S. and Caribbean, resuming nonstops to Chicago and Philadelphia and increasing service to Orlando to three times daily. Flights were offered with 20% off base fares, in honor of 20 years at the Atlanta airport.

**6. JetBlue, United Offers Sales Across Both Airlines.**

Travelers can purchase eligible itineraries operated by JetBlue or United at each airline’s website or mobile app, a new benefit of their Blue Sky collaboration which is rolling out in phases. . . . In other news, JetBlue and Contour signed a new interline agreement, effective immediately, for flights operated by both airlines, with coordinated ticketing and through-checked baggage to final destination. The Tennessee-based regional serves 30 destinations in the U.S. and Caribbean, said Contour President Ben Munson; other interline partners are Alaska, American and United.

**7. Frontier Announces New Florida Routes; Fleet Optimization.**

Frontier launched new nonstops from Miami to Chicago O’Hare, and Orlando to Pensacola, with fares starting at \$29. . . . Frontier signed a non-binding agreement with AerCap for early return of 24 Airbus A320neo aircraft currently in operation, all of which have lease agreements scheduled to expire within next two to eight years. In turn, AerCap will agree to 10 future sale-leaseback transactions for deliveries scheduled for years 2028 and 2029. This represents “our new strategy to improve the productivity of the airline by a disciplined right sizing of our fleet,” said President and CEO Jim Dempsey.

**8. Air Canada Announces Expanded Winter 2026-27 Schedule.**

Air Canada officials told reporters that a demand surge for domestic and international routes is mitigating the impact of reduced Canada-U.S. demand. The carrier announced a Winter 2026-27 schedule that will add new flights to Quito from Montréal and Toronto; between Montreal and Santiago; Calgary to Cancun and Puerto Vallarta; and expanded service to Brazil, Peru and Chile. Toronto to Manchester and Copenhagen become year-round. . . . Air Canada will acquire eight Airbus A350-1000s, with rights to purchase another eight; deliveries to begin in 2030. In addition, 14 Boeing 787-10 Dreamliners are expected to start entering service this year, as are the first of 30 A321XLRs. Air Canada continues to take deliveries of the Canadian-assembled Airbus A220, with 23 remaining on a firm order of 65. An additional five Boeing 737 MAX

aircraft, on lease, are expected to enter service in 2026. . . . In other news, Montreal-based Transat reportedly is ceasing service to the U.S., and WestJet has significantly reduced service.

**9. Azul Emerges from Bankruptcy.**

Azul emerged from Chapter 11 restructuring, implemented through agreements with its main creditors, including aircraft lessor, AerCap. Equity investments include \$100 million from American Airlines, subject to approval from Brazilian regulators, and \$100 million from United Airlines. John Slattery joined Azul's Strategy Committee, "bringing decades of global leadership experience in the aerospace and aviation industries." The former GE CEO also led Embraer Commercial Aviation. David Neeleman is founder and Chairman of the Board of Azul.

**10. Air France Adds Service to New York.**

See Section VIII, item 2.