



AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION of RETIRED AIRLINE PILOTS and AVIATION PROFESSIONALS

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EDITORIAL

Another great contribution from Dave James; this time on operating the Viscount. Perhaps we should have a committee position "Resident Author"?

Apologies to the New Joiners who signed up in the previous three months. Unfortunately, we editors don't have your 'histories', which we always like to publish. Hopefully, we will have those details for inclusion in the next issue.

You may recall from the previous issue that Dinger Bell has the distinction of being our only member to have flown the C46. Later in this issue we have included the loss of that aircraft and all on board, which occurred the day after he last flew it.

There was a time when we would be apprehensive about the crew's *skillset* when sitting down the back going somewhere on an unfamiliar airline.

Nowadays, it's more a worry about their 'kill'-set! And with the locked cockpit door, there's absolutely nothing that can be done about it!

Luckily for Alaska Airlines 2059 there were two pilots to overcome the suicidal one. However, not so for the passengers and crew of China Eastern 5735 despite the Chinese authorities' cover up.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

A very pleasant afternoon was had by all those attending the 2026 AGM meeting and lunch.

The meeting was very successful with some interesting topics discussed. *(Ed. The Minutes will be published on the website in due course.)*

Your current committee was unanimously voted back in and I look forward to another enjoyable year working with them all.

The final decision on the Christmas lunch will be made shortly; details will be sent by Mailchimp and posted on the website.

Don't forget to look at the photos from the AGM which are now on the website.

Hoping to have a fun time at the Kingaroy Phoenix talk fest in July and to catch up with those who attend.

Your association is in good shape for the ongoing future.

Phil James

WELFARE & RECRUITMENT REPORT

On behalf of your Welfare and Recruitment Sub Committee Members, Bob Allan, Laurie Gilham and myself, I present the Welfare and Recruitment Report

We monitor and are always available for support to any members or former colleagues when they are not travelling the best. Indeed, we are all advancing in years and succumbing to the ravages of age whether through illness or our bodies wearing out.

We do respect everyone's privacy and only mention names if requested. We are there for any member who would like a chat about the good old days either by visiting or for a coffee or drink as with all being retired aviation professionals, we never close the hangar doors. We do not intervene if not requested and rely on friends or colleagues to say if a person would like some contact.

On the recruitment side, we have not had many new members and are always on the lookout for suitably eligible new recruits. If anyone knows of friends or colleagues who may be interested in joining our organisation, we are happy to supply an application form or direct them to the AARAP website to do so online.

Remember, it is not just retired pilots but aviation professionals.

A great way to catch up and see if joining AARAP is desirable, is to come along with potential new members to the monthly breakfast at The Seaway Kiosk on the Gold Coast Spit the first Wednesday of the month. There, in a relaxed informal atmosphere and enjoying a great brekky with a view we get very talkative about all things aviation be it past or present as well as our ailments and definitely solving all the world's problems.

John Gadsby

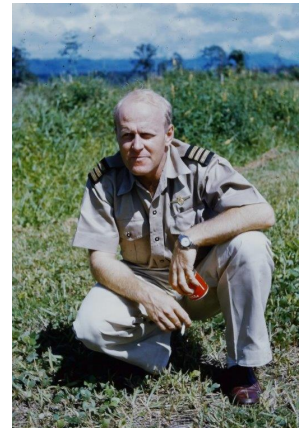
VALE

CAPTAIN MAL SHANNON: 16 AUGUST 1925 – MAY 2026

Mal Shannon turned one hundred on August 16 2025. He was a Captain with Qantas then Ansett-MAL and Ansett PNG. Mal served in the RAAF in World War Two on Kittyhawk fighters, finally bringing one home from Morotai via Tadjil and Moresby in 1945. Little did he know then what an amazing part New Guinea would feature in his life.



Mal joined Qantas in 1951 and was endorsed on the Dragon at Lae by the late great Bill Forgan Smith. The Dragon had no brakes and was woefully underpowered. Forgy had him taxi around in circles and then got him to line up for take-off. Pulling his trouser leg up, he pointed to a large scar and told him not to do that to him - the last guy had gone off into the trees! Mal told me that they were so underpowered, full power was maintained most of the way to the highlands.



He transitioned to a DC3 command in 1954 and became a legend over the following nineteen years. The Chief Pilot of Qantas Airways mentioned in his tribute that Mal had left a legacy, helped to pioneer the skies of New Guinea and instilled pride in the generations of pilots who followed. His name stands out, he mentioned, with enduring respect, earning him a reputation for exceptional skill, courage and unwavering professionalism.

Mal recalled a take-off at the town strip at Hagen in 1959 when the strip was undergoing works. He was flying the Friday freezer run which brought in pillow cases of frozen goods from Madang. Mud and slush closed the strip with just 75 points of rain and resulted in cancellation of the freezer run. The ladies of the town tired of having the freezer run cancelled and realised that emptying out half of the rain gauge stopped the cancellation.

A well-known Qantas scheduled flight in the fifties was known as the Courier run from Moresby to Goroka, Minj, Banz, Hagen, Baiyer River and Wabag. At midday passengers and crew would partake of a box lunch under the wing, usually at either Banz or Baiyer River.



Mal loved New Guinea and his skills went beyond flying, keeping many folks awake at night pounding out Yellow Bird on the piano.

Dear Mal,

It is a privilege to send this message on behalf of the entire Qantas pilot community to honour a truly extraordinary aviator - Captain Mal Shannon - as you celebrate your 100th birthday.

From all of us at Qantas: congratulations on reaching this remarkable milestone. And more than that - thank you. Thank you for the legacy you've left, the skies you helped pioneer, and the pride you instilled in generations of pilots who followed.

While many of today's pilots may not know you personally, your story remains an important part of the Qantas history. Among those who know the legacy of our New Guinea days, your name stands out with enduring respect. As a DC-3 Captain, you earned a reputation for exceptional skill, courage, and unwavering professionalism — the kind of pilot others looked up to, and aspired to become.

Your time with Qantas - what you fondly call your "glory days" - were also some of ours. You are a proud part of that history, and it's an honour we continue to celebrate.

Mal, your affection for Qantas is deeply felt - and I want you to know that the feeling is mutual. We are proud to have been a part of your life, and even prouder that you remain a part of ours.

From all your colleagues - past and present - at Qantas: Happy 100th birthday, Captain.

Thank you for everything.

Warmest regards,

*Captain Dick Tobiano
Chief Pilot Qantas Airways*

CAPTAIN RAY SEAVER: DIED 8 APRIL 2026 AGED 93

Ray joined 77 Squadron RAAF in January 1953 and flew Meteor jets out of Kimpo (now Gimpo). He spent 226 days in Korea and completed 101 combat operations.

In recognition of his service, he was retrospectively awarded the United States Air Medal for the number of combat patrols flown over enemy territory.

Following his military service, Ray enjoyed a distinguished career as a civilian pilot with Qantas Airways from 1956 to 1983.

(Ed. Follow the link below to the Anzac Portal where Ray talks of his Korean War experience.)

<https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/stories/oral-histories/spencer-ray-seavers-story>

CAPTAIN KIM CALLABY: 6 FEBRUARY 1950 – 3 JUNE 2026

Kim learnt to fly at NASA, Nationwide Aviation Space Academy at Cessnock during the early 1970's. He joined Ansett circa 1972 and flew the F28, based in Sydney and at the time of the dispute, was a B737 captain, based in Melbourne.

In the early 1990's he joined WAC, World Air Charter which was a division of ANA based in Singapore flying the B767 as a First Officer.

In 1992 he joined EVA Air based in Taipei as a B747 Cruise Captain and towards the end of the 90s transferred to the B767 as a Captain. In 2007 he transitioned to the B747 as Captain. Kim was an instructor on both the B767 and B744 and was very highly thought of.

Kim retired from EVA around 2015. Kim and his wife Diane had built a new house in Bolwarra NSW, North East of Maitland.

The current Executive Chief Pilot EVA Air had the following comments re Kim on hearing of his death. *Captain Gary Peng (Executive Chief Pilot) has requested the following message be forwarded to the family:*

'Thank you for letting me know. This is very sad news indeed.

I had the privilege of working with Kim when we were in 747 fleet, and I always regarded him as an outstanding instructor, professional pilot, and true gentleman. He had a tremendous impact on many of us, both professionally and personally.

My sincere condolences to his family, friends, and all who had the pleasure of knowing and flying with him. He will be greatly missed.

*Sincerely,
Gary.*

CAPTAIN MARTIN TIMOTHY CULLINANE: 5 DEC 1954 – 19 APRIL 2026

Martin gained his CPL in 1976. Jobs at Air Gold Coast and Talair followed.

He then joined Ansett in March 1979 in Melbourne as an F/O on the F27 and later the B727. He did his command with ANSW on the F50.

Post dispute, he joined CX in 1990 as an F/O on the 747 Classic and later flew the 747-400 before returning to the 'Classic' for command. He later transitioned to the 747-400 before retiring from CX.

Martin was a New Zealander and so retired to live in New Zealand. He died aged 71.



AARAP - GENESIS

Editor's Note: This is an edited copy of a letter written by the founding Chairman of AARAP having been extracted from the archives in 2011 by Ron Austin.

Circa 1989 Captain Ivan Black wrote of the establishment of the AARAP:

"It all began with the support of Captain Buck Brooksbank.

I had a discussion with him whilst we flew the 727 and he arranged a successful hearing at the AFAP Executive meeting in June 1977. They, on his recommendation, helped us immensely in the founding of our organisation.

It was received with great pleasure when Charlie Grey said that he would start a branch in Queensland. That branch has grown over the years hosting a very successful Surfers "get together" in September 1986. (Unfortunately, I could not attend as I was hospitalised.)

After QLD, Stew Archibald got some of his old Qantas friends to meet us in Sydney. Their first Chairman was Bill Edwards.

Next, I had a call from an expatriate pilot, Allen Hall, who invited me to Perth. We got together at two successive day meetings and away went the West Australian Branch.

Lastly, Dave Miller of Adelaide, on a visit to Melbourne, made known his intention to found a South Australian group. This was good timing; Arthur Lovell had just taken over the Victorian Chairmanship so we both journeyed to Adelaide to answer their questions and help them on their successful path."

Ivan Black was elected Founding President from 1977 to 1979 when he was replaced by Arthur Lovell. On his death, Bob Bennett took the role which he ultimately passed the baton in 1995, to Ron Austin.

THE JAPANESE ZERO AND HOW WE LEARNED TO FIGHT IT...

In April 1942 thirty-six Zeros attacking a British naval base at Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), were met by about sixty Royal Air Force aircraft of mixed types, many of them obsolete.



Twenty-seven of the RAF planes went down: fifteen Hawker Hurricanes, eight Fairey Swordfish, and four Fairey Fulmars. The Japanese lost one Zero.

Five months after America's entry into the war, the Zero was still a mystery to US Navy pilots. On May 7, 1942, in the Battle of the Coral Sea, fighter pilots from aircraft carriers Lexington and Yorktown fought the Zero and didn't know what to call it. Some misidentified it as the German Messerschmitt 109. A few weeks later, on June 3 and 4, warplanes flew from the Japanese carriers Ryujo and Junyo to attack the American military base at Dutch Harbor in Alaska's Aleutian archipelago.

Japan's attack on Alaska was intended to draw remnants of the U.S. fleet north from Pearl Harbor, away from Midway Island, where the Japanese were setting a trap. (The scheme ultimately backfired when US Navy pilots sank four of Japan's first-line aircraft carriers at Midway, giving the United States a major turning-point victory.)

In the raid of June 4, twenty bombers blasted oil storage tanks, a warehouse, a hospital, a hangar, and a beached freighter, while eleven Zeros strafed at will. Chief Petty Officer Makoto Endo led a three-plane Zero section from the Ryujo, whose other pilots were Flight Petty Officers Tsuguo Shikada and Tadayoshi Koga.

Koga, a small nineteen-year-old, was the son of a rural carpenter. His Zero, serial number 4593, was light gray, with the imperial rising-sun insignia on its wings and fuselage. It had left the Mitsubishi Nagoya aircraft factory on February 19, only three and a half months earlier, so it was the latest design.

Shortly before the bombs fell on Dutch Harbor that day, soldiers at an adjacent Army outpost had seen three Zeros shoot down a lumbering Catalina amphibian. As the plane began to sink, most of the seven-member crew climbed into a rubber raft and began paddling toward shore. The US soldiers watched in horror as the Zeros strafed the crew until all were killed. The Zeros are believed to have been those of Endo, Shikada, and Koga.

After massacring the Catalina crew, Endo led his section to Dutch Harbor, where it joined the other eight Zeros in strafing. It was then (according to Shikada, interviewed in 1984) that Koga's Zero was hit by ground fire. An Army intelligence team later reported, "Bullet holes entered the plane from both upper and lower sides." One of the bullets severed the return oil line between the oil cooler and the engine. As the engine continued to run, it pumped oil from the broken line. A Navy photo taken during the raid shows a Zero trailing what appears to be smoke. It is probably oil, and there is little doubt that this is Zero 4593.

After the raid, as the enemy planes flew back toward their carriers, eight American Curtiss Warhawk P-40's shot down four Val (Aichi D3A) dive bombers thirty miles west of Dutch Harbor. In the swirling, minutes-long dogfight, Lt. John J. Cape shot down a plane identified as a Zero. Another Zero was almost instantly on his tail. He climbed and rolled, trying to evade, but those were the wrong maneuvers to escape a Zero. The enemy fighter easily stayed with him, firing its two deadly 20-mm cannon and two 7.7-mm machine guns. Cape and his plane plunged into the sea. Another Zero shot up the P-40 of Lt. Winfield McIntyre, who survived a crash landing with a dead engine.

Endo and Shikada accompanied Koga as he flew his oil-spewing airplane to Akutan Island, twenty-five miles away, which had been designated for emergency landings. A Japanese submarine stood nearby to pick up downed pilots. The three Zeros circled low over the green, treeless island. At a level, grassy valley floor half a mile inland, Koga lowered his wheels and flaps and eased toward a three-point landing. As his main wheels touched, they dug in, and the Zero flipped onto its back, tossing water, grass, and gobs of mud. The valley floor was a bog, and the knee-high grass concealed water. Endo and Shikada circled. There was no sign of life. If Koga was dead, their duty was to destroy the downed fighter. Incendiary bullets from their machine guns would have done the job. But Koga was a friend, and they couldn't bring themselves to shoot. Perhaps he would recover, destroy the plane himself, and walk to the waiting submarine.

Endo and Shikada abandoned the downed fighter and returned to the Ryujo, two hundred miles to the south. (The Ryujo was sunk two months later in the eastern Solomons by planes from the aircraft carrier Saratoga. Endo was killed in action at Rabaul on October 12, 1943, while Shikada survived the war and eventually became a banker.)

The wrecked Zero lay in the bog for more than a month, unseen by U.S. patrol planes and offshore ships. Akutan is often foggy, and constant Aleutian winds create unpleasant turbulence over the rugged island. Most pilots preferred to remain over water, so planes rarely flew over Akutan. However, on July 10 a U.S. Navy Catalina (PBY) amphibian returning from overnight patrol crossed the island. A gunner named Wall called, "Hey, there's an airplane on the ground down there. It has meatballs on the wings." That meant the rising-sun insignia.

The patrol plane's commander, Lt. William Thies, descended for a closer look. What he saw excited him. Back at Dutch Harbor, Thies persuaded his squadron commander to let him take a party to the downed plane. No one then knew that it was a Zero. Ens. Robert Larson was Thies's copilot when the plane was discovered. He remembers reaching the Zero. "We approached cautiously, walking in about a foot of water covered with grass. Koga's body, thoroughly strapped in, was upside down in the plane, his head barely submerged in the water. "We were surprised at the details of the airplane," Larson continues. "It was well built, with simple, unique features. Inspection plates could be opened by pushing on a black dot with a finger. A latch would open, and one could pull the plate out. Wingtips folded by unlatching them and pushing them up by hand. The pilot had a parachute and a life raft." Koga's body was buried nearby. In 1947 it was shifted to a cemetery on nearby Adak Island, and later, it is believed, his remains were returned to Japan.

Thies had determined that the wrecked plane was a nearly new Zero, which suddenly gave it special meaning, for it was repairable. However, unlike U.S. warplanes, which had detachable wings, the Zero's wings were integral with the fuselage. This complicated salvage and shipping. Navy crews brought the plane out of the bog. The tripod that was used to lift the engine, and later the fuselage, sank three to four feet into the mud. The Zero was too heavy to turn over with the equipment on hand, so it was left upside down while a tractor dragged it on a skid to the beach and a barge.

At Dutch Harbor it was turned over with a crane, cleaned, and crated, wings and all. When the awkward crate containing Zero 4593 arrived at North Island Naval Air Station, San Diego, a twelve-foot-high stockade was erected around it inside a hangar. Marines guarded the priceless plane while Navy crews worked around the clock to make it airworthy. (There is no evidence the Japanese ever knew we had salvaged Koga's plane.)

In mid-September, 1942, LCDR Eddie R. Sanders studied it for a week as repairs were completed. Forty-six years later he clearly remembered his flights in Koga's Zero. "My log shows that I made twenty-four flights in Zero 4593 from 20 September to 15 October 1942," Sanders said. "These flights covered performance tests such as we do on planes undergoing Navy tests.

The very first flight exposed weaknesses of the Zero that our pilots could exploit with proper tactics. "The Zero had superior maneuverability only at the lower speeds used in dog fighting, with short turning radius and excellent aileron control at very low speeds. However, immediately apparent was the fact that the ailerons froze up at speeds above two hundred knots, so that rolling maneuvers at those speeds were slow and required much force on the control stick. It

rolled to the left much easier than to the right. Also, its engine cut out under negative acceleration [as when nosing into a dive] due to its float-type carburetor.

“We now had an answer for our pilots who were unable to escape a pursuing Zero. We told them to go into a vertical power dive, using negative G, if possible, to open the range quickly and gain advantageous speed while the Zero’s engine was stopped. At about two hundred knots, we instructed them to roll hard right before the Zero pilot could get his sights lined up. This recommended tactic was radioed to the fleet after my first flight of Koga’s plane, and soon the welcome answer came back: “It works!” Sanders said, satisfaction sounding in his voice even after nearly half a century.

This zero was added to the U.S. Navy inventory and assigned its Mitsubishi serial number. The Japanese colors and insignia were replaced with those of the U.S. Navy and later the U.S. Army, which also test-flew it. The Navy pitted it against the best American fighters of the time: the P-38 Lockheed Lightning, the P-39 Bell Airacobra, the P-51 North American Mustang, the F4F-4 Grumman Wildcat, and the F4U Chance Vought Corsair—and for each type developed the most effective tactics and altitudes for engaging the Zero.

In February 1945 CDR Richard G. Crommelin was taxiing Zero 4593 at San Diego Naval Air Station, where it was being used to train pilots bound for the Pacific war zone. An SB-2C Curtiss Helldiver overran it and chopped it up from tail to cockpit. Crommelin survived, but the Zero didn’t. Only a few pieces of Zero 4593 remain today.

A somewhat comparable event took place off North Africa in 1944—coincidentally on the same date, June 4, that Koga crashed his Zero. A squadron commanded by Capt. Daniel V. Gallery [USNA'21], aboard the escort carrier Guadalcanal, captured the German submarine U-505, boarding and securing the disabled vessel before the fleeing crew could scuttle it. Code books, charts, and operating instructions rescued from U-505 proved quite valuable to the Allies. Captain Gallery later wrote, “*Reception committees which we were able to arrange as a result ... may have had something to do with the sinking of nearly three hundred U-boats in the next eleven months.*”

By the time of U-505’s capture, however, the German war effort was already starting to crumble (D-day came only two days later), while Japan still dominated the Pacific when Koga’s plane was recovered.

A classic example of the Koga plane’s value occurred on April 1, 1943, when Ken Walsh, a Marine flying an F4U Chance-Vought Corsair over the Russell Islands southeast of Bougainville, encountered a lone Zero. “*I turned toward him, planning a deflection shot, but before I could get on him, he rolled, putting his plane right under my tail and within range. I had been told the Zero was extremely maneuverable, but if I hadn’t seen how swiftly his plane flipped onto my tail, I wouldn’t have believed it,*” Walsh recalled. “*I remembered briefings that resulted from test flights of Koga’s Zero on how to escape from a following Zero. With that lone Zero on my tail, I did a split S, and with its nose down and full throttle my Corsair picked up speed fast.*”

I wanted at least 240 knots, preferably 260. Then, as prescribed, I rolled hard right. As I did this and continued my dive, tracers from the Zero zinged past my plane’s belly. From information that came from Koga’s Zero, I knew the Zero rolled more slowly to the right than to the left. If I hadn’t known which way to turn or roll, I’d have probably rolled to my left. If I had done that, the Zero would likely have turned with me, locked on, and had me. I used that maneuver a number of times to get away from Zeros.”

By war’s end Capt. (later LtCol) Kenneth Walsh had twenty-one aerial victories (seventeen Zeros, three Vals, one Pete), making him the war’s fourth-ranking Marine Corps ace. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for two extremely courageous air battles he fought over the Solomon Islands in his Corsair during August 1943. He retired from the Marine Corps in 1962 after more than twenty-eight years of service. Walsh holds the Distinguished Flying Cross with six Gold Stars, the Air Medal with fourteen Gold Stars, and more than a dozen other medals and honors.

How important was the acquisition of Koga's Zero? Masatake Okumiya, who survived more air-sea battles than any other Japanese naval officer, was aboard the Ryujo when Koga made his last flight. He later co-authored two classic books, Zero and Midway. Okumiya has written that the Allies' acquisition of Koga's Zero was "no less serious" than the Japanese defeat at Midway and "did much to hasten our final defeat."

If that doesn't convince you, ask author Ken Walsh: "INSIDE THE ZERO"

The Zero was Japan's main fighter plane throughout World War II. By war's end about 11,500 Zeros had been produced in five main variants.

In March 1939, when the prototype Zero was rolled out, Japan was in some ways still so backward that the plane had to be hauled by oxcart from the Mitsubishi factory twenty-nine miles to the airfield where it flew. It represented a great leap in technology.

At the start of World War II, some countries' fighters were open cockpit, fabric-covered biplanes. A low-wing all-metal monoplane carrier fighter, predecessor to the Zero, had been adopted by the Japanese in the mid-1930's, while the U.S. Navy's standard fighter was still a biplane. But the world took little notice of Japan's advanced military aircraft, so the Zero came as a great shock to Americans at Pearl Harbor and afterward.

A combination of nimbleness and simplicity gave it fighting qualities that no Allied plane could match. Lightness, simplicity, ease of maintenance, sensitivity to controls, and extreme maneuverability were the main elements that the designer Jiro Horikoshi built into the Zero.

The Model 21 flown by Koga weighed 5,500 pounds, including fuel, ammunition, and pilot, while U.S. fighters weighed 7,500 pounds and up. Early models had no protective armor or self-sealing fuel tanks, although these were standard features on U.S. fighters.

Despite its large-diameter 940-hp radial engine, the Zero had one of the slimmest silhouettes of any World War II fighter. The maximum speed of Koga's Zero was 326 mph at 16,000 feet, not especially fast for a 1942 fighter. But high speed wasn't the reason for the Zero's great combat record. Agility was. Its large ailerons gave it great maneuverability at low speeds. It could even outmaneuver the British Spitfire.

Advanced U.S. fighters produced toward the war's end still couldn't turn with the Zero, but they were faster and could out climb and out dive it. Without self-sealing fuel tanks, the Zero was easily flamed when hit in any of its three wing and fuselage tanks or its droppable belly tank. And without protective armor, its pilot was vulnerable.

In 1941 the Zero's range of 1,675 nautical miles (1,930 statute miles) was one of the wonders of the aviation world. No other fighter plane had ever routinely flown such a distance. Saburo Sakai, Japan's highest-scoring surviving World War II ace, with sixty-four kills, believes that if the Zero had not been developed, Japan "would not have decided to start the war." Other Japanese authorities echo this opinion, and the confidence it reflects was not, in the beginning at least, misplaced.

Today the Zero is one of the rarest of all major fighter planes of World War II. Only sixteen complete and assembled examples are known to exist. Of these, only two are flyable: one owned by Planes of Fame, in Chino, California, and the other by the Commemorative Air Force, in Midland, Texas.

JUST ONE MONTH AFTER S7 BANNED FIRST OFFICER LANDINGS, THE CARRIER SUFFERS RUNWAY OVERRUN

Russian airlines have been forced to improvise to keep their aircraft in service. With the war still ongoing, all



Russian aircraft operators have been blacklisted by various western part manufacturers and suppliers.

As a result, these carriers have had to find unique ways to get around these blocks, either by importing spare parts through convoluted channels, or simply fabricating their own as best as they can. Unfortunately, it has resulted in many aircraft being grounded and parted out to keep others airborne.

At the start of June, Russia's S7 Airlines temporarily restricted first officers from performing landings except at a handful of airports following a series of hard landings. The airline implemented the temporary restriction (which lasts until October 1, 2026) as a measure to maintain reliable flight operations and reduce the chances of aircraft being grounded for extended periods of time following these hard landings.

First officers are only approved to land at Moscow (DME), Novosibirsk (OVB), all runways at Irkutsk (IKT) except runway 12, and Vladivostok (VVO).

Less than a month later, an S7 Boeing 737-800 overran the runway after landing at Mirny Airport (MJZ), coming to a stop with all three gears in the grass. On June 30, S7 Airlines operated flight S7 5241 from Novosibirsk to Mirny with a Boeing 737-800 (registered RA-73359). There were 179 passengers and cabin crew members on board.

At the time of touch down, the Meteorological Aerodrome Report (METAR) reported light rains and little wind. Just after landing, the aircraft veered off the end of the runway, becoming stuck in the muddy field. It appears the aircraft by and large escaped unscathed. Of all the gears, the left main sunk most into the ground, with the left engine cowling sitting just above the grass.

Further assessments will have to be conducted, and the matter is also being investigated by officials. "The Novosibirsk Transport Prosecutor's Office has launched an investigation to ensure the airline is complying with flight safety regulations." The incident raises further questions as S7 already had its sights set on first officer training standards.

The airline also has to be very cautious given how challenging it is to source spare parts. However, to their credit, they've done a good job keeping most of their aircraft airworthy. Of the 15 737-800s and two 737-800 freighters, only two are parking for maintenance (including RA-73359 as a result of this incident).

They are also doing well keeping their fleet of Embraer ERJ-170s and A320 and A321neo family aircraft in service. However, all eight A321neos and 24 of 31 A320neos are grounded with engine issues being the main culprit as all of them are powered by Pratt and Whitney PW1100 GTF engines.

Even though the issues affecting these engines are mostly fixed, Russia simply has no way around getting the affected engines replaced as they have to reach out directly to Pratt and Whitney for assistance. With various export restrictions in place, S7 is stuck with at least 30 planes sitting idly by until the war is over.

GREAT AT GAMING? US AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL WANTS YOU TO APPLY

People adept at video games should consider taking jobs as air traffic controllers, the US government has said, as it tries to address a shortage of workers in the sector.

In a new ad campaign, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is explicitly calling for gamers to apply for jobs in air traffic control when its hiring window opens next week.

The Xbox one logo appears at the start of the video before dissolving into a montage that cuts between images of men playing various online computer games and people, including women,

in air traffic control towers looking at their own computers. "You've been training for this," the ad says.

The ad also highlights the salary on offer to controllers, saying it is \$155,000 (£115,000) after three years of work. US Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy said in a statement that the FAA had to adapt in order to reach the next generation of air traffic controllers. The new strategy tapped into "a growing demographic of young adults who have many of the hard skills it takes to be a successful controller", he said.

The campaign echoes one launched in 2021 under the Biden administration, called "level up", a phrase used to describe making progress in electronic games. The Biden-era push was also aimed at persuading gamers to fill vacant controller jobs.

Vacancies for controllers have been a problem for years, with the shortfall projected to grow each year for the next several years, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The FAA said last year that it would be considered fully staffed with 14,663 active controllers. It was at least 3,000 controllers short at the time and said twice that many controllers were expected to leave their roles by 2028. Duffy said on Friday that staffing was currently at its highest level in six years, but did not provide specific numbers.

Nick Daniels, president of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association, a labour union that represents controllers, said unions supported the strategy of recruiting gamers to tackle the shortage. "Our union welcomes innovative approaches to expanding the candidate pool, including outreach to individuals with high-level aptitude skills such as gamers, so long as all pathways maintain the rigorous standards required of this safety-critical profession," Daniels said.

The recruitment drive comes after several high-profile incidents involving aircraft and air traffic control. In early 2025, an army helicopter ran into a passenger jet mid-air above Ronald Reagan Airport near Washington DC, killing 67 people. This year, an Air Canada flight crashed into an airport fire truck at La Guardia Airport in New York, killing two pilots.

UNRULY RYANAIR PASSENGER SLAPPED WITH 10-MONTH PRISON SENTENCE

Over the past few years, Ryanair started aggressively cracking down on bad behaviour, fining multiple disruptive passengers across its network.

In January 2025, a drunken passenger flying from Dublin (DUB) to Lanzarote (ACE) was hit with a €15,000 lawsuit, while another disrupter was sued for €\$3,000 in April. In May, another abusive passenger was fined for a similar amount, with the carrier later announcing that it would enforce mandatory fines starting at €500 for those having to be offloaded as a result of bad behaviour.

Ryanair has not let up, and has taken yet another passenger to court. The accused in this case is 61-year-old passenger Stephen Blofield. On November 11, 2025, Blofield started drinking duty free alcohol in the terminal at Krakow (KRK), and continued during the flight to Bristol (BRS). In the air, officials reported that he was verbally abusive towards passengers and failed to comply with crew instructions. Blofield was taken into police custody at the gate in Bristol.

In the Bristol Crown Court ruling, the passenger was found guilty of the above offenses, and was sentenced to 10 months in prison.

“LIGHT UP A VISCOUNT A VISCOUNT A VISCOUNT. LIGHT UP A VISCOUNT THE BEST OF THEM ALL!”

These were the words of a Viscount cigarette TV ad in the 60s. I was a junior First Officer on the other type of Viscount. A four-engine turboprop Airliner. We used to call a TV ad which was sung or played to music a Jingle. I'll park this fascinating information for the moment.

After about a year as a probationary First Officer on the wonderful DC3 I was assigned to the Vickers Viscount. I would have much preferred the DC6B, but we had no choice in those days.

Coming off probation meant a small pay increase, but more importantly the gold stripe on my uniform sleeve and epaulettes went from a single thin strip to a single wider stripe.

The Viscount ground school was all chalk and talk. There were very few diagrams and no trips to the tarmac to see an actual aircraft. There were no Simulators in those days so at the end of the ground school, we were split into small groups to be endorsed on the aircraft flying circuits and bumps at Mangalore. Not the one in India, the one in Victoria.

The next phase was line training where we were assigned a Training Captain to fly regular interstate flights together until he decided you were ready for a Check to the line.

We were gathered for an operations briefing and to be assigned a Training Captain. I was assigned Captain Ken Cooper in Brisbane. I was based in Melbourne so this would mean a temporary transfer of a couple of weeks; my Fiancée would understand? My classmate, John Gillam, based in Brisbane was allocated Captain Col Griffin in Melbourne so this would mean a temporary transfer; his wife and kids would understand? John suggested we should swap if possible. He asked the training manager, and the change was approved. Brownie points all round!

Tragically some weeks later First Officer John Gillam and his Training Captain Ken Cooper were flying VH - RMI in Western QLD when it was lost with all passengers and crew near Winton.

During every flight the F/O's duty was to close both of the main cabin doors as the Captain started the four engines. If you left the cockpit as he started No 1 you would be back as he finished starting No 4.

The company required that the F/O wore his full uniform with hat, to look dignified striding purposefully through the cabin to close the rear door. I was quite good at this with my single wide gold strip. Until....

On a flight from Essendon to Launceston, I was halfway down the cabin and a little old lady reached up and grabbed my sleeve. She pressed a sixpence into my hand and explained that she had forgotten to buy a newspaper in the terminal, and would I get one for her? I think she called me Sonny. As my dignity evaporated, I scurried through the rear door down the stairs on to the tarmac and made a beeline for the terminal, went into the Newsagent, and bought a copy of the Melbourne Sun. I broke into an even more undignified run back to the aircraft when I noticed that all four engines were running. I closed the rear door, delivered the newspaper, and scampered, panting, back to the Flight Deck.

Captain Griffin was not pleased demanding to know WHERE THE HELL HAD I BEEN? As I explained, his frown deepened as he shook head and no more was said.

The Viscount fleet was made up of two main types the -800 which were all the same and the -700 which had two sub types. The 720 and 747. There were two 747s, VH-BAT and VH-BUT which came to Ansett ANA when Ansett took over and shut down Sydney based Butler Air Transport. They were reregistered RMO and RMP.

As a result of the Australian Marsupial Two Airline Policy both Ansett ANA and TAA were required to have the same aircraft types. TAA had more Viscounts and less DC6Bs and Ansett ANA more DC6s and less Viscounts. Accordingly, two of our wonderful DC6Bs went to TAA and we got two of their Viscounts to balance the two fleets.

Therefore, Ansett ANA wound up with two ex TAA Viscount 720s. There was a problem. All of our aircraft had UP for ON switches on the overhead panel and TAAs had DOWN for ON. A recipe for confusion or worse when jumping from aircraft to aircraft as happened frequently. The problem was solved by isolating a number of crews to fly only the ex-TAA aircraft. I was one of them. I flew these aircraft only for 6 months.

What were they like to fly? All types were a delight to handle and land.

The 700s cockpit layout was truly dreadful. The pressurization system was entirely manual and positioned on the F/O's side panel where the captain couldn't see it. The radar was on the captain's side panel where the F/O couldn't see it. There were 4 fuel flow gauges, each had an on/off switch; why? There was a vane type transmitter in the fuel line to each engine. The vane in each unit moved to indicate fuel flow. There was no bypass so if the vane failed closed, fuel to the engine would be cut off and the engine would fail! As a precaution the 4 switches were turned off for T/O and on again at 1000 ft. 200 pounds was then added to fuel used indication for the T/O.

The 800's cockpit layout was better and had more automatic systems.

Both types were rendered a handful to operate due to Ansett's checklist policy. The checklist items were printed on a roll in a box with a knob to move each item under a cursor. Not a bad system BUT the policy required that it be "read and do". So, in effect the checklist flew the aircraft. For example, you should only put the gear down when called for on the checklist. Adding to the difficulty only the F/O used the checklist and called the items. Even when flying the sector.

Towards the end of my sentence on the Viscount the scan and checklist system was introduced, and this procedure is now used worldwide.

The Vickers Viscount had a bad run in Australia - indeed in Ansett-ANA. I mentioned earlier the tragic loss of VH-RMI in September 1966. That was not the first nor was it the last.

In November 1961 VH-TVC, a 700 flew into an active thunderstorm shortly after T/O from RWY 16 at SYD. In 1961 Viscounts did not have onboard weather radar. In 1961 SYD tower did not have weather radar. Control was lost in severe turbulence and the aircraft was over stressed causing the starboard wing to fail. The aircraft crashed into Botany Bay with the loss of all on board.

As a result of this disaster onboard weather was mandated on all Australian commercial aircraft.

The cause of the Winton tragedy was an intense magnesium fire in the cabin blower causing wing failure.

On New Year's Eve 1968 the third sad loss occurred as VH-RMQ was on descent into Port Hedland WA. The starboard wing failed at 7000 ft, all on board were killed.

Viscount aircraft had a single solid aluminium spar. A maintenance blunder caused a fatigue crack leading to spar failure.

I count myself lucky as I had crewed VH-RMQ some months earlier.

We, as a Pilot group took some satisfaction that, of all these disasters, none were Pilot Error.

To close on a happier note, I return to the Viscount jingle. As a line First Officer I got to fly with several real characters. My favourite was Captain Hughie Bond. He looked a bit like Baldrick of Blackadder fame. He was deficient in the finger department to the tune of two on his left hand. He had lost them hand swinging a Tiger Moth propeller when the engine kicked back. Starting four engines for Hughie was a bit of a challenge.

Starting was simple for the normally fingered. The captain would use his left hand to signal to the Ground Engineer, holding four fingers one at a time to signal the starting of each engine. The right hand was used to manipulate the cockpit switches and levers to start each engine in turn. In Hughie's case it was a bit more complicated as he ran out of digits after the third engine was started. To signal starting No 4 he had to call into action a digit on the right hand. It looked like calisthenics for the cockpit.

To see him starting all four engines while singing “Light up a Viscount a Viscount a Viscount” was an unforgettable experience in my aviation career.

After three tense years on the Viscount the American bidding system was introduced. I was able to bid for and was awarded a First Officer position on the truly wonderful DC9-30. The DC9 story I shall save for another day.

Dave James

CHINA COVER-UP ALLEGED IN CHINA EASTERN CRASH FINDINGS

Newly released data from U.S. investigators indicates that the 2022 crash of China Eastern Airlines Flight 5735 was likely the result of deliberate action by a pilot, raising fresh questions about transparency and aviation safety oversight.

The Boeing 737 crash in Guangxi province killed all 132 people on board and remains one of China’s deadliest aviation disasters in recent years.



According to findings from the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), evidence from the flight recorders shows that the fuel supply to both engines was manually shut down while the aircraft was cruising at 29,000 feet. The data suggests a

struggle in the cockpit, with control inputs indicating that one pilot forced the aircraft into a steep dive while another attempted to regain control.

The aircraft rapidly descended with no emergency communication from the crew, and video footage from the ground showed the jet plunging nearly vertically. The cockpit voice recorder continued operating after the flight data recorder stopped, though its contents were not disclosed publicly.

U.S. authorities transmitted their findings to Chinese officials shortly after the crash. Despite the severity of the incident, Chinese authorities have not released a final public report. Officials have cited concerns that disclosing full details could affect national security and social stability, drawing criticism from international aviation bodies that stress the importance of transparency in accident investigations.

The case has renewed focus on the risk of pilot-related incidents, which have been identified as a significant factor in several major aviation tragedies over the past decade. Investigators have noted similarities with previous cases where intentional cockpit actions led to fatal outcomes, including the 2015 Germanwings crash and ongoing theories surrounding Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370.

At the time of the crash, three pilots were present in the cockpit, including a captain, a first officer, and a trainee. Speculation has centred on internal dynamics, though no official attribution of responsibility has been confirmed.

Global aviation organizations continue to push for full disclosure of accident findings, arguing that transparency is essential to improving safety standards and preventing future incidents. Industry leaders have emphasized that withholding information limits the ability to learn from past events and address systemic risks.

The expected final report, which has yet to be released, is anticipated to provide greater clarity on the sequence of events. Until then, the NTSB data offers the most detailed insight into what may have occurred during the final moments of Flight 5735, highlighting the critical importance of cockpit security, monitoring, and mental health oversight within the aviation industry.

C46 FATAL CRASH APRIL 16 1969

On 16 April 1969 9T-PIJ a C46 operated by Wigmo for the Congolese government crashed into the river Congo with no survivors.

The captain was Ragne Moller. He was initially a mechanic and had been employed by Transair Sweden, the previous owner of the aircraft.

The aircraft was returning to N'djili, Kinshasa with hydraulic failure. When they pulled the handle to release the landing gear uplocks the cable broke.



Ragne informed the base that the co-pilot would fly a holding pattern while he went to see if he could do anything about the cable. The next thing we know is that people saw the aircraft crash into the river.

Divers found the co-pilot strapped in his seat and Ragne was floating around the cockpit.

All 45 people on board were killed.

Dinger Bell

THE ATSB'S INVESTIGATION OF AN AIRSHOW DISPLAY ACCIDENT AT AVALON LAST YEAR HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANCE OF MINIMUM SAFE HEIGHTS FOR AEROBATIC MANOEUVRES.

The Sky Aces formation aerobatics team, made up of four Pitts-type aircraft operated by Paul Bennet Airshows, was performing a display at the Australian International Air Show at Avalon, Victoria, on 28 March 2025, an ATSB investigation final report notes.

One of the four aircraft, a Pitts S1-11X, collided with the ground when exiting a loop towards the conclusion of an attempted triple avalanche manoeuvre.



The aircraft was substantially damaged, and the pilot was seriously injured.

The ATSB's investigation concluded the triple avalanche manoeuvre, which comprises a loop with three snap rolls at the top, was commenced at around 100 ft above ground level, rather than the 200 ft height used during previous flights. The aircraft still climbed to 800 ft during the first half of the loop, similar to other flights, but the changed profile resulted in the aircraft having a lower than usual nose attitude during the snap rolls.

“The low nose attitude limited the ability of the aircraft to climb further during the snap rolls, and resulted in the pilot finishing the snap rolls still at around 800 ft, rather than having climbed above 1,000 ft, as demonstrated in previous flights,” ATSB Chief Commissioner Angus Mitchell said. “The pilot then commenced the second half of the loop with insufficient height to safely recover.”

Mr Mitchell noted that low-level aerobatics is a high-risk activity. “Low-level aerobatics and airshow display pilots can mitigate and reduce risk by setting and adhering to minimums for various points during a manoeuvre, and by ensuring there is an exit strategy if they are below minimums,” he said. “Undertaking regular debriefs and reviews of their, and their team members’ in-flight video recordings can also be an important safety tool to check that selected minimum commencement heights are adequate.”

The ATSB also found a number of factors increased the time taken for emergency services to respond to the accident, although these likely did not contribute to the severity of the pilot’s injuries.

“The flight display took place above a pyrotechnic detonation area, which the aircraft came to rest in, and responding Aviation Rescue Fire Fighting Service crews had to assess and safely navigate the pyrotechnics to get to the pilot,” Mr Mitchell noted. “The ambulance service also required escorts to ensure safe access to the accident site.”

In response, the event organiser is redesigning the pyrotechnic area for future airshows to provide clearly identified routes of entry for emergency services, and is proposing to stage an ambulance with the Aviation Rescue Fire Fighting Services to reduce accident response times. The organiser has also committed to adopt similar requirements for aerobatic displays to those introduced by the United Kingdom Civil Aviation Authority, which include minimum height requirements based on aircraft performance, and pilots having ‘gate’ parameters or check altitudes set for all critical junctures of an aerobatic manoeuvre.

“I’M NOT OKAY”: CHILLING AUDIO CAPTURES NEAR-DISASTER AS PILOT TRIES TO KILL ENGINES



The aviation community and the public are getting a chilling, first-hand look at the moments of near-catastrophe aboard **Alaska Airlines Flight 2059 (operated by Horizon Air)**.

Newly released cockpit voice recordings (CVR), made public in early January 2026 following the conclusion of legal proceedings, capture the exact moment off-duty pilot Joseph Emerson attempted to shut down the aircraft’s engines mid-flight.

The recordings provide a visceral account of the confusion and rapid response that prevented a mass-casualty event on the October 22, 2023, flight from Everett to San Francisco.

“I’m Not Okay” The audio, obtained through public records requests following Emerson’s late-2025 sentencing, reveals a haunting exchange between the flight crew and Emerson, who was occupying the cockpit’s jump seat.

In the transcript, Emerson can be heard breathing heavily before stating clearly: “I’m not okay.” Initially, the captain, misunderstanding the severity of the situation, replied, “You’re, okay?” Emerson immediately corrected him, more forcefully this time: “I’m not okay.” “I’m not okay.” Seconds later, the audio captures the sound of a physical struggle as Emerson lunges for the two red T-handles. The T-handles, located on the overhead panel, are designed to cut off fuel flow to the engines in the event of an engine fire.

Timeline of the Incident Flight AS2059

05:45 PM Departure Flight 2059 departs Everett (PAE) for San Francisco (SFO).

06:15 PM Initial Distress Emerson tells the crew, "I'm not okay."

06:16 PM Engine Shutdown Attempt

Emerson reaches for T-handles; pilots physically restrain him.

06:17 PM Emergency Declared Pilots radio ATC: "We've got a jump seater who tried to shut our engines off."

06:30 PM Diversion Flight begins emergency descent into Portland International (PDX).

06:42 PM Safe Landing.

Emerson is taken into custody by Port of Portland Police. Subsequent investigations and Emerson's own testimony revealed that the veteran pilot was suffering from a profound mental health crisis exacerbated by the use of psilocybin ("magic mushrooms") two days prior.

Emerson told investigators he had not slept for over 40 hours and believed he was stuck in a "dream" from which he needed to wake up. "I thought I was dying. I thought pulling those handles would wake me up," Emerson stated during his 2025 trial. "I had no intention of hurting anyone; I just wanted to be home."

Medical experts later identified that Emerson may have been suffering from Hallucinogen Persisting Perception Disorder (HPPD), a rare condition where the effects of psychedelics can cause dissociative "flashbacks" long after the substance has left the bloodstream.

Legal Conclusion and Industry Reform

In December 2025, the legal saga concluded with a federal judge sentencing Emerson to time served and five years of probation. The sentence was seen by many as a landmark decision, balancing the severity of the act with the clear evidence of a mental health breakdown.

The incident has sparked a massive overhaul in how the FAA and airlines approach pilot mental health.

Emerson has since become an advocate for reform, launching a non-profit aimed at allowing pilots to seek help for depression and grief without the immediate fear of losing their medical certification.

A COCKPIT DISPLAY FELL AND KNOCKED OUT A SOUTHWEST PILOT MID-TAKEOFF

A Southwest Airlines Boeing 737-700 was forced to declare an emergency and return to Las Vegas on April 8, 2026, after the captain was struck on the head by a detached Head-Up Display unit during the takeoff roll. This extraordinary equipment failure incapacitated the flight's commander at one of the most critical phases of any flight.



The First Officer took control of the aircraft, executed an emergency return, and landed the plane safely, averting what could have been a far more serious outcome.

Southwest Airlines Boeing 737-700, registration N200WN, operating flight WN568 from Las Vegas Harry Reid International Airport to Reno-Tahoe International Airport, returned to Las Vegas shortly after departure following a captain incapacitation event.

The incident occurred when the Head-Up Display unit on the captain's side detached and struck the captain on the head during the takeoff roll. The First Officer assumed control, coordinated with Air Traffic Control, and landed the aircraft safely back at Las Vegas on runway 26L. The aircraft landed safely on runway 26L about 17 minutes after departure. The speed and composure with which the First Officer managed the emergency, from the initial impact through to touchdown and gate arrival, have been widely praised.

ATC Audio Reveals the Severity of the Impact The full gravity of the situation became clear through radio communications between the First Officer and Las Vegas ground controllers, which were recorded and shared by the aviation monitoring account "You Can See ATC". The exchange, which took place as the aircraft was taxiing to the gate after landing, paints a vivid picture of the cockpit event: SWA 568: "Yeah, it's the captain's side HUD, it came down during the takeoff roll and smacked him pretty hard on the head." ATC (Ground): "Southwest 568, roger. Something on the captain's side came down, you said?" SWA 568: "Yeah, the heads-up display. It's a big unit, came down, smacked him on the head, made him see a few stars, and started throwing up."

Earlier in the sequence, the First Officer had already radioed Las Vegas Departure: "Yeah, it's just the HUD came down and hit him on the head on the takeoff roll, he'd like EMS when we return."

Southwest Airlines confirmed the incident and provided its own account of the sequence of events. The airline acknowledged the crew's decision to return as well as the captain's condition after landing. "Southwest Airlines Flight 568 returned safely to Harry Reid International Airport in Las Vegas around 2:45 p.m. local time on April 8 after the crew reported a pilot injury," an FAA spokesperson told The Independent. "The flight was traveling to Reno-Tahoe. Shortly after takeoff, the captain began to feel unwell, the airline said. That led both him and the First Officer to decide to return to the airport. "The First Officer landed the aircraft, but the captain felt well enough to taxi the plane safely to the gate," the Southwest Airlines spokesperson added.

A wheelchair was subsequently requested to remove the captain from the aircraft. The captain had sustained a mild concussion. The First Officer advised that after landing, the captain had started throwing up.

Boeing 737 aircraft equipped with HUD systems typically mount the unit above the pilot's eye level on an articulating arm. A mechanical failure or latch malfunction could cause the unit to swing down unexpectedly, posing a direct physical hazard to the pilot seated below. The HUD is not a lightweight component. Its articulating arm and combiner assembly constitute a solid, heavy unit designed to be mounted securely in a precise overhead position. During the dynamic forces generated on the takeoff roll, acceleration, vibration, and any imperfections in the runway surface, a compromised latch could allow the unit to swing downward with significant momentum, directly into the space occupied by the seated captain.

This is precisely what appears to have occurred aboard N200WN on April 8. Despite the drama in the cockpit, the incident did not result in any passenger injuries. The Boeing 737-700 sustained no structural or mechanical issues beyond the HUD malfunction, and all passengers and crew arrived safely at the gate. The aircraft was able to depart again after about 90 minutes on the ground and reached Reno with a delay of about 2 hours. A replacement crew took command of the aircraft for the rescheduled departure, with the incapacitated captain having been removed by medics upon arrival at the gate.

Whatever the outcome of any subsequent investigation, the April 8 incident is a striking demonstration of why commercial aviation mandates two qualified pilots on the flight deck for every departure. As has been noted in previous Southwest incapacitation events, with two pilots on every flight, the captain and the first officer are "equally qualified and trained" to operate the plane by themselves if the other becomes incapacitated. On Flight WN568, the First Officer executed precisely that protocol, taking control at the most critical moment, managing the emergency communications with ATC, bringing the 737 to a safe stop with the aircraft, passengers, and remaining crew intact.

The outcome, while deeply concerning from a maintenance and airworthiness standpoint, is ultimately a story of Crew Resource Management training working exactly as designed.

A DASH 8 FLIGHT CREW WAS FOCUSED ON CONDUCTING CHECKS AS THEY INADVERTENTLY ALIGNED THEIR AIRCRAFT WITH THE RUNWAY EDGE LIGHTING PRIOR TO TAKING OFF FROM MILDURA AIRPORT.

On the morning of **25 February 2025**, the **QantasLink-operated Dash 8** was being operated on a scheduled passenger service from Mildura to Melbourne.

After leaving the gate shortly after 0630, prior to first light, the aircraft was backtracked down runway 09 and taxied past the threshold into the start extension bypass pad, to turn around and line up.

In the dark ambient conditions, the flight crew did not follow the taxi guidance line markings, and inadvertently lined the aircraft up on the right runway edge lights, before commencing a take-off, the ATSB's investigation found.

During the take-off roll, the nose landing gear contacted five runway edge lights, before the captain identified they were not on the centreline, and manoeuvred the aircraft towards it to continue the take-off.



ATSB Director of Transport Safety Kerri Hughes said a number of factors known to influence misaligned take-offs were identified in the investigation. “Dark ambient conditions have been consistently identified in similar occurrences and can reduce the visual cues available,” Ms Hughes said. “The crew was also focused on completing checks during the turn and at its completion. While these checks are a necessary part of a flight, they may result in the diversion of attention away from tasks like lining up correctly. “Pilots should consider the timing for conducting checks in situations where monitoring their external environment is important.”

The ATSB's report notes during the initial climb, the flight crew realised that the aircraft had impacted runway edge lights. Prior to landing in Melbourne, they subsequently conducted a low pass of the air traffic control tower to facilitate a visual inspection of the landing gear.

“While ATC did not identify any issues and the aircraft later landed without incident, during the low pass the aircraft descended below the briefed height of 200 ft, to a minimum of 134 ft for a short period,” Ms Hughes said. “Notably, the flight crew did not seek advice on the low pass from the operator, nor did the operator provide supporting procedures for this.”

Ms Hughes said this element of the investigation highlighted how, in non-normal situations for which there is no documented procedure, pilots should consult all available sources, including their operator, for assistance.

After the flight, the aircraft was found to have sustained minor damage to its nose landing gear, fuselage and right propeller blade.

In response to the incident, QantasLink has enhanced flight crew recurrent training with human factors and non-technical skills training on the threat awareness of factors known to contribute to misaligned take-offs. The operator has also introduced policy aligned with Qantas Group operators regarding the risks associated with air traffic control tower fly pasts.

Finally, the final report notes that during post-incident drug and alcohol testing, the captain tested positive for a non-prescribed medication. However, impairment was not expected by the time of the incident given the reported dosage and time elapsed. “Nonetheless, this is a reminder to pilots to exercise caution when taking any medications, and to be discouraged from taking prescription medications without medical supervision,” Ms Hughes concluded.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgyLEE2TA-I>

My friend Ty came first in the Beijing marathon, but wasn't awarded a gold medal...
The Chinese refuse to acknowledge Ty won.

My dad used to put me in a tyre and roll me down a hill.
Those were the Goodyears.

Velcro - what a rip off!

Broken pencils are pointless.

I told my doctor that I broke my arm in two places.
He told me to stop going to those places.



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