



Short Final

The aviation industry is, to me, a magical place, where very smart people cooperate with near perfection to move massive numbers of people and tons of cargo through air too thin to breathe, a miracle that happens every hour of every day, give or take a volcanic eruption. Absent natural catastrophes and man-made disasters like wars and terrorism, the flow continues, moving people and stuff around the globe, creating a system of travel and commerce that breaks down international barriers that have stood for millennia.

Watching a documentary about The Beatles' early days, I saw an interview with the band after their first visit to France, a country you can see from England on a clear day. The lads were asked how they found France, and what was the electricity like there? Today, this question seems silly beyond belief, but in 1964, on the brink of the transportation revolution, even close neighbors were not much informed about each other, and distant countries and cultures might as well have been on the far side of the moon, remote and unknowable.

Now, of course, international travel is available to any member of the global middle class, which is growing by 10 million every month, in part due to the

energetic international trade invigorated by tourism and air cargo. As Flight Safety Foundation has discussed, this rapid expansion of the prospective passenger pool creates a new catalog of threats and risks, chief among them the difficulty of maintaining quality oversight of system growth and finding personnel properly trained to run the system. India and Indonesia are good examples of what can happen when very strong economic expansion butts up against an overwhelmed political structure, but these are only the most obvious examples; as Flight Safety Foundation Chairman and CEO Bill Voss points out, risks lurk even in the most mature aviation markets as budget pullbacks threaten oversight.

Today's safety challenge is not the same as in past decades, when the search focused on how to fly safely. FSF Director of Technical Programs Jim Burin constantly reminds us that while our current system is very safe, there will never be a flight with zero risk, wisdom traceable to Orville Wright. However, we now know how to reduce that risk to levels we can call safe. Today's challenge is to disseminate that information around the world, and this is a major component of what drives Flight Safety Foundation's activities.

I'm trying to say that I consider aviation not only magical but also essential to the world's continued development, and that the Foundation — and the rest of the aviation safety community — play critical roles in keeping it the dependable transportation mode it has become, with improvements continually in process.

Now, as I retire, I know I am very fortunate to have been part of this magical community. Starting as a military pilot at age 18, I have somehow been able to either fly or write about flying — mostly write — for my entire professional career. Amazing.

This is my last issue of *AeroSafety World*, but the magazine and the Foundation will continue without pause, bringing you the most up-to-date safety information available. I hope to maintain some connection with the Foundation, but it is time to transfer control of the process. So to Frank Jackman, ASW's new editor-in-chief, I say, "You've got it."

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J.A. Donoghue".

J.A. Donoghue
Editor-in-Chief
AeroSafety World