



**Confusing Airmanship With Automation?**

read the article about the A340 tail strike and overrun (ASW, 2/12, p. 12). Had my teeth not been fixed in firmly, they would have fallen out.

Retired from airline flying for 20 years, I am now “out of the loop,” in my dotage and in any case have always tried very hard not to be critical of others on the premise that “there but for the grace of God go I.” And I have never flown a “glass” cockpit.

Having said that, and on the basis of your abridged version of the full Emirates A340 accident report, I wonder if many airline crews are now getting completely mesmerized by all the electronic goodies available to them, and forgetting the big picture, basic airmanship elements of the operation?

I flew the 747 classic for 12 years, in command on short-, medium- and ultralong-haul flights. Takeoff weights ranged from 220 to 377 tons. Many flights were really critical, performance-wise.

Melbourne to Dubai, the A340 must have been quite heavy. Are crews no longer thinking about their next flight until one hour prior to departure? Thinking about the criticality — or otherwise — of takeoff run distance required against available runway? The required body angle after rotation to achieve three-engine  $V_2$  should one engine fail, etc.?

A before-preflight mindset on the 747 for an 11-hour flight might run as follows. It soon becomes second nature and can be modified for most aircraft types (including type variants). Believe me, it works and makes for a safer flight, modified for last-minute alterations.

Empty weight = 170 tons  
 Galley/miscellaneous equipment = 10 tons  
 350 pax @ 100 kg (including baggage) = 35 tons  
 Fuel @ 12 tons hourly burn plus reserve = 144 tons  
 Anticipated approx. gross takeoff weight = 359 tons

Someone really needs to take a long, hard look at selection and training requirements for the huge expansion in numbers of airline pilots in highly automated jet transport operations forecast for the next two decades. Don't let's confuse the two As — airmanship and automation.

While on my soapbox: if the preflight check-in is still one hour prior to departure, that is often woefully inadequate and often leads to rushed preflight activity. It really does need to be changed.

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*AeroSafety World encourages comments from readers, and will assume that letters and e-mails are meant for publication unless otherwise stated. Correspondence is subject to editing for length and clarity.*

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