



Unalaska Airport Closure Planning Across Cultures and Jurisdictions

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Unalaska Planning Director

THE ACCIDENT

October 17 2019: 5:41 pm

Ravn Flight 3296 ran off the runway while attempting to land at DUT.

The plane is a Saab 2000 – this is it's only US route
39 passengers and crew

Cordova HS Swim Team – about 20



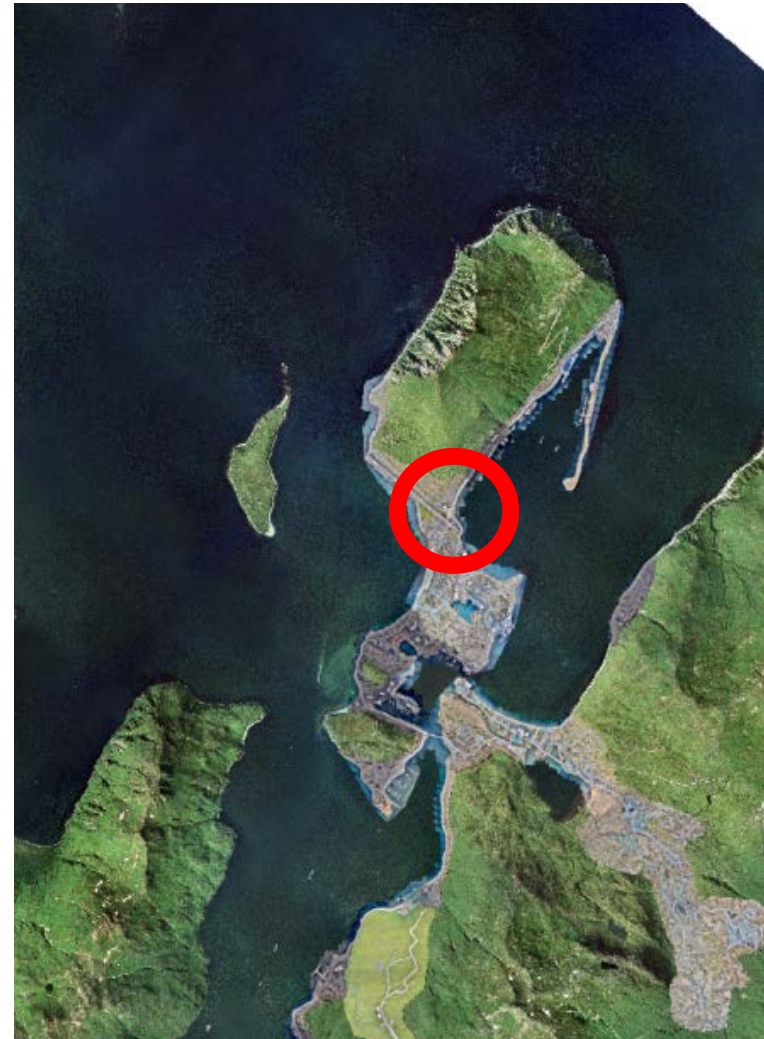
THE ACCIDENT

Police, Fire, EMS, AK Trooper, Coast Guard, Clinic

12 minor injuries

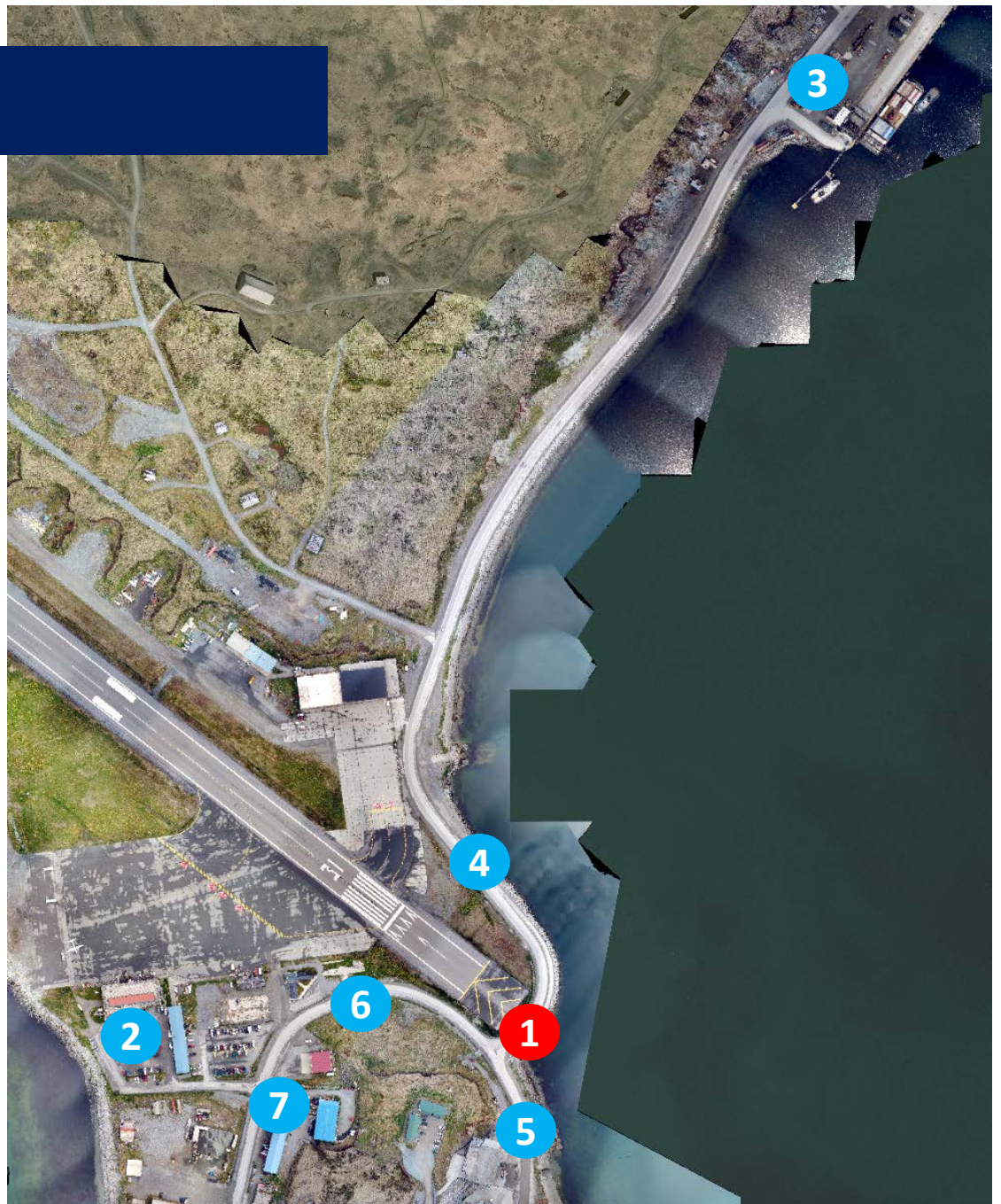
1 Medavaced to ANC

1 fatality



THE ACCIDENT

1. Plane
2. Airport Terminal
3. Unalaska Marine Center
4. Ballyhoo Road (to docks, housing, fuel)
5. East Point Road (to container yards, fuel dock, housing)
6. Airport Beach Road (main road to town)
7. UFD Station 2 (rehab for responders)



IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH

- Plane impedes the intersection, obstructs traffic
- City closes the intersection
- Police & Fire maintain 24hr presence and set up escorts through scene
- The intersection is a critical connection between port facilities, storage yards, worker housing, city offices



IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH

- NTSB Orders plane to stay put and closes airport
- Press Releases – 5 on the first day. 20 thus far.
- NTSB Arrives on Ravn charter plane to begin onsite investigation
- Cordova HS Swim Team departs via the Ravn charter plane – otherwise they were stuck
- All sorts of Facebook information flying about with incorrect information



IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH

- The City & shipping companies work out a way to get food and mail shipments from Port facility to a private dock facility
- NTSB and City Coordinate plane move via barge to dock to truck to airport. Yep. That's correct!



SHORT TERM AFTERMATH

- Airport deemed not damaged and reopened within 3 days
- Crisis & Behavioral Health team increases presence on the island for victims and families
- Ravn grounds Saab 2000, says it doesn't know if it's the plane or pilot error.

SHORT TERM AFTERMATH

- Ravn cancels all ANC – DUT flights through December 26 . Airport is basically non-functioning as a result
- Small charters offer to help but capacity and cost is at both extremes, little capacity and a big cost (\$1,250 one way)



SHORT TERM AFTERMATH

- Ravn Air and Alaska Air realize they don't have a route agreement for DUT – ANC for planes other than the Saab 2000
- Ravn cancels agreement with Alaska Air for service to DUT and says they'll try again by May 31, 2020
- Ravn Air will now attempt to fly 'solo'



SHORT TERM AFTERMATH

- Still need FAA approval for landing a new plane at the 4,500' runway
- The Ravn/Alaska airline route agreement cancellation ALSO eliminates the use of the Alaska Air website, smart phone app, use of air miles, and restricts luggage to 1 bag instead of 3.
- Cancelling the reservations causes new problem. It eliminates information about how many people are stranded / en route to Unalaska!
- City declares a State of Emergency 10/29

SHORT TERM AFTERMATH

- City considers options to contract charter flights
- Uses State and Federal Elected Officials to help expedite approval of a waiver from USDOT for the city to be a charter company
- Ravn agrees to handle reservations in a round about fashion. Since it's a charter operation travelers cannot use the Ravn website or reservation telephone number.

SHORT TERM AFTERMATH

- Meanwhile the City is trying to estimate the number of charter flights needed without much information.
- If there's a huge demand, is there going to be some criteria such as medical and business travel versus general travel?
- Issue a city survey of need and demand to determine how frequent to fly planes

SHORT TERM AFTERMATH

- Of course the City's not doing anything else right?
New officials and temp / vacant positions
- Numerous calls to state and federal elected officials, AK DOT, US DOT, legislative advocate
- Several special City Council meetings to review and approve path forward
- City gets into the charter business in 9 days



SHORT TERM AFTERMATH

- City starts charters week of 11/6
- \$35k per round trip – city pays no matter what
- If we want to play ‘Leap Frog’? It’s \$2,000 per hour to sit on our favorite islands between DUT and ANC
- In total the city budgeted \$ 350,000
- Flights cost travelers \$600 one way (\$1,200 round trip)
- The city subsidized the difference in the cost and any non-sold seats

SHORT TERM AFTERMATH

- Presently no service is being offered after May 30, 2020
- Alaska Air & Ravn Air are working to secure new user agreements, code sharing, and route details
- Unalaska residents, businesses, and commerce is in a predicament, but now the city's eligible for the Essential Air Service program

SHORT TERM AFTERMATH

Resilience? Sustainability? Unalaska is already concerned !

- Processor companies affected
- Delayed start of a fishing season
- Project bids soared!
- Cost of travel already high, local community and natives pay out of pocket
- Concerned parents and school activities impeded

ONGOING AIR ISSUES

- WW2 Naval Operating Base founded prior to WW2.
- Initially a flying boat base with minimal runway facility.
- The 4,000 foot long runway was updated in 2013-15 to add an additional 500 feet of length, for a total of 4,500 feet
- Owned by the Alaska Department of Transportation
- Classified by the FAA as a Non-hub Primary Commercial Service Airport
- About 50,000 enplanements annually



ONGOING AIR ISSUES

- Small 4,500' runway length vs. 6,000', means planes must be approved by FAA individually per such airport.
- Only the Saab 2000 was approved, all prior planes discontinued
- Limited approach options due to adjacent mountain and runway alignment
- Visual flight only, no instruments

ONGOING AIR ISSUES

- So many ways to cancel, only one way to get there.
- Dutch Harbor Poker:
Cancelations for Mechanical Problems, Poor Visibility, High Wind, Volcanic Activity, Pilot flight hour limit, Lack of Available Pilots.
- Leap frogging activity – often layovers in Cold Bay or King Salmon, only to return to ANC after 8 hours with no mileage credit, not getting to destination, have to rent a hotel, and need to be at airport at 7am for standby



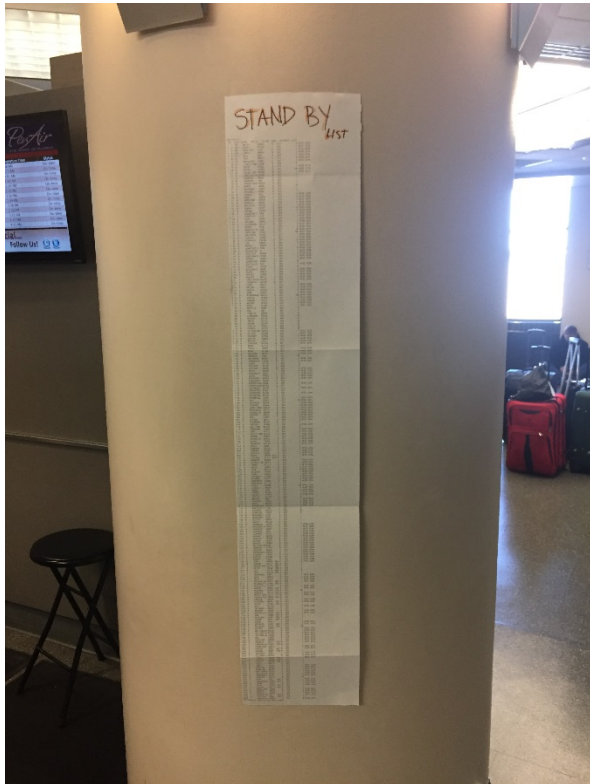
ONGOING AIR ISSUES

- Ravn Air purchased PenAir and assumed operations January 2019.
- Really didn't roll out any sort of plan
- Lack of any visible cross training of Ravn/PenAir employees



ONGOING AIR ISSUES

Regularly have 400-500
people on standby



ONGOING AIR ISSUES

- Backlog of Standby passengers can take a month or more to clear out.

Saab 2000 – 45 passenger Dash 8 – 32

- This strands people in Anchorage, can delay A and B fishing season processor workers to get to the island and impact the season
- Expensive

Round trip with PenAir was \$1,100

Round trip with Ravn is \$1,350

Unalaskans buy Alaska Air miles

ONGOING AIR ISSUES

- **1942** – PBY Catalina crash on take-off (Pre NTSB)
- **1943** – DC-3 hits Tabletop Mountain (across the bay) after take-off. (Pre NTSB)
- **1976** – Volpar Turboliner II operated by Winship Air Services crashes on landing. NTSB: **Weather**, **Pilot Error** to blame.
- **1979** – Learjet 24 operated by ERA Helicopters aborts take-off but skids off snowy runway. NTSB: **Pilot Error**, **Runway Conditions** to blame.
- **1986** – Boeing 737-2X6C operated by MarkAir crashes on landing. NTSB: **Pilot Error**, **Runway Conditions**, **Weather**, **Facility Inadequacy**, **Pilot Unfamiliarity**, **Terrain Conditions**, **Inadequate Surveillance of Operation (FAA and Other Government)** to blame.
- **2001** – DC-3C operated by Majestic Air Cargo crashes into Cinder Cone near Eider Point. NTSB: **Pilot Error**, **Pilot Intoxication**, **Night Conditions**, **Weather** to blame.
- **2008** – Grumman Goose G-21A operated by Pen Air strikes the trailer of a truck crossing the runway against the stop lights (gates not down). NTSB: Truck Operator Error, **Maintenance failure of crossing gates**.
- **2017** – Beechcraft B200 Super King Air operated by Grant Aviation landed with wheels retracted. NTSB: **Pilot distracted by traffic and radio calls**.
- **2019** – Saab 2000 operated by PenAir/Ravn Alaska/Corvus Airlines lands with tail wind and runs off end of runway on landing. NTSB (Preliminary): **Pilot Inexperience**, **Wind conditions**, **Pilot Error**.
- **2020** – Beechcraft B200 King Air operated by LifeMed/Aero Air LLC ditches in bay after take-off. No NTSB report as yet, however, according to hearsay **night-time operations require takeoff in one direction from Runway 31**, in this case, with the **wind**.



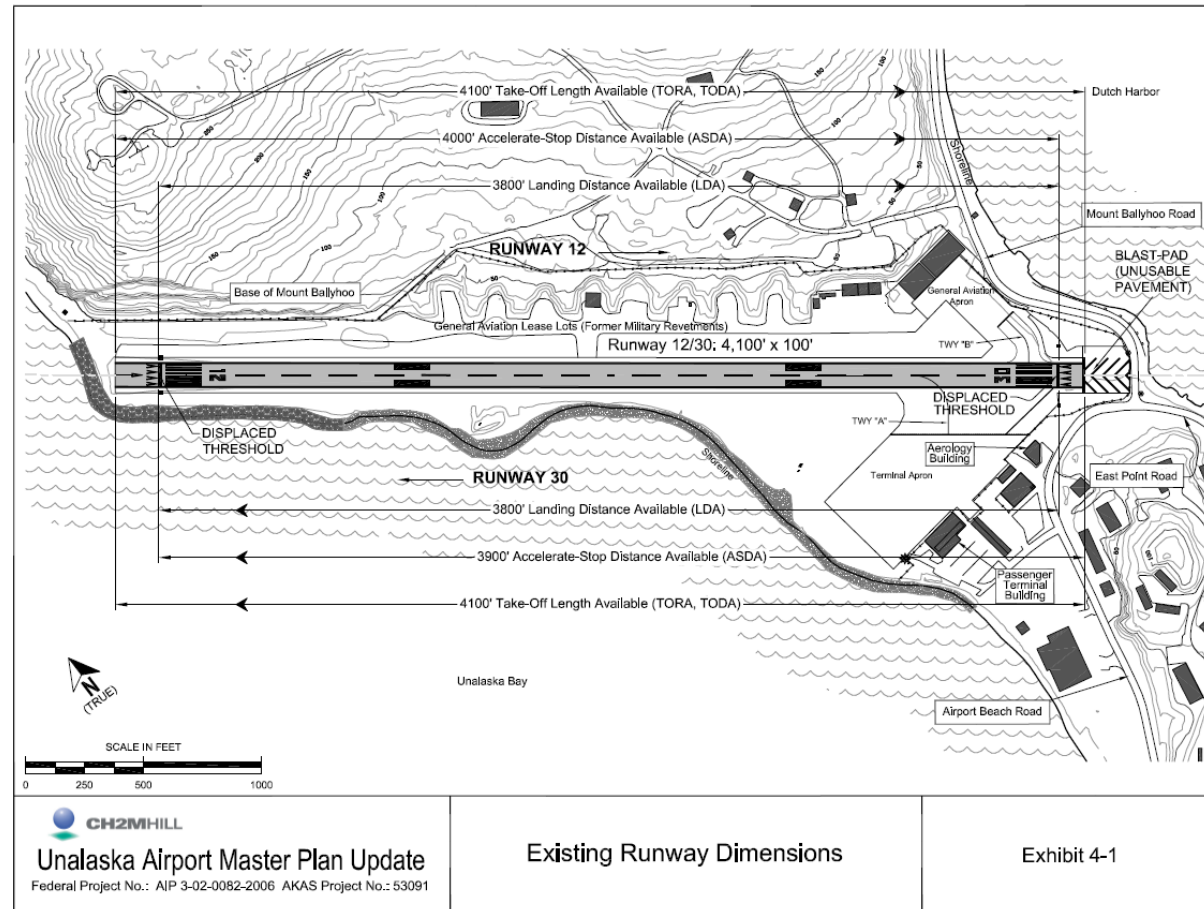
LONG TERM ISSUES

- Last Airport Plan was adopted in 2012
- Estimated improvements to cost \$250 M to improve runway length, terminal issues, and other passenger experience needs
- \$28 M spent to extend runway 500 feet



LONG TERM PLAN

- City recently changed its legislative priorities and will add any facility changes to its CMMP (Capital Major Maintenance Plan)



LONG TERM PLAN

- City is seeking assistance from the USDOT and AKDOT to prepare an updated Airport Master Plan. 2012 Plan cost \$500,000
- City intends to pursue the Essential Air Service Program wherein funds are provided to air carriers to offset costs of passenger fares
- City is analyzing current 'potential plans' for any concurrent, leveraged development opportunities

LONG TERM PLAN

- Current Projects Underway or Discussed
 - Geothermal Development (Ounalashka Corp)
 - Rocket Launching Company (Private)
 - New medical facility (Q Tribe)
 - Captains Bay Road improvement
 - Always rumors about military plans
 - About \$170 million CIP over 5 years

LONG TERM PLAN

- Is it wise to invest \$250-400 M for a new airport?
- Dash 8 has much shorter take off and landing than the Saab 2000, but Unalaskans love the Saab!
- Chances are even an Instrument rated airport will have difficulty due to 40-80 mph winds, extremely poor visibility and the island's rough terrain in general



WHAT'S YOUR RISK?

- Risk assessment - What happens if your community airport closes? Runway damage, repair time?
- Wreckage removal, storage/security, NTSB
- Community circulation – food delivery, mail, emergency facilities, public offices
- Where will people stranded stay?
- Do you have an emergency response plan? Would you follow it?
- How much morgue space is available?

WHAT'S YOUR RISK?

- What impact would an airport closure cause on your businesses?
- Is your city prepared financially for the costs of an emergency in terms of overtime, possible emergency repair needs, or strange unforeseen needs such as chartering planes (\$210,000)?
- No? What will you do?



Contact:

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PENAIR CRASH AT UNALASKA AIRPORT

Unalaska, Alaska, October 18, 2019 – On Thursday, October 17, 2019 at 5:41 p.m. Unalaska Public Safety officers and Fire/EMS personnel responded to a report of a Saab 2000 aircraft going off the end of the runway while landing at the airport in Unalaska.

Unalaska Police, Fire and EMS personnel and other emergency responders arrived within five minutes of the event. Unalaska units set up incident command with state assets to manage the incident and assess life and safety issues. Once all safety concerns were identified and mitigated, EMS personnel extracted one patient from the aircraft and completed the evacuation of the remaining passengers. All 39 passengers and crew were accounted for.

The Unalaska Fire Department transported seven patients to the Iliuliuk Clinic and four other patients were brought to the clinic by personal vehicle. Patient injuries ranged from minor to critical. Of the patients transported to the clinic, one was medevaced to Anchorage, and one died of traumatic injuries suffered in the crash. Next of kin has been notified.

Law enforcement has secured the scene pending arrival of NTSB investigators, which may arrive as early as today. The runway and vehicle traffic through the area is shut down until further notice. Access to Ballyhoo Road is closed and transportation is being coordinated through Unalaska Public Safety. The aircraft may still pose safety risks so the public is asked to stay away from the area.

Updated information will be provided as it becomes available. Thank you for your continued support and patience.

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