



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on January 20, 2023

## Was the Air Travel “Ground Stop” the Work of Ransomware Hackers?

Last Wednesday, January 11, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) halted all United States domestic air travel due to the “failure” of its Notice To Air Missions (NOTAM) system the evening before. It was big news not just because of the profound inconvenience, but because it was NOTAM’s first ever failure and only the second time in history that a “ground stop” was implemented on all U.S. air travel, the first being on 9/11. Yet the news perhaps should have been even bigger still because of a very odd coincidence:



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Just hours after the FAA’s ground stop, Canada’s NOTAM system *also experienced an outage*.

The FAA claimed this past Thursday that its problems were caused when an unnamed contractor “unintentionally deleted files.” But is this really the explanation?

Fox News host Tucker Carlson isn’t so sure. On the Tuesday edition of his evening show, *Tucker Carlson Tonight*, the commentator speculated that the NOTAM outages could have been caused by a ransomware attack. He also buttressed his theory with an observation.

“Almost all ransoms like this are paid in Bitcoin,” he stated. “So if the US government was buying huge amounts of Bitcoin in order to pay a ransom, Bitcoin prices would surge, of course. So the question is: Has that happened?”

“Well yes, it has happened,” he continued. “Since the nationwide ground stop last Thursday, the price of Bitcoin has shot up about 20 percent. Is that a coincidence?”

The ransomware-attack phenomenon has made headlines in recent years and “is defined as a form of malware attack in which an attacker seizes the user’s data, folders, or entire device until a ‘ransom’ fee is paid,” [explained](#) Spiceworks last September. Large companies are usually the targets, with KFC and Pizza Hut stores in Britain [being victimized](#) just this week.

As for the FAA, the agency claimed in a Thursday [statement](#) that it “has so far found no evidence of a cyber-attack or malicious intent.” Of course, though, Carlson pointed out, the U.S. and Canadian governments would be unlikely to ever admit it if they had been hacked. It’s embarrassing and politically disadvantageous.

In fairness, the ransomware-attack theory is just speculation, and the Canadian NOTAM failure was resolved within two hours and didn’t affect air operations. It also has been scoffed at by some in the cryptocurrency community. As website CoinTelegraph [reports](#):

Nick Almond, the founder of FactoryDAO, described Tucker’s wild theory as “maximum tin



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foil” to his 13,500 Twitter followers.

Almond replied to supporters of the theory that he doubted very highly that the U.S. government would buy billions in Bitcoin on the open market to pay for the ransoms.

Blockstream CEO and cypherpunk Adam Back also mocked Carlson to his 506,000 Twitter followers, stating that the two events were exactly what Carlson described them to be — a coincidence....

Other arguments made against the theory on Crypto Twitter included that the U.S. government already has a large amount of confiscated Bitcoin, that the government would buy it over-the-counter if it did buy it, and thaas [sic] [because] Bitcoin is traceable and transparent, large ransoms are more likely to be paid in Monero.

Stack Hodler [another expert] pointed out to his 30,000 followers that the recovery of \$5 [billion in] assets by FTX was a more likely explanation for the recovery in crypto markets.

Perhaps. These individuals certainly do know more about crypto markets than I or Carlson does; many are also, however, apparently biased against the commentator, which means they’re not impartial.

What’s for sure is that competence in third-millennium America is diminishing. Just consider what *The Plain Dealer Cleveland* [reported](#) Thursday in other aviation news:

Just days after two planes had a near miss on a runway at New York’s John F. Kennedy International Airport, two planes collided in a gate area.

The incident involved a JetBlue plane that was headed for Puerto Rico and an unoccupied aircraft. As the flight was leaving the gate about 7 a.m. Wednesday, it “came into light contact with a parked unoccupied aircraft during pushback,” JetBlue spokesman Derek Dombrowski said in an email.

...The incident comes on the heels of a scary moment Friday when a Delta Air Lines Boeing 737 aborted its takeoff as an American Airlines plane crossed the runway.

“(Expletive)! Delta 1943, cancel takeoff clearance! Delta 1943, cancel takeoff clearance!” an air controller said in an audio recording of Air Traffic Control communications when he noticed the other plane, operated by American Airlines, crossing in front....

Carlson reported on these incidents yesterday, without hazarding a guess as to the cause or who was at fault. But a theory comes to mind:

Barack Obama-era FAA “diversity” rules dumbed down the requirements for air-traffic controllers, motivated, of course, by their being “too white.” Fox News reported on this in 2018, having obtained a copy of the questionnaire for air-traffic-control candidates. According to Carlson at the time, “candidates whose worst subject in high school was science [and who played a lot of sports] and candidates who are unemployed receive the most points possible on the test,” [related](#) The Blaze at the time. “In contrast, licensed pilots and those with extensive air traffic control knowledge aren’t highly scored.”

Add to this United Airlines’ [2021 resolution](#) to choose pilots based on racial and sexual quota so that 50 percent of the 5,000 pilots they planned to train in the next decade would be “women or people of



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color,” and you can rest assured that the sentient biped (wouldn’t want to assume identity) flying your plane is the best — that is, the best a diversity program has to offer.

But, hey, what’s an extra crash here and there in the name of forging our brave new world?

For those interested, Carlson’s Tuesday segment is below.



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