

# National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Aviation Safety

Washington, DC 20594



DCA23LA179

## **AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL**

Group Chair's Factual Report

January 22, 2025

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## **A. INCIDENT**

Location: Sarasota/Bradenton, Florida  
Date: February 16, 2023  
Time: 2058 Eastern standard time (EST)<sup>1</sup>  
[February 17, 2023, 0158 coordinated universal time (UTC)<sup>2</sup>]  
Airplane 1: Boeing 737-800, American Airlines flight 2172 (AAL2172), N826NN  
Airplane 2: Airbus 321-200, Air Canada Rouge flight 1633 (ROU1633), C-GKFB

## **B. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL GROUP**

|              |                                                                                   |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Group Chair  | Betty Koschig<br>National Transportation Safety Board<br>Washington, DC           |
| Group Member | Tim Keck<br>National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA)<br>Cleveland, OH |
| Group Member | Rodney Taylor<br>Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)<br>Orlando, FL             |

## **C. SUMMARY**

On February 16, 2023, about 2058 eastern standard time, Air Canada Rouge flight 1633 (ROU1633), an Airbus 321-200, and American Airlines flight 2172 (AAL2172), a Boeing 737-800, were involved in a runway incursion at the Sarasota/Bradenton International Airport (SRQ), Sarasota/Bradenton, Florida.

AAL2172 was operated under Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)* Part 121 as a scheduled passenger flight from Charlotte/Douglas International Airport (CLT) Charlotte, North Carolina to SRQ. ROU1633 was operated under Title 14 *CFR* Part 129 as an international scheduled passenger flight from SRQ to Toronto/Lester B. Pearson International Airport (CYYZ), Toronto, Canada.

There were no injuries reported to the 2 pilots, 4 flight attendants, and 188 passengers on board the Air Canada Rouge flight; or the 2 pilots, 4 flight attendants, and 172 passengers aboard the American Airlines flight. There was no damage to

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<sup>1</sup> All times are eastern standard time (EST), using the 24 hour clock, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Coordinated universal times (UTC) is a single time standard for global aviation, using the 24-hour clock, and is based upon the time at 0 degrees East/West (the Greenwich Meridian) located in Greenwich England.

either aircraft. Nighttime visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of the incident.

## **D. DETAILS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

On Tuesday, March 7, 2023, the air traffic control (ATC) group convened at SRQ airport traffic control tower (ATCT). The group attended an in brief conducted by the air traffic manager (ATM). Attending the in brief were the event investigations managers (EIMs), district general manager (GM), assistant general manager (AGM), Co-AGM, SRQ National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA) facility representative, and representatives from the Eastern Service Area quality control group.

The group was provided a tour of the SRQ ATCT, and then reviewed associated data related to the incident. The group conducted interviews with the ATM and the local control (LC) controller, who was the only person in the tower at that time and was combined on all positions including the operational supervisor (OS) position. Both interviews were audio recorded and transcribed<sup>3</sup>.

On Wednesday, March 8, 2023, the ATC group reconvened at the SRQ ATCT, and reviewed data associated with the incident. The group then conducted an interview with a certified controller in charge (CIC) controller, who was not involved in the incident and was not in the facility at the time of the incident. The interview was audio recorded and transcribed.

The ATC group completed and approved the field notes. The onsite phase of the ATC investigation was completed.

## **E. FACTUAL INFORMATION**

### **1.0 History of Flight**

The history of flight timeline was constructed using FAA source data, ATC audio, documents, and air traffic controller interview statements. See Attachments 1 through 6 of this report for detailed information.

This history of flight provides the time and summary of the flight crew and controller communications and other pertinent information.

ATC services provided to ROU1633 and AAL2172 while operating in Tampa International Airport terminal radar approach control (TPA TRACON) airspace were

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<sup>3</sup> All interview transcriptions are included in Attachment 1: Interview Transcriptions.

routine and uneventful. Specific summaries of communications with TPA TRACON are only included in the timeline to provide context to the narrative.

This incident occurred during the time that the flight crews of ROU1633 and AAL2172 were in communications with and operating in the SRQ ATCT airspace.

- 2045:03 The crew of ROU1633 contacted the SRQ ATCT and reported they were pushing off [the gate] at [taxiway] B1. The SRQ LC controller instructed the crew to advise when they were ready to taxi. An acknowledgement of "roger" was stated by a pilot.
- 2050:20 The crew of ROU1633 advised the LC controller that he was ready to taxi. The LC controller instructed the crew to taxi to runway 14 via taxiway A, and cross runway 22. The crew readback the instructions as issued.
- 2052:13 The crew of ROU1633 asked the LC controller to confirm they were cleared to cross runway 22. The LC controller responded affirmative and instructed the crew to cross runway 22.
- 2054:09 The crew of AAL2172 contacted SRQ ATCT and reported they were on a visual approach to runway 14. The LC controller provided the crew the wind and cleared them to land on runway 14. Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B)<sup>4</sup> data indicated that AAL2172 was approximately 12 nautical miles (nm)<sup>5</sup> northwest of SRQ airport.
- 2057:01 The LC controller asked the crew of ROU1633 if they were ready. The crew responded that they were ready.

Figure 1 is the SRQ airport diagram depicts the location of runway 14 (orange arrow), taxiways Alpha 3 (A3) and Bravo (B) (purple rectangles), and the airport traffic control tower (blue circle). Other inconsequential locations mentioned in the history of flight can be found on the airport diagram but are not emphasized with symbols.

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<sup>4</sup> Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) is a surveillance system in which an aircraft or vehicle to be detected is fitted with cooperative equipment in the form of a data link transmitter. The aircraft or vehicle periodically broadcasts its GPS-derived position and other information such as velocity over the data link, which is received by a ground-based transmitter/receiver (transceiver) for processing and display at an air traffic control facility.

<sup>5</sup> All miles are nautical unless otherwise noted.

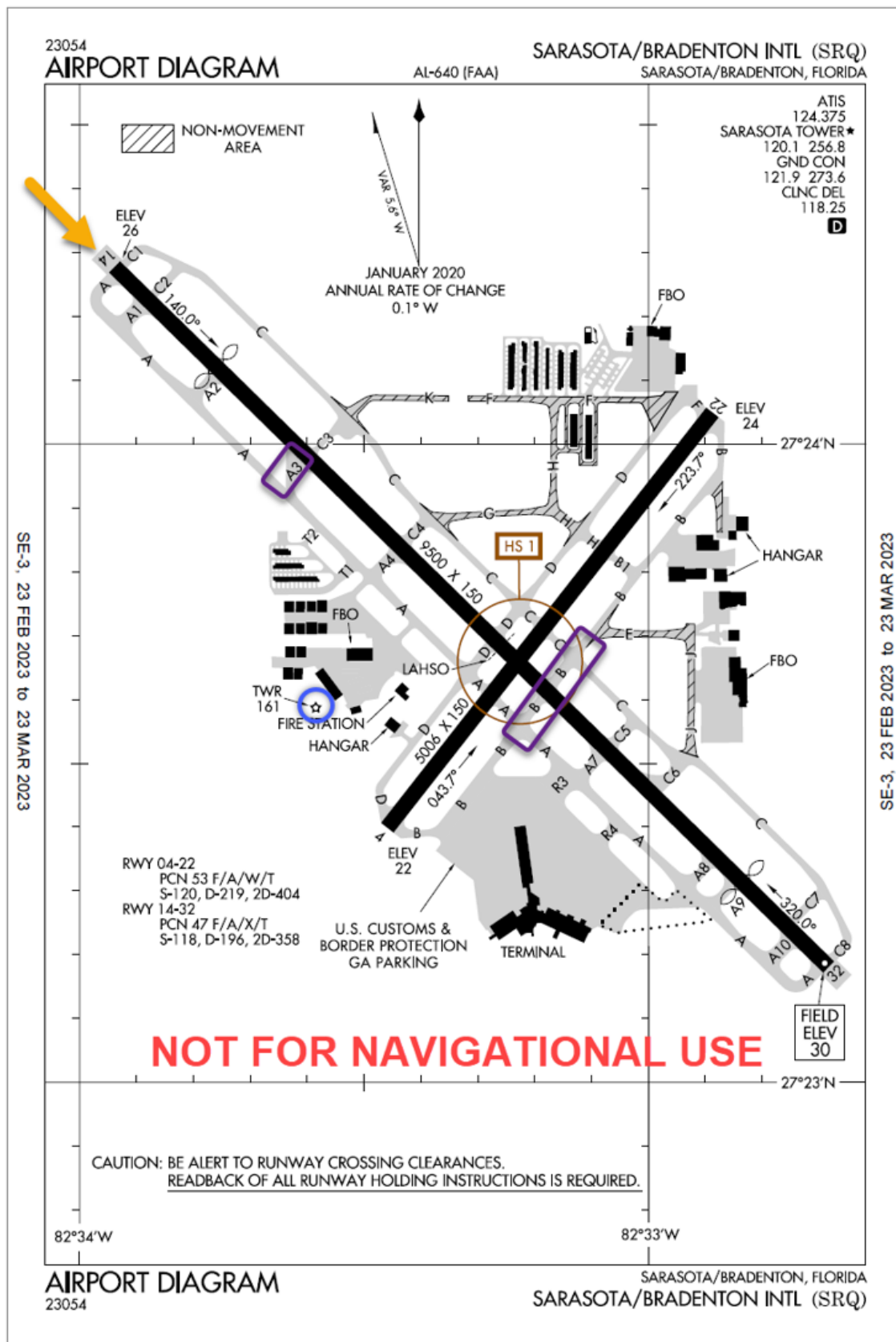
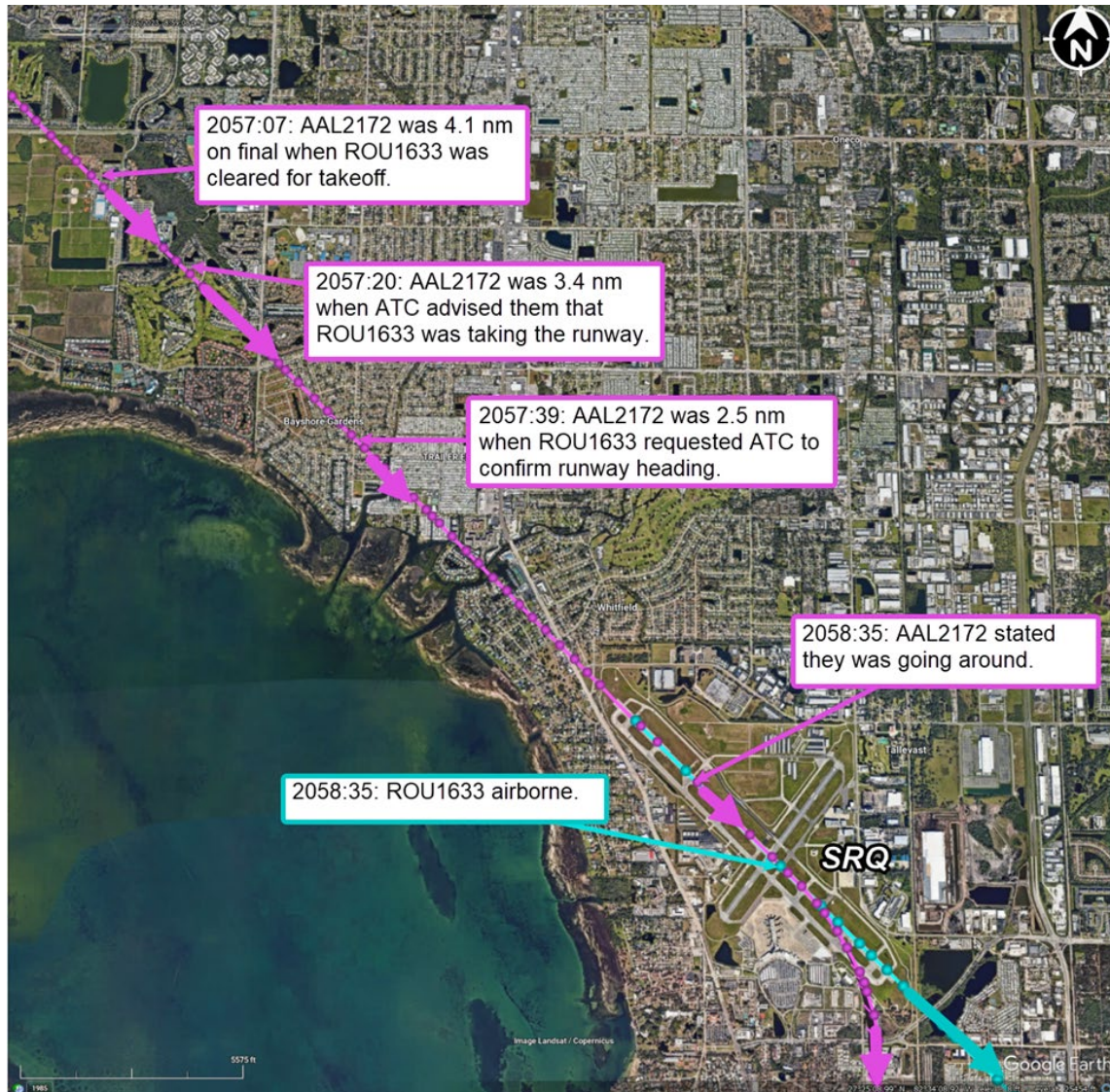


Figure 1. SRQ airport diagram.

- 2057:07 The LC controller instructed the crew of ROU1633 to fly runway heading, cleared the flight for takeoff runway 14, and advised them that traffic was on a 3-mile final [AAL2172]. The crew read back cleared for takeoff runway 14. ADS-B data indicated that AAL2172 was approximately 4.1 nm from the threshold of runway 14.
- 2057:20 The LC controller advised the crew of AAL2172 that an airbus was taking the runway [14] for departure. The crew acknowledged by stating their call sign. ADS-B data indicated that AAL2172 was approximately 3.4 nm from the threshold of runway 14.
- 2057:39 The crew of ROU1633 asked the LC controller to confirm they were to fly runway heading. The LC controller stated affirmative, fly runway heading. ADS-B data indicated that AAL2172 was approximately 2.5 nm from the threshold of runway 14.
- 2058:35 The crew of AAL2172 stated they he was going around. The LC controller stated roger. ADS-B data indicated that AAL2172 had crossed the threshold of runway 14 and was abeam taxiway Alpha 3 (A3), and ROU1633 was airborne from runway 14 and abeam taxiway B.

Figure 2 is a satellite aerial view graphic depicting the location AAL2172 and ROU1633, for the specific times and locations noted. The graphic was produced by overlaying ADS-B flight track data from AAL2172 and ROU1633 onto satellite imagery in Google Earth. AAL2172's targets and flight track are indicated in magenta, and ROU1633's targets and flight tracks are indicated in cyan. A scale is located in the lower left hand corner of the chart and a compass rose is located in the upper right hand corner of the chart. Arrows associated with the flight tracks indicate the direction of flight. Callout icons contain information about the flight(s). The graphic is a satellite aerial view depicting the location AAL2172 and ROU1633, for the specific times and locations noted in the above timeline.



**Figure 2. Graphic depicts the location AAL2172 and ROU1633 during noted times.**

2058:43 The LC controller instructed the crew of AAL2172 to turn right heading 270. The crew readback the instructions as issued.

2058:50 The LC controller instructed the crew of ROU1633 to contact Tampa departure control. The crew responded with their callsign.

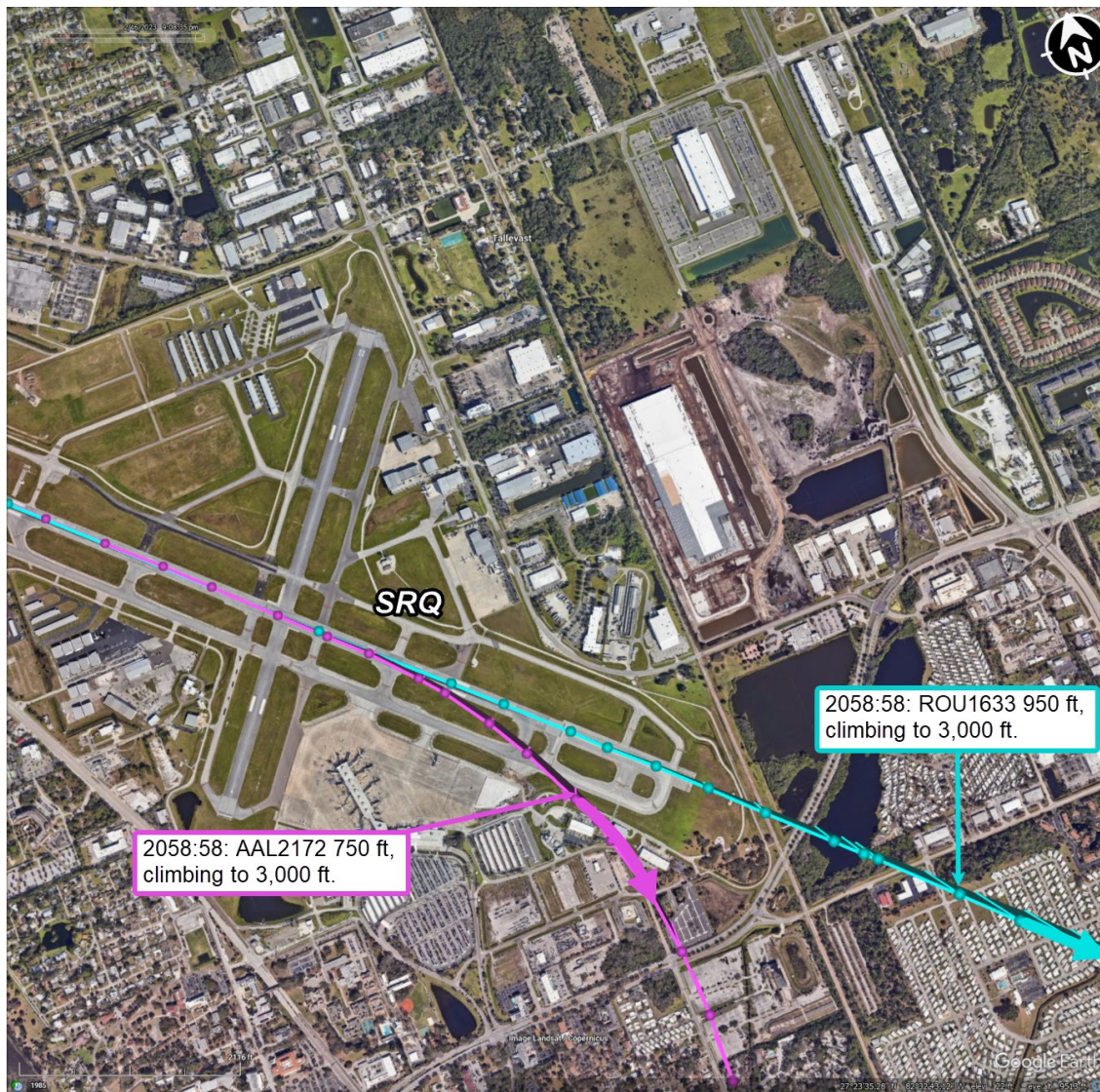
No further communications were identified between SRQ ATCT and ROU1633.

2058:58 The crew of AAL2172 asked the LC controller if they could get an altitude [to climb]. The LC controller instructed the crew to maintain 3,000 feet<sup>6</sup>. The crew readback the altitude. ADS-B data indicated that AAL2172 had

<sup>6</sup> All altitudes are in feet above mean sea level (msl) unless otherwise noted, and in the case of cloud ceilings which are in feet above ground level (agl).

been on a 154 degree heading and turning right at 750 feet and climbing to 3,000 feet, and ROU1633 had been on a 270 degree heading at 950 feet and climbing to 3,000 feet.

Figure 3 is a satellite aerial view graphic depicting the location AAL2172 and ROU1633 at 2058:58, when both airplanes were turning and climbing for separation. The graphic was produced by overlaying ADS-B flight track data from AAL2172 and ROU1633 onto satellite imagery in Google Earth. AAL2172's targets and flight track are indicated in magenta, and ROU1633's targets and flight tracks are indicated in cyan. A scale is located in the lower left hand corner of the chart and a compass rose is located in the upper right hand corner of the chart. Arrows associated with the flight tracks indicate the direction of flight. Callout icons contain information about the flight(s).



**Figure 3. Graphic depicts the locations of AAL2172 and ROU1633 at 2058:58.**

- 2059:02 The TPA approach controller responded to the LC controller's call on the direct voice line, and the LC controller advised that AAL2172 went around and was coming to them heading 270 and climbing to 3,000 feet. The TPA approach controller acknowledged the go around.
- 2059:31 The LC controller instructed the crew of AAL2172 to contact TPA departure control. The crew readback instructions to contact departure.
- 2101: 41 The TPA approach controller asked the crew of AAL2172 what was the reason for their go around. The crew responded, "That guy [ROU1633] was still on the runway." The approach controller responded, "that was a good reason."
- 2103: 16 The TPA approach controller instructed the crew of AAL2172 to fly heading 050 and to advise when they have SRQ airport in sight. The crew reported the airport in sight and the TPA approach controller cleared the crew for the visual approach to runway 14. The crew readback the clearance as issued.
- 2103:50 The TPA approach controller instructed the crew of AAL2172 to contact SRQ tower. The crew readback the instruction as issued.
- 2104:04 The crew of AAL2172 contacted SRQ LC controller and reported they were on a visual approach to runway 14. The LC controller instructed the crew they were number two for the approach [to runway 14], issued them traffic that was on a one mile final, and then cleared the crew to land. The crew readback the clearance to land runway 14.
- 2107:39 [After AAL2172 had landed on runway 14], the LC controller instructed the crew to turn right when able, then taxi to the ramp via taxiway alpha. The crew readback the instructions as issued.

No further communications were identified between AAL2172 and SRQ ATCT or TPA TRACON for this leg of the flight.

## **2.0 Automatic Dependent Surveillance - Broadcast (ADS-B)**

Certified ADS-B data was provided by the FAA. These data were provided in comma separated value (.csv) and keyhole markup language (.kml) formats. The ADS-B data provided flight track surveillance information for both flights while in the SRQ Class C airspace.

### 3.0 Meteorological Information

An automated surface observing station (ASOS)<sup>7</sup> was located on the SRQ airport between runway 14, and taxiway Charlie (C) near taxiway C3, and was at an elevation of 17 feet. The ASOS was augmented by limited aviation weather reporting station (LAWRS)<sup>8</sup> certified tower weather observers.

#### 3.1 Surface Observations

The official weather observation current at the time of the incident was documented using aviation routine weather reports (METARs)<sup>9</sup>. The METARs current during the period surrounding the incident are noted below. The observation closest to the incident time was 2053 EST; that METAR is indicated in bold text and includes a plain language description of that METAR.

1953: KSRQ 170053Z 20005KT 10SM CLR 23/17 A3008 RMK AO2 SLP183 T02280172

**2053: KSRQ 170153Z 23004KT 10SM CLR 22/18 A3009 RMK AO2 SLP188 T02220178**

KSRQ weather at 2053 EST, wind from 230 degrees at 4 knots, 10 statute miles visibility, clear skies below 12,000 ft agl, temperature 22 degrees C, dew point temperature 18 degrees C, altimeter 30.09 inHg. Remarks, station with a precipitation discriminator, sea level pressure 1018.8 hPa, temperature 22.2 degrees C, dew point temperature 17.8 degrees C.

2153: KSRQ 170253Z 21005KT 10SM CLR 22/18 A3009 RMK AO2 SLP188 T02170183 50010

### 4.0 SRQ Airport Information<sup>10</sup>

The SRQ airport was owned by the Sarasota Manatee Airport Authority and was located 3 miles north of downtown Sarasota and 6 miles south of Bradenton. It

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<sup>7</sup> ASOS - Automated Surface Observing System is equipped with meteorological instruments to observe and report wind, visibility, weather phenomena, ceiling, temperature, dewpoint, altimeter, and barometric pressure. ASOS are maintained by the NWS.

<sup>8</sup> LAWRS - Limited Aviation Weather Reporting Station - An airport weather station that utilized various degrees of automated sensors and/or other automated equipment (i.e., ASOS) and is often augmented/backed up by certified tower weather observers at these locations.

<sup>9</sup> The METAR has been adopted by the United States to provide surface observations of current weather conditions in support of aviation for the terminal. It is issued at fixed times hourly. It provides insight on a number of weather elements being observed at the airport or observing location.

<sup>10</sup> Information about the SRQ airport was accessed from the following websites:

<https://www.faa.gov/srq#:~:text=SRQ%20TWR%20operates%20from%200600L,lighting%20when%20>

SRQ airport consisted of two asphalt intersecting runways; runway 4/22 was 5,006 by 150 feet and runway 14/32 was 9,500 by 150 feet. The airport had a parallel taxiway ( taxiway A), which ran the entire length of runway 14/32.

The image is a composite of an aerial photograph and an inset diagram. The main part of the image is an aerial view of the Sarasota-McAlister Airport, showing the runway, taxiway, and surrounding landscape. The inset diagram, located in the top right corner, is a schematic of the runway layout. It shows two runways, RWY 06-22 and RWY 14-32, intersecting at a 90-degree angle. The diagram includes various labels for airport features: 'NON-MOVEMENT AREA' (hatched area), 'JANUARY 2020 ANNUAL RATE OF CHANGE 0.1" W' (with a north arrow), 'FBO' (Fixed Base Operator), 'HANGAR', 'TWR 161' (Tower), 'FIRE STATION', 'U.S. CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION GA PARKING', 'TERMINAL', and 'FIELD ELEV 30'. It also lists runway specifications: RWY 06-22 (PCN 53 F/A/W/T, S-120, D-219, 2D-404) and RWY 14-32 (PCN 47 F/A/X/T, S-118, D-196, 2D-358). The diagram is oriented with a north arrow pointing towards the top right.

TWR%20is%20closed. SRQ Sarasota Bradenton International Airport | Fly SRQ, AirNav: KSRQ - Sarasota/Bradenton International Airport, and the published FAA Chart Supplement.

## **5.0 SRQ Airspace**

The airspace at SRQ was Class C with a 4000' msl ceiling. To the north of SRQ, the airspace lies directly adjacent to TPA Class B airspace and underlies the TPA 30 nm Mode C and ADS-B out veil<sup>11</sup>

## **6.0 SRQ Airport Traffic Control Tower<sup>12</sup>**

SRQ ATCT operating hours were 0600 to midnight, 7 days a week. The FAA control tower was located on the west side of the airfield near the runways intersection and was 128 feet tall.

The design was a standard FAA low activity level tower with a 525 square foot (SF) control cab and a 9,000 SF administrative base building. The 10-sided polygon tower was integrated with the control cab.

For maximum visibility, the control cab had been designed to incorporate only four columns and used a butt-glazed cab window system. Insulated structural precast concrete panels were designed with interlocking edges to help ensure wind-driven rain would be kept out of the building during a major storm or hurricane.

Figure 5 is a photo of the SRQ airport traffic control tower.

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<sup>11</sup> Mode C and ADS-B Out veil refers to a specific airspace surrounding a primary Class B airport where all aircraft operating within that area must be equipped with a transponder capable of transmitting altitude information (Mode C) and also have ADS-B Out capability.

<sup>12</sup> Information about the SRQ airport traffic control tower was accessed from <https://leoadaly.com/project/sarasota-bradenton-international-airport-air-traffic-control-tower/>.



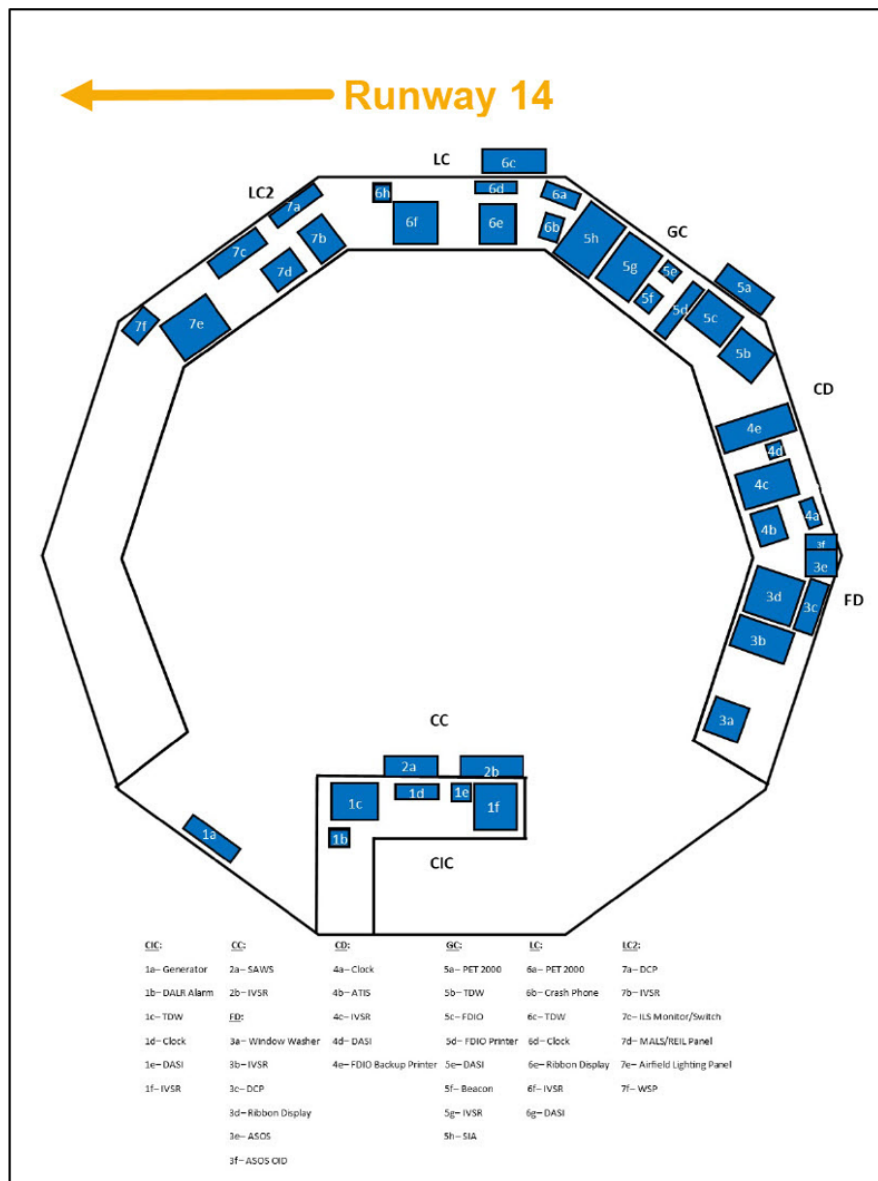
**Figure 5. Photo of SRQ ATCT. Photo credit: Unknown.**

Figure 6 is a photo of the inside of the SRQ control tower during construction. The photo provides a view of the runways and taxiways from the control tower.

Figure 7 is the tower cab layout depicting the location of the workstations.



**Figure 6. Photo of the inside of the SRQ control tower. Photo Credit: Unknown.**



**Figure 7. Tower cab layout depicts the location of the workstations.**

## **7.0 Air Traffic Control Personnel Interviews**

### **7.1 Local Control (LC) Controller, Combined on all Positions**

The LC controller's air traffic control career with the FAA began in August 2007 when he was hired under the Veteran's Recruitment Appointment (VRA) direct hire program. He worked at the Miami Executive Airport (TMB) from 2007 to 2012, Orlando Executive Airport (ORL) from 2012 to 2015, Fort Worth air route traffic control center (ZFW), from 2015 to 2018, and SRQ from 2018 to present. In December 2019, he was promoted to OS, but also actively controls traffic.

He was qualified on all positions in the tower and remained current on all positions. He held the required second class medical certificate with a restrictions to wear corrective lenses, which he stated he was in compliance with during the interview.

Prior to working for the FAA, he served 5 years as an air traffic controller in United States Navy.

### **7.2 Air Traffic Manager (ATM)**

The ATM's air traffic control career with the FAA began in June 2000 when he attended initial air traffic control training at the FAA Academy in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. After successful completion of initial training, he worked at the Casper, Wyoming flight service station from 2000 to 2002, Casper/Natrona County International Airport (CPR) from 2002 to 2007, Myrtle Beach International Airport (MYR) from 2007 to 2013, Florence Regional Airport (FLO) from 2013 to 2016, Jacksonville International Airport (JAX) as a supervisor from 2016 to 2019, FLO as the ATM from 2019 to 2021, and SRQ as the ATM from 2021 to present.

Prior to working for the FAA, he served over 6 years as an air traffic controller in United States Navy.

### **7.3 Controller in Charge (CIC) Uninvolved in Incident**

The CIC's air traffic control career with the FAA began in 2009 when he attended initial air traffic control training at the FAA Academy in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. After successful completion of initial training, he worked at Kansas City ARTCC (ZKC) from 2009 to 2011, Charles B. Wheeler Downtown Airport (MKC) from 2011 to 2014, and SRQ from 2014 to present.

He was qualified on all positions in the tower and remained current on all positions. He held the required second class medical certificate with no restrictions. He obtained a Bachelors in sociology degree from Beloit College in 2004.

## **8.0 Air Traffic Control Procedures**

### **8.1 FAA Order JO 7110.65Z, Air Traffic Control**

#### **8.1.1 Purpose of This Order**

Chapter 1, Section 1, General, paragraph 1-1-1, Purpose of This Order, stated in part:

*This order prescribes air traffic control procedures and phraseology for use by persons providing air traffic control services. Controllers are required to be familiar with the provisions of this order that pertain to their operational responsibilities and to exercise their best judgment if they encounter situations that are not covered by it.*

#### **8.1.2 ATC Service**

Chapter 2, Section 1, paragraph 2-1-1, ATC Service, stated in part:

- a. *The primary purpose of the ATC system is to prevent a collision involving aircraft operating in the system.*
- b. *In addition to its primary purpose, the ATC system also:*
  - 1. *Provides a safe, orderly, and expeditious flow of air traffic.*
  - 2. *Supports National Security and Homeland Defense missions.*
- c. *The ATC system must provide certain additional services to the extent permitted. The provision of additional services is not optional on the part of the controller, but rather required when the work situation permits. It is recognized that the provision of these services may be precluded by various factors, including, but not limited to:*
  - 1. *Volume of traffic.*
  - 2. *Frequency congestion.*
  - 3. *Quality of surveillance.*
  - 4. *Controller workload.*
  - 5. *Higher priority duties.*
  - 6. *The physical inability to scan and detect situations falling in this category.*

#### **8.1.3 Duty Priority**

Chapter 2, Section 1, paragraph 2-1-2, Duty Priority, stated in part:

- a. *Give first priority to separating aircraft and issuing safety alerts as required*

*in this order. Good judgment must be used in prioritizing all other provisions of this order based on the requirements of the situation at hand.*

**NOTE–**

*Because there are many variables involved, it is virtually impossible to develop a standard list of duty priorities that would apply uniformly to every conceivable situation. Each set of circumstances must be evaluated on its own merit, and when more than one action is required, controllers must exercise their best judgment based on the facts and circumstances known to them. That action which is most critical from a safety standpoint is performed first.*

#### **8.1.4 Pilot Acknowledgment/Read Back**

Chapter 2, Section 4, paragraph 2–4–3, Pilot Acknowledgment/Read Back, stated in part:

*Ensure pilots acknowledge all Air Traffic Clearances and ATC Instructions. When a pilot reads back an Air Traffic Clearance or ATC Instruction:*

- a. Ensure that items read back are correct.*
- b. Ensure the read back of hold short instructions, whether a part of taxi instructions or a LAHSO clearance.*
- c. Ensure pilots use call signs and/or registration numbers in any read back acknowledging an Air Traffic Clearance or ATC Instruction.*

**NOTE–**

*1. ATC Clearance/Instruction Read Back guidance for pilots in the AIM<sup>13</sup> states:*

- a. Although pilots should read back the “numbers,” unless otherwise required by procedure or controller request, pilots may acknowledge clearances, control instructions, or other information by using “Wilco,” “Roger,” “Affirmative,” or other words or remarks with their aircraft identification.*
- b. Altitudes contained in charted procedures, such as departure procedures, instrument approaches, etc., need not be read back unless they are specifically stated by the controller.*
- c. Initial read back of a taxi, departure or landing clearance should include the runway assignment, including left, right, center, etc., if applicable.*

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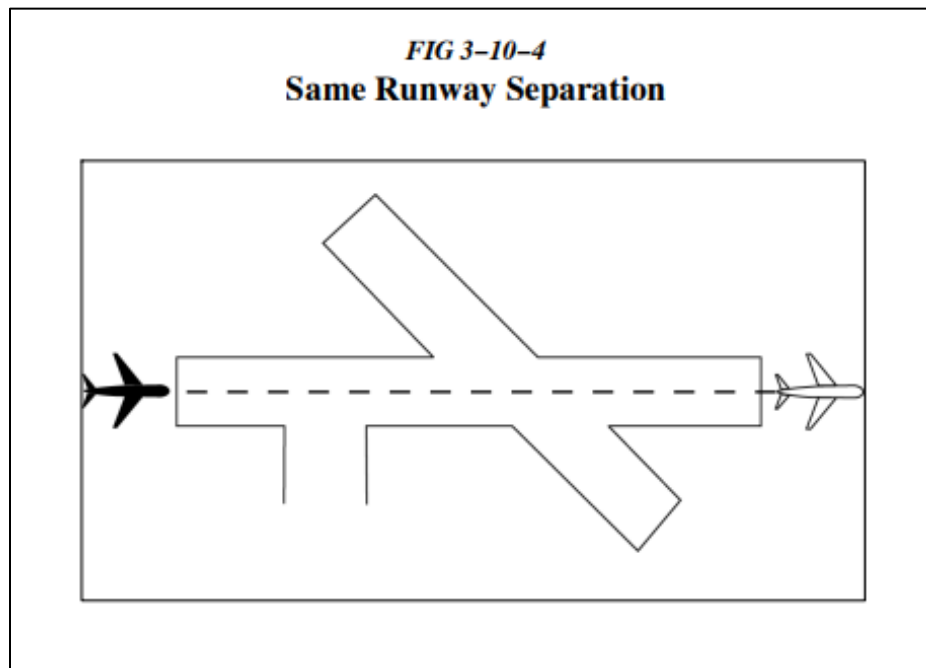
<sup>13</sup> Aeronautical Information Manual (AIM) - This manual is designed to provide the aviation community with basic flight information and ATC procedures for use in the National Airspace System (NAS) of the United States.

2. *Until a pilot acknowledges a controller's clearance or instruction, a controller cannot know if a pilot will comply with the clearance or remain as previously cleared.*

### **8.1.5 Same Runway Separation**

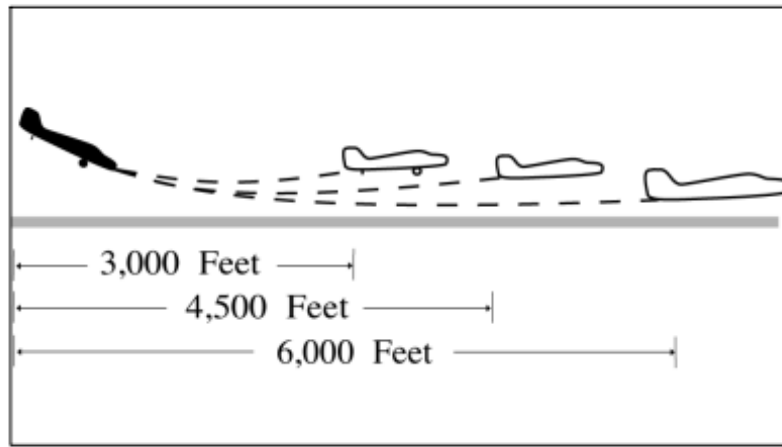
Chapter 3, Section 10, paragraph 3-10-3, Same Runway Separation, stated in part:

- a. *Separate an arriving aircraft from another aircraft using the same runway by ensuring that the arriving aircraft does not cross the landing threshold until one of the following conditions exists or unless authorized in paragraph 3-10-10, Altitude Restricted Low Approach.*
2. *The other aircraft has departed and crossed the runway end. (See FIG 3-10-4). If you can determine distances by reference to suitable landmarks and the other aircraft is airborne, it need not have crossed the runway end if the following minimum distance from the landing threshold exists:*



- (a) *Category I aircraft landing behind Category I or II— 3,000 feet.*
- (b) *Category II aircraft landing behind Category I or II— 4,500 feet.*
- (c) *When either is a category III aircraft—6,000 feet. (See FIG 3-10-5.)*

**FIG 3-10-5**  
**Same Runway Separation**



## **F. LIST OF ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Interview Transcriptions  
Attachment 2: SRQ Local Control (LC) Audio  
Attachment 3: SRQ ATIS<sup>14</sup> Audio  
Attachment 4: TPA Sector 1L audio  
Attachment 5: TPA Sector 1S Audio  
Attachment 6: ADS-B Data  
Attachment 7: FAA ATC Radar Data  
Attachment 8: SRQ Administrative Documents

Submitted by:

Betty Koschig  
Senior Air Traffic Control Investigator

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<sup>14</sup> ATIS - Automatic Terminal Information Service - A continuous broadcast of current, routine information to arriving and departing aircraft by means of continuous and repetitive broadcasts throughout the day or specified portion of the day.