A personal note about NOTAMs

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I learned a lot this week.

On Wednesday, I published an article in our International Flight Ops Bulletin. Our normal readership is 40,000, and that usually results in 4,000 or so immediate looks at our blog website.

By Friday, a quarter of a million people had visited flightservicebureau.org.

My inbox overflowed. I'm still replying one by one, with a couple hundred still to go.

The reason? I called a spade a spade, and used a profanity to describe what has become of the International NOTAM System. My own frustration forged the narrative. For many, I tapped into a channel of visceral agreement. For some, however, the word **bullshit** is not acceptable.

For me, this is not a question of whether or not it was the right word to use. This is not a question of free speech or the First Amendment. It's not a question of 'being polite', or remembering our 'professional audience'.

It is a question of not holding back. Not having a public and private persona. Not bowing to the stifling rules of Corporate Comms. Not assessing how this might impact 'the business'. And not being afraid to get it wrong.

We have a voice here at Flight Service Bureau, and we're going to use it. And sometimes, we might get it wrong. Sometimes, we might cross lines that make people uncomfortable.

In fact, we do that every week. We routinely receive government requests, demands in fact – from Aviation Authorities, from Foreign Affairs Ministries, Company Lawyers – to remove information from our bulletin, to say less, to not call their airspace 'unsafe', not report on incidents at their airports, not voice airlines and

pilots frustrations, lest others turn away their business.

And by very definition, sometimes **we have to get it wrong**. If we craft and control every bit of information, every warning, and every article, editing the life out of the story and the truth, then we're failing. We're not being brave enough. Maybe we could have said it differently, but that's not the point.

This week, when I got 400 emails in an amazing show of support, it made me realise that we are doing this for a large community that love what we do, and that makes me very proud to serve you. Going above 2,000 members in OPSGROUP is major milestone.

We have a clear mission: keep the International Ops community – Pilots, Dispatchers, Controllers, Airlines, Organisations – **informed and safe**, in an ever-increasing web of bureaucracy, complexity and litigation.

We'll fight the fight for you, and we'll tell it how it is.

Mark.