Boeing 777 Nearly Breaks Sound Barrier Across the Atlantic

Boris Djuric March 12, 2015

A commercial Boeing 777, traveled from NY to London in 5 hours, thanks to the unusually powerful tail wind that pushed the aircraft at its structural limit.

(Newswire.net -- March 12, 2015) -- Beside the Concorde, which is out of the service, no commercial airplane is designed for speeds higher than the speed of sound. However, a British Airways Boeing 777, caught a Jetstream and almost become supersonic, reaching London from New York in just over 5 hours.

Passengers onboard BA flight 114 from John F. Kennedy International Airport to London Heathrow were probably left waiting for their taxi rides after their flight arrived about an hour and a half ahead of schedule, the Telegraph reported.

The Boeing 777-200 commercial airliner caught a strong 200mph tail wind that pushed the jet across the Atlantic at a fascinating 745mph ground speed. To break the sound barrier, a plane must travel at a speed of 761mph (1000kph), named ‘One Mach’ (1M) speed.

To illustrate the privilege of breaking the sound barrier, there is an association of persons that flew over the speed of sound, with not many members, mainly military jet pilots.

“It’s just like surfing. It’s extraordinary how fast you can go,” Alastair Rosenschein, a former British Airways pilot, told the Daily Mail.

“You try to sit in the core of the jet where it’s not too turbulent and where you can pick up some free mileage. It’s not unusual to get 100mph tailwinds but they have got more than that,” he said. “This must be a record.”

The record for commercial supersonic flight actually belongs to a Concord, the supersonic commercial jet produced in a British-French cooperation. Its fastest transatlantic flight happened on February 7, 1996 when it completed the New York to London flight in 2 hours 52 minutes.

Boeing 777, commonly referred to as the “Triple Seven, is a long-range wide-body twin-engine jet airliners developed and manufactured by Boeing Commercial Airplanes. It is the world's largest twinjet, however it is capable flying the near speed of sound.

At 35,000 feet, the Boeing 777 cruises at Mach 0.84 or 84 % the speed of sound. The maximum speed would be in the region of around Mach 0.86 or the red mark in the speed indicator.

It is fair to say that the strong tail wind just pushed a fully-loaded 777 at its maximum speed, which this magnificent aircraft could reach, on its own; however, it would burn its fuel quickly. Another reason commercial jets don’t cruise at max speeds is the consideration of possible structural stress.