CARIBAVIA 2025 - AN EXCLUSIVE AVIATION SUMMIT HOSTED BY ST BARTH

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CARIBAVIA 2025 was a trully exclusive aviation summit and retreat on a five-star island. This time, St Barth island hosted 4 days of the event. CARIBAVIA itself is an aviation event like no other. The outcome had to be perfect when you combine this with the absolutely amazing location. To remind, CARIBAVIA is a communication platform for all stakeholders of airlift. This conference is really characterized by asking questions and finding solutions. Airlift is THE common denominator of the interests of stakeholders in aviation, tourism, business development and investment industries. It is equally important to government decision makers.

Inter-island transportation issues and opportunities require increased attention since they are needed to prepare for future changes in the region. Ongoing airlift and tourism activities need to be addressed collectively for better understanding and increased collaboration in order to improve the Caribbean airlift system.The event started by Hon. Xavier Lédée, President of the Collectivity of

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Saint-Barthélemy. Later I had the opportunity to discuss in a bit more details. Please find the essential of our discussion :

T.O. Thank you for welcoming this time the whole event of Caribavia at StBarth. It's a pleasure to be back two years later. First obvious question, what was the reason you decided to have all the event on your island?

X.L. Well, the first reason is that we cannot always be invited somewhere else if we don't return the invitation at some point.. it's also important because connection between the islands is something that is crucial for somebody. So, it made sense to say, okay, let's bring everybody here. It's always an opportunity in the program to put our own agenda also and to show what the problems are to discuss with the other islands on bilateral times. So that's one of the reasons and of course because we believe that this is an amazing event that has a lot of importance today.

T.O.Everyone thinks that StBarth is a paradise and you have only benefits. You don't have any challenge, you don't have any problem. Seriously, all people in France are absolutely sure that this is the place where everything is just great and you're waking up without any problems. From the aviation point of view, what are challenges you're facing?

X.L. Well, it's my job to make sure that everybody thinks that there's no problem, that everything is smooth. When it comes to aviation, the biggest challenge we have is that we have a lot of traffic. So, to give you an example, at the peak of the season, we would have 300 something movements over the time of one day. When you think about the fact that in StBarth most of the activity takes place from midday to the closing of the airport, it brings a ratio of close to a minute, a minute and a half between every movement. So, we need to make sure that no matter what happens, Europe coming to St. Bart stays safe. And so we need to be able to bring enough people to the island for it to be sustainable and for the activity to be to be good. But we also need to make sure that it is in compliance with the regulations, it is in adequation with the volume of the island. And that's one of the biggest challenges we have right now.

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T.O. A question apart of aviation business. People don't think about or don't talk that much, medical evacuation, all the emergency stuff, how you're dealing at StBarth if something happens, I mean, let's think that everything always goes well, but still this is a part of the aviation business, which is very important, how you're dealing with that.

X.L. There's always a situation. It was one of the the biggest challenges we had at the beginning of the mandate to make sure that we would go back to regulatory, safe evacuations. So the way it works, we have a Hospital in St. Bart, but it mostly is able to deal with minor problems or to stabilize in case of a bigger problem. And then we evacuate to St. Martin, St. Maartin, Guadeloupe or Martinique, depending on how urgent the situation is. So we have hospital has agreements with the companies. Right now, I think they're working with the St. Barth Executive, for example. So, they take the same planes that they have to bring people in, but when there's an evacuation, they get rid of a few seats, they reorganize the plane and they transfer persons to the other hospital.

T.O. Another question, people living on the island, if they are dreaming about aviation, what are their options for them to have a career in aviation?

X.L. Well, first you have to go outside of the island. For the training, of course. And so, we have people going to Canada, you have people going to France. If you go to Canada or the U.S. you need to have a specific organization after that to be allowed to fly in France. And then you have the local companies, of course, and that's as far as it goes. If you want to fly in a big commercial plane in jets, you cannot do it in StBarth. Yet we have people, we have a lot of local people now in flying planes, working in the companies, including ST Barth Commuter, the local company. They have, I think right nowthree pilots who are local guys born on the island. So it's also an opportunity because there are local companies. The collectivity can also accompany in the training to finance parts of it to make sure that you get the opportunity to come back and work in StBarth.

T.O.Last question. What are your development plans? Because the airport is as big it is and you cannot have more movements. Would you like to have some partnerships to still have a lot of people coming, but maybe dispatch them between the islands?

X.L. Well, we don't want more people coming. We're at full capacity when it comes to tourism. So, our job is more to stabilize the economy, to make sure that everybody lives correctly with the business and with tourism and with that industry. But at the same time, when it comes to aviation, we also need to make sure that our population is able to go outside. Right now you can go direct flight to St. Martin. St. Martin, Guadeloupe, San Juan, and that's almost about it. Maybe sometimes to Antigua during the season, but that's about it. So, that's also the sense of the discussion saying, okay, how can we have direct flights with St. Kitts, with Nevis, with Anguilla, and have that organization? So, people will come to StBarth or to some other island for their trip, but they can have an extra day, an extra two days on another island, see something different. So everybody would benefit of it. So, it would be additional business between the islands. It's not more business, it's just something slightly different.

T.O. Exactly. I hope that next year we will see each other somewhere. On the Caribbean, maybe not StBarth, but close to it. I mean, we would love to come next year as well to St. Bart.

X.L. Thank you very much. I'm looking forward to see you next year. With pleasure.

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