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AVIATION

Oneworld airlines get immunity

By: Jerry Limone
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The U.S. Department of Transportation granted antitrust immunity to five Oneworld carriers, enabling them to forge ahead with a transatlantic joint venture.

The DOT's approval means American Airlines, British Airways, Iberia, Finnair and Royal Jordanian Airlines can collaborate on transatlantic fares and schedules while sharing revenue and costs on those routes.

Last week, the [European Commission approved the Oneworld joint venture \(/article3_ektid217434.aspx\)](#), accepting the carriers' offer to surrender slots at Heathrow Airport to receive approval.

The DOT said the Oneworld joint venture is "on balance, pro-competitive" but added the alliance could hurt competition on certain Heathrow-U.S. routes.

Therefore, the DOT is requiring that the carriers make four pairs of slots at Heathrow available to competitors for new U.S.-London service, with two pairs to be used for Boston-London service and the other two for service from any other U.S. cities.

The E.C. is requiring the joint venture to make available landing and takeoff slots at Heathrow or London Gatwick, at the entrant's choice, on routes to Boston, New York, Dallas and Miami.

In addition to surrendering slots, Oneworld must submit traffic data to the DOT, implement the joint venture within 18 months and resubmit the alliance agreements for review within five years.

The DOT said the joint venture will enable the Oneworld joint venture to "compete more vigorously" with the Star Alliance and SkyTeam, alliances that already have immunized joint ventures for transatlantic routes.

Also, the DOT said the Oneworld joint venture would benefit travelers with "lower fares in some markets, new nonstop routes, improved services and better schedules."

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