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DOT gives final approval for oneworld antitrust immunity

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The US Dept. of Transportation yesterday issued its final clearance of antitrust immunity for American Airlines, British Airways, Iberia, Finnair and Royal Jordanian to "more closely coordinate international services" including a planned AA/BA/IB joint venture on transatlantic flights.

The granting of ATI follows on the heels of the European Commission's approval last week ([ATW Daily News, July 15](#) ^[2]) and cements DOT's tentative approval earlier this year ([ATW Daily News, Feb. 15](#) ^[3]).

"The department found that granting antitrust immunity to the oneworld alliance will provide travelers and shippers with a variety of benefits, including lower fares in some markets, new nonstop routes, improved services and better schedules," DOT said. "The department also said that the alliance will enhance competition around the world by enabling the oneworld alliance to compete more vigorously with Star Alliance and SkyTeam, which operate similar immunized alliances." DOT said that to alleviate any anticompetitive concerns the carriers had agreed "to make four pairs of slots at [London] Heathrow available to competitors for new US-London service, with two pairs to be used for Boston-London service and the other two for service from any other US cities."

AA Chairman and CEO Gerard Arpey said, "We are pleased that US and EU regulators have approved our long-sought-after alliance proposal...We look forward to delivering enhanced competition for customers on transatlantic flights."

British Airways CEO Willie Walsh added, "This final approval is fantastic news for [AA/BA/IB] and the oneworld alliance. We've waited 14 years to bring the benefits of the transatlantic joint business to our customers and level the playing field with the other two global alliances...We're pleased that the DOT and EU have worked together to ensure that there is consistency in the number of slots that the three airlines have to give up for our competitors to use on services from Heathrow to the US."

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