

**ACI EUROPE**

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# Europe's airports issue warning ahead of EU & US security meeting

For immediate release

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The past days have seen much speculation and media coverage over a possible extension by the US of their current ban on the carriage of large personal electronic devices (PEDs) aboard US-bound flights departing from selected Middle East & North African airports to US-bound flights departing from an unspecified number of European airports.

ACI EUROPE very much regrets this speculation & media coverage – not least, because it reveals a lack of meaningful security cooperation between the EU and the US. This is not conducive to effective security and potentially compromises trust in the aviation security system.

Following a letter sent to the US on 9 May by EU Commissioners Violeta Bulc and Dimitris Avramopoulos calling for a common approach and subsequent bilateral contacts, a meeting will finally take place tomorrow in Brussels between the US Department for Homeland Security (DHS) and the European Commission.

Ahead of this meeting, ACI EUROPE is issuing a warning about the highly disruptive and far-reaching consequences that a ban on the carriage of PEDs aboard US bound flights from European airports, would have.

**59 airports in the European Common Aviation Area\*** currently have direct services to the USA, with a total of **3.684 weekly flights** being operated.

The 5 airports with the largest number of US weekly flights are London-Heathrow (761 flights), Paris-Charles de Gaulle (353 flights), Frankfurt (291 flights), Amsterdam-Schiphol (242 flights) and Dublin (179 flights). Together, these 5 airports account for nearly 50% of the weekly flights to the US. Based on a sample of European airports, the number of passengers carrying PEDs is estimated to be between 60% and 90%.

## DISRUPTION

Given the volumes involved, extending the current US ban to European airports would result in significant disruptions, with implications on various aspects on airport and airline operations. Amongst these would be *ad hoc* screening checks at the gate of each flight, as well as the implementation of related processes to load PEDs into the hold of aircraft. This would require the deployment of a very large number of additional security staff. Appropriate staff are not readily available and would need to be trained. Also, as for anyone working in the restricted area of a European airport, new staff would need to first obtain security clearance from the competent national authorities – a process that usually takes several weeks.

Affected airports would also need to reconsider their gate allocation system – with the objective of re-grouping US bound flights within 'common gate areas', where possible. In addition to the extended boarding processing times involved by the extra screening, this would generate inefficiencies in infrastructure capacity utilisation, with potentially spill-over effects on other flights.

**Olivier Jankovec, Director General of ACI EUROPE** said "*All in all, if the ban was to go ahead, it would hit the continent's busiest airports hardest, where a significant portion of US-bound flights would need to be cancelled at short notice. For the flights that could still operate there would be delays, which would compromise onward connections in the US.*"

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*Beyond the immediate operational impact, we are concerned about the consequences that such a ban would have on demand for transatlantic air travel – and ultimately connectivity between Europe and the US. The fact that one of the affected Gulf airlines has downsized its operations the US is indeed worrying – and points to a wider & lasting economic impact.”*

### TIME TO RESET EU & US COOPERATION ON SECURITY

ACI EUROPE is calling on the US and the EU to share between themselves all information in their possession, to jointly review the threat which led to the initial US ban and carefully consider whether any additional security measures are needed for US bound flights departing from European airports. Should any such measures be considered, these should be purely risk-based – which means that they need to be credible, proportionate and effective to address whatever threat they are supposed to address.

*Jankovec concluded “Tomorrow’s meeting should be the opportunity for the EU and the US to reset their cooperation on aviation security. More than ever, given the geopolitical environment we are in, we need the EU and the US to work hand-in-hand on this. This is what the travelling public - and citizens - rightly expect from their Governments, as it is the only way to stand a chance of defeating terrorism.”*

### ENDS

Notes for Editors

\*The European Common Aviation Area includes the EU-28, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo and FYROM.

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*ACI EUROPE is the European region of Airports Council International (ACI), the only worldwide professional association of airport operators. ACI EUROPE represents over **500 airports** in 45 European countries. These airports contribute to the employment of **12.3 million people**, generating **€675 billion each year (4.1%) of GDP** in Europe.*

**EVERY FLIGHT BEGINS AT THE AIRPORT.**