

Information

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EUROPEAN AIRLINES PROTEST 'UNACCEPTABLE' INCREASES IN US INSPECTION COSTS

The Association of European Airlines, representing Europe's most important network carriers, has reacted with dismay at an announcement from the US Authorities that health inspections of arriving aircraft and passengers, conducted by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will cost 10% more from November 1st.

AEA airlines were charged more than \$65 million for these inspections in 2008.

The reasons for the increases are spelled out by APHIS: they are to recover revenues lost by the ongoing decrease in passengers and arrivals. AEA airlines' North Atlantic traffic has decreased by 6% in the last 12 months, while passenger revenues on the route have fared much worse, at about minus 17%.

Said AEA Secretary General Ulrich Schulte-Strathaus: *"Action such as this simply beggars belief. The airline sector has seen its financial performance devastated by the economic crisis, despite our having ruthlessly cut costs and pursued efficiencies wherever we can find them. Yet external agencies and service providers – and APHIS is not alone in this respect – seem to think they can extract even more from us at this time in order to make up their revenue shortfalls"*.

The AEA Secretary General also noted that the changes bypassed normal consultation channels because of their 'emergency' nature. *"What emergency?"*, he asked. *"The economic recession is now well over 13 months old, there have been innumerable press reports on the decline in air travel, as well as well-documented statistics from every airline in the world. This is no emergency and it ill suits a government agency to use emergency rulemaking measures when no emergency exists. It is not only an abuse of administrative procedure, but an abuse of the affected parties, which the Department seems to think are inexhaustible banks of funds to draw upon"*.

The APHIS announcement makes it clear that the agency has achieved no moderation in cost level during this period of reduced activity. Said Mr Schulte-Strathaus: *“Cost-recovery charging policies such as this simply invite waste and inefficiency. They have no place in the infrastructure of a commercially-driven business sector. They are iniquitous at the best of times; at the worst of times, which is where we are at the present, they are totally unacceptable”*.

AEA has written to the US Secretary of Agriculture to protest in the strongest terms at the APHIS actions, as has the US airline industry’s own association, ATA.

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Note to the Editor: The Association of European Airlines (AEA) brings together 33 European established scheduled network carriers. These collectively carry 366 million passengers and 7 million tonnes of cargo each year, operating 2,617 aircraft serving 662 destinations in 162 countries with 11,585 flights a day. They provide around 394,200 jobs directly, and generate a total turnover of €79 billion

- Adria Airways
- Aer Lingus
- AeroSvit
- Air France
- Air Malta
- Alitalia
- Austrian
- bmi
- British Airways
- Brussels Airlines
- Cargolux
- Croatia Airlines
- Cyprus Airways
- Czech Airlines
- DHL
- Finnair
- Iberia
- Icelandair
- Jat Airways
- KLM
- LOT
- Lufthansa
- Luxair
- Malev
- Olympic Airlines
- SAS Scandinavian Airlines
- SWISS
- TAP Portugal
- TAROM
- TNT Airways
- Turkish Airlines
- Ukraine International Airlines
- Virgin Atlantic Airways