

Korean Air to lease out four 787-9s for Asiana approval

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Korean Air is in talks to lease four of its Boeing 787-9s to local competitor Air Premia as part of remedies to resolve US Department of Justice competition concerns over its planned merger with Asiana Airlines.

The US authority is said to be the biggest hurdle to the Korean Air-Asiana merger, which has been dragging on for four years.

Air Premia plans to fly the 787-9s on routes to the Americas, as the carrier is in need of additional capacity for expansion of its network in the USA and for added frequencies on existing routes. This week, Air Premia confirmed its fourth destination in the USA – San Francisco.

Air Premia currently operates flights from Seoul Incheon to New York, Los Angeles, and Honolulu.

These routes, plus San Francisco, are the services that the US DOJ believes will become a quasi-monopoly if Korean Air and Asiana are allowed to merge.

Two of the leased Korean Air 787-9s are due to arrive at Air Premia in 2024, while the remaining two will be delivered thereafter.

The deal follows a similar one between Korean Air and T'way Air from June 2023, which included five A330-300s and 100 pilots to appease European Commission concerns.

T'way will use the aircraft to launch four European routes, including to Paris, Rome, Barcelona, and Frankfurt, in order to provide competition to Korean Air and Asiana, which currently both serve each route.

Korean Air currently has 12 787-9s, plus 28 on order comprising eight additional -9s and 20 larger 787-10s.

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