

US airlines better off competing than seeking protection: analyst

Emirates responds to US lobby group backlash saying 5th Freedom service between Newark and Athens has been poorly served to date

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Dubai: Backlash on Monday by an American lobby group representing US competitors, accusing Emirates of competing unfairly by way of state subsidies, has added to the ongoing row between the Gulf and US carriers.

But industry experts are of the opinion that US airlines would be better off competing with the Gulf carriers rather than seeking protection.

“The US airlines are very profitable and could compete if they wanted to. It would be better to compete than seek state protection,” says Addison Schonland, Partner at US-based AirInsight.

“Unfortunately this US lobbying protest reflects a worldview at odds with the open skies the US airlines once formerly championed,” he added.

Emirates on Monday announced the launch of services from Dubai to Newark, New Jersey via Greek capital of Athens. The move attracted backlash from the US lobby group Partnership for Open & Fair Skies.

Defending its stand Emirates told Gulf News in a statement on Tuesday that the 5th Freedom service that Emirates will operate between Newark and Athens has been “poorly served to date, with no existing year-round direct air service between both cities.”

“These rights are actively used by the US legacy carriers in their Pacific traffic, particularly the Tokyo hubs operated by Delta and United,” an Emirates spokesperson said, adding that these rights enable airlines to initiate service in unserved or underserved markets benefiting consumers, communities and businesses.

“The state protection should first be applied to consumers. Consumers are better served by new air services, regardless of which airline is doing this,” said Schonland.

According to the Emirates spokesperson, the new US route by the airline via Athens was firmed up following requests from Athens International Airport and the Greek aviation authorities, and its own

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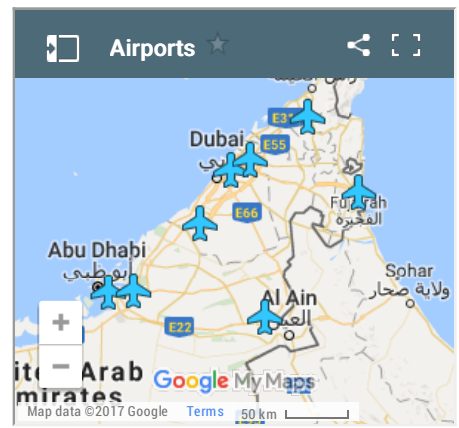
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evaluation of route feasibility.

The backlash comes just a few days after some US airline executives said they believed that President Donald Trump's administration will be friendlier to them than was former President Barack Obama's administration, which, according to an AP report, briefly tried to block the American Airlines-US Airways merger on antitrust grounds and adopted rules on fare advertising that the industry opposed.

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