

Laptop ban hot topic as airlines meet in Cancun

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US and British bans on laptops on certain commercial flights is a hot topic at the International Air Transport Association (IATA) annual meeting, being held this year in Cancun

Top airline industry players are meeting Monday and Tuesday in Cancun to seek alternatives to the US and British bans on laptops and tablets on certain flights, which they say is hurting business.

The computer bans are looming large over the agenda as the International Air Transport Association (IATA) holds its annual meeting in the Mexican resort city.

Alternative proposals include sniffer dogs, bomb-detection technology, increased training—anything but the ban, which IATA says is threatening the industry just as it was enjoying a boom.

With fuel prices low and 3.8 billion passengers flying last year—a figure that is expected to double in the next 20 years—"the industry is doing quite well," said IATA's director general, Alexandre de Juniac.

"Airlines are in the black and it's the eighth year in a row," he told journalists during a conference call ahead of the meeting.

But the bright financial outlook is clouded by the in-cabin ban on [electronic devices](#) larger than a cell phone on flights between the United States and 10 airports in Turkey, the Middle East and North Africa—imposed in March by President Donald Trump's administration.

Britain has imposed a similar ban for flights from six countries.

The move came after intelligence officials learned of efforts by the Islamic State group to fashion a bomb into consumer electronics.

The US Department of Homeland Security then threatened to slap the same ban on flights from Europe—though it indicated Tuesday that it has backed off the idea for now.

IATA, whose 275 member airlines represent 83 percent of global air traffic, says the bans have already taken a toll on business. It warns that extending them to European flights would be catastrophic.

The dog solution?

De Juniac called the laptop ban "inappropriate."

"Hot topics will include finding alternative means to keep flying securely without the inconvenience," he said.

"We have no doubt about the threat. We have doubt about the measure that has been proposed to ban (electronic devices) from the cabin."

In talks with US and European authorities, IATA has proposed using alternative approaches—including dogs—to detect explosives in carry-on electronics, he said.

IATA says passengers appear to be avoiding routes where the ban is in place.

If it were extended to flights between the US and Europe, the lost revenue would total around \$1.4 billion, it estimates.

De Juniac said rising "protectionism" in "powerful and important countries" is also worrying the industry, a reference to Trump's policy plans and Britain's looming exit from the European Union.

Other top agenda items are expected to include the fight against human trafficking and how to implement a 2016 agreement on buying carbon credits to offset emissions, he said.

Last year, the 191 member states of the International Civil Aviation Organization set a target of limiting the airline industry's huge carbon footprint to 2020 levels by the year 2035.

Under the plan, airlines would buy [carbon credits](#) from other companies

such as clean-energy producers.

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