



NORWEGIAN AIR SHUTTLE BOSS SEES U.S. DISPUTE GOING TO ARBITRATION

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Norwegian Air Shuttle's dispute with U.S. regulators over its wish to fly more transatlantic routes will likely go to arbitration, the CEO of Europe's third biggest budget airline said on Thursday.

Norwegian wants to fly to the United States from Ireland but its Irish subsidiary has been waiting more than two-and-a-half years for permission from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DoT), which it says is far longer than airlines usually wait.

The European Commission has previously said the delay constitutes a breach of the Open Skies air traffic agreement between the European Union and the United States.

Norwegian Air Shuttle Chief Executive Officer Bjorn Kjos said he expected the dispute to go to arbitration.

"It will probably end up in an arbitration by the EU," Kjos said in a speech in London on Thursday. "The ongoing delays by the DoT set a dangerous precedent that can only be bad news for ...

everyone in the industry."

Norwegian flies to the United States from Norway and elsewhere in Europe, including Britain, on its Norwegian operating license.

It has also asked for permission to fly to the United States on its UK operating license, but says that request is facing delays too.

More transatlantic flights from Britain are a key part of Norwegian's expansion and Kjos said the airline's plans would not be affected if Britain votes to leave the EU on June 23.

"London and the UK will always be one of the world's most popular leisure destinations, regardless of its standing in the European community. For that reason we will continue to create new routes, new aircraft and new jobs here in the UK," he said.

The former fighter pilot turned lawyer turned airline boss said he believed Britain would be better off remaining in the EU but that it was a matter for the British people to decide.

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