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# U.S. and U.K. Tangle Over Airline Emission Limits

Climate Watch Blog

January 26, 2010 BY Mark Schapiro



Climate Change Headlines
<p><b>U.N. Forecasts Less Than 1 Bln Kyoto Offsets By 2012</b></p> <p>Source: Reuters - A United Nations agency on Wednesday cut its forecast for pre-2012 Kyoto Protocol carbon offsets, estimating for the first time that less than 1 billion tonnes will come to market before the climate pact expires.</p>
<p><b>JA welcomes Spanish donation to Adaptation Fund</b></p> <p>Source: Jamaica Observer - JAMAICA has welcomed news of Spain's euro 45-million contribution to the Adaptation Fund, from which developing countries are to benefit in their efforts to fortify themselves against the ill effects of climate change.</p>
<p><b>Japan, Germany, Denmark ready to cooperate with Belarus under Kyoto Protocol</b></p> <p>Source: BelTA - Japan, Germany and Denmark are ready to cooperate with Belarus within the framework of the Kyoto Protocol, Alexander Grebenkov, national coordinator-expert of the Support to the Kyoto Protocol Implementation project, told reporters.</p>
<p><b>Kenya Turns to Carbon Trade in a Bid to Curb Climate Change</b></p> <p>Source: Newstime Africa - Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga has said the country is keen to partner with investment bankers to promote trading in carbon markets and ensure the rehabilitation of the Mau and other threatened forests in the country.</p>
<p><b>How China and India Sabotaged the UN Climate Summit</b></p> <p>Source: Spiegel - What really went on at the UN climate conference in Copenhagen? Secret recordings obtained by SPIEGEL reveal how China and India prevented an agreement on tackling climate change at the crucial meeting.</p>
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You may have noticed over the past year that it has become easier to hop a U.S. airline to fly across the Atlantic to Europe -- the result of an "open skies" agreement implemented in 2008. Now those skies are looking pretty turbulent as three of the biggest U.S. carriers -- United, Continental and Delta, along with the U.S. Air Transport Association--are pursuing [a lawsuit](#) to block Britain's effort to impose emission limits on the airline industry.



The UK lawsuit could be the first in a series of transcontinental

Britain is the first European country to begin executing a plan by the European Union to [reduce emissions](#) from aviation. Even though [air travel](#) contributes only about 3 percent of Europe's total greenhouse gas emissions, the European Commission reports that the rate has risen 87 percent since 1990 as air travel has become cheaper but has failed to account for the environmental costs.

The EU estimates that one person flying from London to New York and back generates roughly the same emissions output as it takes to heat the average European home for a year.

On my way to the Copenhagen climate summit in December, I wrote about the unusual mid-air experience of hearing the Air France pilot announce our flight's

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carbon footprint -- one signal of the transatlantic tensions to come.

The U.S. airline industry has [adamantly opposed](#) establishing emissions limits domestically, and this lawsuit against the UK shows the widening gap between how the U.S. and European industries are approaching carbon emissions reductions.

from aviation.

The UK's largest airline, British Airways, has said it will be able to voluntarily reduce its emissions to half that of 2005 levels over the next decade; and Virgin's Chairman, Richard Branson, has said he is willing [to pay](#) a carbon tax on his aviation business. He has also steered some \$3 billion of company funds into researching non-fossil fuel alternatives and other greenhouse gas reduction measures.

With the EU upping the ante on emissions controls while the U.S. drags its feet in Congress on setting its own emissions targets, the UK lawsuit could be the first in a series of transcontinental legal battles as global industries face up to Europe's tougher rules on climate policy.

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