Poland's Boeing 787s To Resume Flight In June

The Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Polish national airline LOT said Tuesday its Boeing 787s [1], which had been grounded for months due to battery problems, will resume flying in June and that it will seek compensation from the U.S. plane maker.

The world's total fleet of 50 Boeing 787s has been grounded since Jan. 16 as Boeing and investigators tried to figure out why one aircraft battery caught fire and another smoldered, forcing an emergency landing. Both cases concerned aircraft owned by Japanese airlines.

Every 787 has two lithium ion batteries. To solve the problem, Boeing has decided to revamp the battery system.

Sebastian Mikosz, LOT's chief executive, told the PAP news agency that both of the carrier's 787s will resume commercial flights to North America and China in early June, following repairs and test flights.

The two planes, currently in Chicago and Warsaw, will have their batteries fixed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where Boeing technicians are currently fixing the country's four 787s.

A third 787 that LOT is due to receive in May will have a new kind of battery and will also enter service in June. Two more 787s are to join LOT's fleet in July and August.

Heavily indebted LOT is Europe's only airline to have 787s, which are also known as "Dreamliners." Norwegian Air Shuttle has ordered some, but deliveries have been delayed.

LOT's management had hoped that the modern and fuel efficient plane would attract new business and improve financial results. Instead, the grounding has cost it money as it had to extend lease on its three 767s.

The airline will approach Boeing in mid-June over compensation for "hundreds of millions of zlotys (dollars)" in losses it suffered due to the grounding of the planes, Mikosz told the PAP agency. LOT spokesman Marek Klucinski confirmed the report.

While the root cause of the battery overheating remains unknown, the United States federal aviation officials have accepted Boeing's plan to fit all 787s with a revamped battery system and cleared the way for the plane to fly again, although the timing remains uncertain.

Mikosz said he was expecting the European aviation authorities to confirm that decision for LOT "within days."

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