



TURKISH AIRLINES HEDGE AGAINST GULF CARRIERS WOULD BE CLOSER LUFTHANSA TIES

News / Airlines



Turkish Airlines said it may strengthen its relationship with Star Alliance partner Deutsche Lufthansa AG as the rapidly-expanding carrier from southern Europe advances a plan to create a counterweight to airlines in the Persian Gulf.

“There is potential Turkish and Lufthansa could become closer,” Chief Executive Officer Temel Kotil said in an interview. “It’s the strongest carrier in northern Europe, and we’re the strongest carrier in southern Europe.”

Lufthansa rose as much as 4.6 percent in Frankfurt, the biggest gainer on Germany’s benchmark DAX Index, which was down 1.8 percent. The two airlines had previously sought to strengthen their relationship in 2012, a foray that fizzled a year later when Lufthansa pared passenger rewards from code-share flights, saying it saw little benefits from closer ties with its rival.

The two carriers are already bound together in the Star Alliance group and in charter-flight venture SunExpress. Lufthansa said in March it would use SunExpress pilots on new long-haul operations under its expanding Eurowings discount brand.

Partnerships with airlines including Lufthansa and Poland's LOT remain key even as Turkish Airlines builds its Istanbul base into a global hub with an eye to the success of Gulf operators Dubai-Emirates, Qatar Airways Ltd. and Abu Dhabi's Etihad Airways PJCS, Kotil said.

Lufthansa spokesman Andreas Bartels said SunExpress is an example for the "good partnership" between the two carriers, with the long-haul flights commencing in November.

A recently agreed deal with LOT will also "reinforce trunk routes" between Poland and Turkey, Kotil said. Turkish Air once explored a bid for the Warsaw-based carrier, before ending talks in 2011 because of European Union rules barring majority ownership from outside the political bloc.

Turkish Airlines plans to almost double the size of its fleet to 450 jets by 2023.

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