

# Air France: Demand dipped after Paris attacks

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Ben Mutzabaugh (<http://www.usatoday.com/staff/2339/ben-mutzabaugh/>), USA TODAY 7:28 p.m. EST November 19, 2015



Air France's Airbus A380 visits Washington Dulles Airport for the first time on June 6, 2011. (Photo: H. Darr Beiser, USA TODAY)

NEW YORK – Air France confirmed a drop in demand following the Nov. 13 terrorist attacks in Paris, but said it's too early to gauge the full impact.

"We have noticed some decline in our bookings," Air France-KLM CEO Alexandre de Juniac (<http://corporate.airfrance.com/en/press/media-library/photos/air-france-staff/the-board-of-directors/>) told USA TODAY in an interview Thursday. He described the drop-off as "in line with what our competitors have faced in very similar situations," referring to the impact on local carriers following terrorist attacks in London in 2005 and in Madrid in 2004.

Air France was not directly targeted in the attacks, thought to inspired by the ISIS terror group. But industry observers had been watching to see if travelers have become spooked about flying after the Paris attacks.

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"We see an impact on Air France, but no impact on KLM," de Juniac added. "So it has clearly impacted (France as a) destination."

KLM is the Amsterdam-based Dutch carrier that merged with Air France in 2004 to create Air France-KLM. Each carrier continues to operate flights under its own brand.

Still, de Juniac cautioned "it's a bit a bit early at this stage to make a precise estimate" about how much or how long the dip in demand might continue. "We'll have clearer and more precise figures in the coming weeks," he said.

Even with the fallout from the attacks, de Juniac said Air France-KLM "will still be profitable this year, as planned."

He pledged to carry on with the company's daily business, saying that offers the strongest rebuke to those who attacked Paris.

"The best behavior we can all have is to stand firm and maintain our plans and live normally," de Juniac said. And he issued a resounding invitation to visit France.

"We are here to share with your compatriots, first of all the pain, but also the need for coming again and maintaining their trips and plans," de Juniac said while visiting New York, where he was to speak at a [French Institute Alliance Française gala celebrating art and culture](http://www.fiaf.org/events/fall2015/2015-11-19-gala.shtml) (<http://www.fiaf.org/events/fall2015/2015-11-19-gala.shtml>). "Paris is safe and secure. Flights on our aircraft are secure."

Particularly important for Air France will be how visitors from the U.S. respond, said Seth Kaplan, editor of [the \*Airline Weekly\* trade publication](http://airlineweekly.com/) (<http://airlineweekly.com/>).

"Are Americans saying they don't want to go to France in the wake of the attacks?" Kaplan said, noting the U.S. market had been a bright spot for the carrier even as it posted losses during the past several years. "The one thing that's still working pretty well for Air France right now is trans-Atlantic. If this impacts that demand, that wouldn't be helpful."

Kaplan suggested that Air France faces a delicate balance with marketing and sales efforts in such a sensitive environment.

"It's different than when something happens specifically to the airline," Kaplan said about how the Paris attacks might affect the airline. "Right now, when you say 'France' to someone, the first thing that comes to mind may not be a lie-flat seat. It's definitely something complicated for them to deal with."

DeJuniac said "it's legitimate that people would raise the question" about whether they should still travel to Paris in the wake of the attacks. But the answer is "yes, go."

While acknowledging the company "must be cautious," he says management opted not to suspend any of Air France's current marketing and sales campaigns.

"We think that the strongest blow we can do against terrorists and on people who are doing these kind of attacks is to tell them that it has no influence on individual behavior and on our values," de Juniac says. "We strongly encourage people to come to France."

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