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#### FAA UPGRADES KOREA'S SAFETY RATING

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) upgraded Korea's aviation safety rating to Category I as of Dec. 6, the [South Korean] Ministry of Construction and Transportation said yesterday.

"U.S. Ambassador to Korea Thomas Hubbard officially informed the ministry of the FAA's rating upgrade," Construction and Transportation Minister Lim In-taik said.

The upgrade was made three months and 20 days after the U.S. agency lowered Korea's aviation safety rating to Category II Aug. 17.

The revised rating allows Korean airlines to launch new routes and increase flights to the United States as well as change the type of aircraft used on these routes.

Korean carriers can also resume code-sharing arrangements with U.S. carriers. For example, Asiana Airlines said it expects a quick resumption of code sharing with American Airlines, which suspended the arrangements after the downgrade.

Korean Air said it hopes to revive a code-sharing agreement that was halted by Delta Air Lines in the spring of 1999 after a Korean Air cargo jet crashed after takeoff from Shanghai.

Korean Air also seeks to resume services to Guam and Saipan, which have been suspended since a 1997 crash in Guam.

The Category I rating indicates that a country has met all the safety regulations set down by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

The FAA gave Korea the preliminary Category II rating in May this year, citing shortcomings in eight fields, including primary aviation law, specific operation regulations, technical guidance, qualified technical personnel and continual surveillance obligation.

Yet the government failed to heed the warnings and take necessary steps till the U.S. agency actually downgraded Korea's rating.

Then, the government hurriedly revised aviation laws complying to the ICAO recommendations and took other steps, including establishing and revising 20 technical guideline manuals and hiring more aviation experts.

It also strengthened training of aviation safety inspectors and prepared measures to

issue air operator certificates (AOCs) to air carriers.

Korean Air and Asiana, for their part, have been preparing for the adoption of the AOC system by forming task force teams.

Korean Air and Asiana welcomed the FAA's decision, hoping that the upgraded rating would have a positive effect on sales, as both carriers would have flexibility in launching and increasing services to the United States in preparation for the rising demand ahead of the 2002 World Cup [to be held in Korea].