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Airbus in South Korea

European aircraft manufacturer Airbus' relationship with South Korea dates back to 1974, when Korean Air became the first airline from outside Europe to place an order with the company, for the original Airbus A300B4. Since then South Korean airlines have attested their confidence in the manufacturer's aircraft and have, over the years, ordered 181 of its aircraft making the country one of Airbus' key customer bases in the Asia-Pacific region.

Korean Air has now ordered a total of 102 aircraft from Airbus, comprising 30 A320s, 32 A300s, 29 A330s and ten A380s. Today 29 of the popular A330s are operated on the airline's Asian network, as well as on selected long haul routes to Europe. On its premier routes, the carrier operates ten A380 superjumbos on services from Seoul to Atlanta, Los Angeles, New York, London and Paris.

Asiana Airlines became an Airbus customer in 1996 and has since ordered a total of 79 aircraft from the manufacturer. Today the carrier operates a fleet of 31 A320 Family aircraft on domestic and regional services, with 16 more aircraft at Air Busan and one at Air Seoul, which are its LCC subsidiaries. For longer regional and selected long haul operations the carrier operates 15 A330s featuring a true intercontinental cabin layout.

In July 2008 Asiana Airlines announced a major order with Airbus for a total of 30 A350 XWB aircraft to form the backbone of its future mid-size widebody fleet. This major order was followed in January 2011 by the news that Asiana had become a new customer for the A380, with a contract for six aircraft. Deliveries began in May 2015 and the carrier operates four A380 superjumbos on services from Seoul to Los Angeles, New York, Hong Kong and Bangkok. The carrier also recently placed a firm order with Airbus for 25 A321neo aircraft as part of its ongoing fleet modernisation programme.

In addition to its position as a key customer base, South Korea is also an increasingly important industrial partner for Airbus. In this area, Korean Air Aerospace Division (KAL-ASD) is the sole global supplier of the Airbus-designed fuel-saving Sharklets wingtip devices for the hugely successful A320neo and A330neo. Moreover KAL-ASD is a major supplier of Airbus aero-structures since 1989, and produces fuselage skin panels and floor assemblies for the A330 and all-composite cargo doors for the new A350 XWB.

Korean Aerospace Industries (KAI) is supplier of machined parts and metallic structures. The production spans all programmes and includes A320 Family fuselage upper shells, A318/A319/A320 wing top panel assemblies, A321 fuselage shells, A380 wing bottom panels and A330 wing machined ribs and stringers. KAI will play an important role in the A350 XWB production, by supplying aluminium-lithium wing machined ribs and the nose landing gear bay and doors.
