

Easygroup sues 'brand theft' airlines

Robert Lea Industrial Editor

The Easyjet billionaire **Sir Stelios Haji-ioannou** is pursuing two Latin American airlines, accusing them of brand theft for using the word "easy".

Easygroup secured an order in the High Court last month calling on the Honduran airline Easy Sky and its Mexican parent company Global Air to desist from using the Easy Sky brand on the side of its aircraft or from using the brand as a domain name on the internet or social media.

The order calls for the company to "change... to a name that does not commence with the word 'easy'".

Easy Sky, which has no links with Easyjet or Easygroup, was in the news three months ago when a Boeing 737 leased by its parent company crashed shortly after take-off outside Havana, Cuba, killing 112 people. Easy Sky has been operating in Honduras since 2012.

Sir Stelios is to follow similar court action against Easyfly, a Colombian airline. At the Farnborough air show,



Easy Sky, whose parent company is Global Air, has no link with Easyjet

Easyfly announced the acquisition of five turboprop aircraft from ATR, the manufacturer co-owned by Airbus and Leonardo of Italy, to increase its fleet by 30 per cent.

At Farnborough, Alfonso Ávila, Easyfly's president, said that he needed the aircraft to cope with double-digit traffic and revenue growth in the rapidly expanding South American aviation market. Easyfly has been operating out of Bogota since 2007.

A spokesman for Easygroup said: "As

you would expect, it has caused some customers to presume that it is associated with Easyjet. This company is nothing to do with the Easy family of brands and is regarded as a 'brand thief.'" The case is due to come to the High Court in October.

Sir Stelios has pursued similar cases against a long list of companies. Easygroup took action against a Bangladeshi cargo operation called Easyfly-express and has also halted the launch of Easyair in India.

He said Easygroup was spending £1 million a year taking on alleged "brand thieves". Last year it sued a French businessman and sometime escort agency operator using the Easyroommate brand. Other actions have targeted Easyart, Easymobile, Easypizza and Easyrentacar. Sir Stelios and his family, via Easygroup, are the largest shareholders in Easyjet with a 33 per cent stake, which at current valuation is worth more than £2 billion.

Attempts to contact Easyfly and Easy Sky for comment were unsuccessful.