GENERAL AUTHORITY OF CIVIL AVIATION GRANTS RIYADH AIR OPERATIONAL LICENSE, PAVING THE WAY FOR INAUGURAL FLIGHTS

News / Airlines



The General Authority of Civil Aviation officially granted an Air Operator's Certificate to Riyadh Air, authorizing the airline to start commercial flight operations. The issuance of the AOC confirms the Riyadh Air's full compliance with Saudi Arabia's aviation regulations, international standards, and flight safety requirements under the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation. This milestone follows GACA's comprehensive audit of the airline's technical and aircraft systems, operational readiness, equipment, and the qualifications of both flight and ground personnel.

The official certification ceremony took place in the presence of His Excellency Saleh Al-Jasser, Minister of Transport and Logistics and Chairman of the GACA Board, and His Excellency Abdulaziz Al-Duailej, President of GACA, who presented the certificate to Riyadh Air CEO Mr. Tony Douglas—affirming the Kingdom's commitment to developing a world-class aviation sector aligned with the Saudi Aviation Strategy.

His Excellency the President of GACA stated: "GACA's issuance of the Air Operator Certificate to

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Riyadh Air marks a significant milestone within the framework of the Saudi Aviation Strategy. Riyadh Air will enhance competition, offer greater value and choices for travelers, and improve connectivity both domestically and globally."

Riyadh Air is projected to fly to more than 100 destinations by 2030, supported by an order of over 132 aircraft. The airline is expected to create more than 200,000 direct and indirect jobs and contribute approximately $19.9 billion to the Kingdom’s non-oil GDP. This operational license follows the earlier issuance of an Economic License to Riyadh Air in June 2023.

Riyadh Air CEO Mr. Tony Douglas commented: "Obtaining the Air Operator Certificate is an important milestone in the company's journey. It is the result of the efforts of many employees at Riyadh Air. Today, we can proudly say that Riyadh Air is now an airline with an operational license to transport our traveling guests, and we are ready to begin operations later in 2025."

The licensing process involved several key phases, including initial consultations, submission of the formal application, review of operational documentation, on-site inspections, and final approvals. The process extended over 11 months and was overseen by a dedicated team of 10 Saudi aviation safety inspectors and technical experts from GACA, who conducted over 200 hours of test flights to ensure full compliance with the highest operational standards.

The awarding of Riyadh Air’s License comes amid a period of record-breaking momentum for Saudi Arabia’s aviation sector. In 2024, the number of passengers rose by 15% to exceed 128 million – approcimately 25% above pre-pandemic levels. The number of flights increased by 11% to reach over 905,000. Additionally, the air connectivity grew by 16%, linking the Kingdom to more than 170 destinations around the world. The air cargo sector also experienced exceptional growth, recording a 34% increase to reach 1.2 million tons in total volume for the year.

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