

BA offers USD 100,000 a year for pilots to drive, not fly

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Dhaka: British Airways is hiring pilots for an unusual role at Chicago O'Hare International Airport – one that involves no flying whatsoever. The airline is seeking experienced pilots solely to taxi its aircraft on the ground between two terminals, offering an annual salary of USD 90,000 to USD 100,000, depending on experience.

The job exists because of how British Airways runs its Chicago operations. Its three daily flights arrive at Terminal 5, O'Hare's main international terminal, where U.S. Customs and Border Protection is based. However, departures operate from Terminal 3, the primary hub for American Airlines.

The reason for this split is the transatlantic joint venture between British Airways and American Airlines. Many passengers on BA's Chicago flights connect to or from domestic American Airlines services.

Operating departures from Terminal 3 keeps connecting passengers close to their arrival gates, minimizing the risk of missed connections.

Unlike some airports, O'Hare does not permit the use of pushback tugs to reposition aircraft between terminals. As a result, a qualified pilot must physically taxi the plane from Terminal 5 to Terminal 3.

British Airways' current job listing describes the role as playing "a critical role in helping achieve on-time performance by safely ground taxiing British Airways Boeing 777 and 787 aircraft between terminals at Chicago O'Hare Airport."

Applicants must hold an airline transport pilot certificate with recent experience on the Boeing 777 or Boeing 787 Dreamliner. While USD 100,000 annually falls short of a typical senior airline pilot's earnings, the position is primarily targeted at recently retired pilots.

In the United States, federal regulations prohibit commercial airline pilots from operating flights once they reach the age of 65. However, retired pilots may still be legally permitted to taxi aircraft on the ground at low speeds, making this role a practical fit for them.

Chicago O'Hare is widely regarded as one of the operationally complex airports in the country, so familiarity with its ground procedures remains essential for the role, despite the relatively limited scope of the work.

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