

## Riyadh air eyes 50 widebody jets from Boeing, Airbus

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Riyadh : Riyadh Air is in talks with Boeing and Airbus to acquire up to 50 additional widebody aircraft as part of its expansion strategy to support Saudi Arabia's ambitions as a global aviation and tourism hub.

The airline is evaluating the Airbus A350-1000 and Boeing 777X models, according to sources familiar with the discussions. With delivery slots becoming increasingly scarce, Riyadh Air is eager to secure its position in the production queue, the sources said, requesting anonymity due to the confidential nature of the negotiations.

Riyadh Air said in response to Bloomberg inquiries that it recently put out a so-called request for product for more widebody aircraft and that the campaign is ongoing. Boeing said it's always in talks with potential customers on their fleet requirements, while Airbus declined to comment on a potential order and said discussions with customers remain confidential.

The people cautioned that the number of aircraft may fluctuate, with as many as half the order classified as non-firm options, depending on what the planemakers can offer.

The airline has already placed orders for 60 Airbus A321neo aircraft and 39 Boeing 787s. Chief Executive Officer Tony Douglas said in January that the carrier planned to make another aircraft order by the second quarter, without providing specifics.

The aircraft now under consideration are the biggest in the manufacturers' fleets, and both models come with their own set of challenges. Boeing's latest 777 is yet to be certified and is already years behind schedule. The Airbus 350-1000 has come under scrutiny as some carriers have said the Rolls Royce Holdings Plc engine has performance issues in harsh and hot climates like the Persian Gulf, requiring more frequent maintenance.

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