

## Riyadh Air receives operational license for inaugural flights

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dhaka : The General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) has officially granted Riyadh Air an Air Operator's Certificate (AOC), authorizing the airline to begin commercial flight operations.

The issuance of the AOC confirms Riyadh Air's full compliance with Saudi Arabia's aviation regulations, international standards, and flight safety requirements as outlined 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.

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.

Commenting on the milestone, Riyadh Air CEO Tony Douglas said: "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 15pc to exceed 128 million - approximately 25pc above pre-pandemic levels.

The number of flights increased by 11pc to reach over 905,000. Additionally, the air connectivity grew by 16pc, linking the Kingdom to more than 170 destinations around the world.

The air cargo sector also experienced exceptional growth, recording a 34pc increase to reach 1.2 million tons in total volume for the year.

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