

Saudi Arabia orders 4 more A330 MRTTs

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Riyadh: Saudi Arabia is set to bolster its air capabilities with 4 additional Airbus A330 MRTTs, aimed at enhancing the Royal Saudi Air Force's critical refueling and transport operations.

The initial Multi Role Tanker Transport aircraft from the order will undergo modification starting in early 2026 to fit its intended role, with all four expected to be operational by 2027, the company said in a press release.

This aligns with the Kingdom's goal of strengthening its defense sector, emphasizing localization as a top priority, with Saudi Arabia targeting to domesticate 50 percent of its defense spending by 2030.

Saudi Arabia's aviation sector is also expanding significantly, supported by investments worth billions of dollars under its Vision 2030 plan aimed at diversifying the economy away from fossil fuels and boosting

the private sector.

“This is the third contract signed by Saudi Arabia for the A330 MRTT, making the RSAF one of the largest MRTT operators in the world,” said Jean-Brice Dumont, head of air power at Airbus Defense and Space.

Additionally, the contract includes a logistics support package covering spare parts, training services, and service support for the four new aircraft.

The A330 MRTT is a new-generation tanker and transport aircraft, holding a 90 percent market share globally outside the US, with 82 orders from 15 countries across Europe, Asia, the Americas, and Oceania.

All RSAF A330 MRTTs feature hose and drogue pods, a boom system, and refueling receptacles that enable refueling from boom-equipped tankers.

In a post on X, Walid Abukhaled, CEO of SAMI, said: “This agreement signed by the Ministry of Defense with Airbus to transfer the technology and knowledge of ‘Airbus A330 MRTT,’ the aerial refueling transport aircraft, to the Kingdom through our joint venture, SAMIAirbus, is a step-in support of our efforts to improve the Saudi defense industries and achieve Saudi Vision2030’s objectives to localize our defense spending.”

Airbus entered into an industrial participation agreement with the General Authority for Military Industries in January, supporting Vision 2030’s goal of diversifying the economy through regional industrial development.

This agreement also includes technology transfer and knowledge sharing of the RSAF A330 MRTT to local firms. SAAMS, a joint venture of Saudi Arabian Military Industries and Airbus, will lead local industrialization efforts, the release added.

In February, during the World Defense Show in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia’s Ministry of Defense signed 17 contracts and two memorandums of understanding with local and global companies aimed at enhancing the Kingdom’s armed forces’ military readiness, strengthening their capabilities, and improving combat efficiency.

