

Discussion at International Aviation Technical College at Riyadh

Awadh Manee AlQahtani – Photography: Fathi Kali

The Great Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is being operated now by its loyal people. The Kingdom's vision for 2030 has opened new paths and transits in the training field and the field of localization of industries in the Kingdom. Nowadays, the ability of the homeland people in dealing with the latest advanced global technology is higher. Saudi young men and women now have the composure, ability and determination to acquire new skills. Now the strength of the homeland is the strength of its people.

The International Aviation Technical College at Riyadh, which is operated by the College of Excellence(one of its departments of general organization of technical and professional training), is considered a unique model in the field of training and qualifying the students of the homeland in the latest engineering program for maintaining civilian and military airplanes and maintaining drones.

"Al-Jazeera" made a tour at this college, which supplies our military forces and its sectors, as well as providing global and local airplane industries with youth trained in engineering and maintaining airplanes.

We met the Dean of Admission and Registration, Prof. Riyadh Bin Mefreh Al-Zahrani, and he said , "we now live in the era of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman Bin Abd AL Aziz and his honest Highness, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman – May Allah keep them safe - and they gave a lot of attention to the young ladies and men of the homeland by opening new paths for them in many fields. One of them is the technical and electronic field, which is what this facility was built up for, which is located near the King Khaled international airport to cover the needs of many of the civil and military sectors. And for the sector of public and private civil aviation for the technicians of plane engineering, there is no doubt that the vision of His Royal Highness Mohammed bin Salman Crown Prince, the secretary of defense – May Allah keep him safe - has significantly contributed in establishing many of these institutions and facilities which work on training the youth of the homeland to keep up with the current and future needs in the different technical and technological fields."

Al-Zahrani explained, "the reputation of this college today has become so great in the field of engineering and airplanes maintenance. And the great edifice of this faculty, which includes great labs with modern high tech, acquired world class certifications, as it has great potential and various programs in airplane maintenance."

Al-Zahrani also said there has been a great increase in students numbers; they started with only 200 students, but today there is more than 4600 students in the facility. The number of the accepted students in this college is also considered to be the largest when it comes in comparison with other colleges starting at the same stage, and we are going on the correct path, according to what the administration says.

Al-Zahrani pointed out the importance of the sector of aviation in the vision of the Crown Prince, and one of the important points is the localization of the Saudi manpower in the

country in the sector of engineering and maintaining airplanes, which the facility will work on providing to the homeland, as the military and civil sectors need trained and qualified workers in this field. The expansion in the number of the students is up to these needs. Below is the interview:

*What is the aim of establishing this college?

-The International Aviation Technical College at Riyadh is a government college which is being operated by the College of Excellence, one of the departments of the general organization of technical and professional training, which was established in 2014. An international operator with great experience in airplane maintenance was sent from Australia to operate and manage the training process at the facility to bring knowledge and experience to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The facility does offer a world class training program to the youth who want to work in the sector of the engineering and airplane maintenance, as all the educational and training content is in English, and the facility is considered the first and only public government college aimed at the science of maintenance of airplanes in the Kingdom.

The facility aims to contribute positively to developing the technical and professional training in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by the localization of maintenance of military and civil airplanes and contributing in increasing the local content of this field.

*How do you keep up with the vision of 2030?

-One of the most important aims of the facility is to qualify the Saudi people to get into the working market of the industry of defense and aviation as professional technicians to get along with the vision of 2030 and participating in achieving the vision goals at three axes:

The industry of defense and aviation: participating in achieving the kingdom goals to be one of the world leaders of the industry of defense and aviation in the whole world.

Manpower: providing the sector of defense and aviation in the Kingdom with professional, highly qualified Saudi manpower.

Economy: participating in achieving the economic plan's goals in the Kingdom by working on increasing the number of airplane technicians who are qualified to enter this industry professionally.

What are the types of education and programs in this college?

The college provides many specifications in two main paths (civil and military) which qualify the students to get certified diploma from the general organization of technical and professional training. The first path contains certified training and theoretical materials from the general authority for civil aviation. The college has certification from the authority as an institution of training in airplanes maintenance PART 147 GACA for the students who want to get an airplanes maintenance technician license from the authority.

The second path/course is for the military sectors and consists of two specialties. The first specialty is compatible with the method of European agency for aviation safety (EASA part 66) in airplanes mechanics and electronics. The second specialty is the drones systems (UAS).

*What kind of education and programs at this college?

- Majors:

* Civil field :

- Aircraft Maintenance Engineering Diploma, specializing in structures and engines.

*Military field:

- Aircraft Maintenance Engineering, Majoring in Mechanics.

- Aircraft Maintenance Engineering, Avionics specialty.

- Drones Systems Engineering major in Mechanics.

- Drones Systems Engineering major in Avionics.

- Drones Systems Engineering with a specialization in Communications.

The International Aviation Technical College at Riyadh is considered to be the only college in the Kingdom to give certified diplomas in the major of maintenance of drones, the first students of this major graduate in mid-2020.

*What is the capacity of the facility?

- The main campus of the college in Riyadh in the industrial zone of King Khalid's airport, which is more than fifty thousand square meters, consist of four buildings and three fully loaded hangers. There is another campus for the preparatory year students in the Salah Ad-Din neighborhood in Riyadh city.

*How many students are there currently?

The count of students for the training year 2020-2021 is 4685 trainees.

*How many have graduated from the college?

The total number is 1712 graduates during the past years.

*How does the facility keep up with what happening in the world with the programs?

The general organization of technical and professional training in co-op with the ministry of human resources and social development is making studies regularly for the needs of the work market, and the facility has its own advisory board which includes an elite group of leaders of military and aviation industry organizations in the Kingdom, as well as representatives of international companies, as the advisory board provides advice to the college on developing training programs for these industries and updating training and

professional curricula. This to keep up with the most recent advances locally and globally in these industries and updating training and professional curricula is to keep up with the latest that these industries get to as the trainee graduates get ready to join the organizations of defense and aviation.

*Is there is any scholarships for the advanced students to continue university studies?

-Our partners of success in the fields of military and defense offer scholarships to continue university studies for the advanced and excellent students in and outside the Kingdom.

*Are the graduates guaranteed work opportunities after graduation?

-All of the students of the military major join the training program which ends in hiring, as the military sectors does support the students from the first day at school to the graduation day and hires them immediately.

Also, the college has a private department which makes strategic associations with companies working in the field of defense and aviation to provide good work opportunities for the civil major graduates; the general hiring rate is 90% from the facility, as the college signs a lot of cooperation agreements with many military and private sectors to ease the joining of the graduates of the facility to these sectors as they graduate.

“The director of business development”

For his part, the General Director of Marketing and Business Development at the College, Mr. Mohsen bin Muhammad Nizar Abdul-Jawad said:

“the college carries out periodic evaluations and sets standards which organize these training programs for those graduates, and the facility analyzes and updates the curricula, which keeps up with the latest developments in aviation industry and continuously observes the updates of this industry in the world, applying it to the facility’s curricula.”

Abdul-Jawad explained that an innovation center has recently been established which contains students’ innovations incubator, which aims to develop students’ skills and to compete in the completions of art and technology locally, regionally and globally, besides being the center of innovation and creation in the field of defense and aviation.

He also said that the facility is supporting excellent students and encouraging their skills and talents to become ambassadors for this facility among their colleagues. The facility also encourages competition and creation among the students. The college took part in a lot of local and global events and recently acquired many world prizes, one of them being the most growing aviation training center in the Kingdom for 2020, as well as the distinguishing prize in the industry of aviation in the Kingdom 2020.

Education authority

“Al-Jazeera” also met the head of education and training in this college Eng. Mohammed AlGhamdy, who said, “I’ve worked as a teacher in the facility for 4 years, and we have many students who study in many majors in engineering and plane maintenance through research

and teamwork tasks. We also have programs for training with military planes, and other programs for the civil planes. We also make regular modification for the way that students deal with the training programs, and how they study and apply it. I assure you that the Saudi youth have great talents and potential to deal with this technology and they have the ambition, composure and love for this job.”

We also met the engineer and teaching assistant at this college, AbdulMajeed AlYahya, who said, “one day I was a student in this facility, now I am a teacher. This college opened up new paths for the youth of the homeland, especially in airplane engineering sciences. Students have a lot of excitement to work on these planes and technical fields, as well majoring in drones, as it is modern major.”

“Al-Jazeera” with the students

Many students in this college has expressed their joy and happiness for being in this edifice in engineering and airplane maintenance, and they said that it is a great honor to study and learn in this national edifice with it is world-class training. They look forward to having a bright future ahead of them after graduation, whether in the military sectors or the civil aviation industry organizations and companies.