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Cambodia's AVi8 Airways plans to add five jets by mid-2Q27



Minh Nguyen, Managing Director at AVi8 Airways, © AVi8

Airways



By Dirk Andrei Salcedo
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AVi8 Airways plans to induct two **A321-200(P2F)**s and three **A320-200s** ahead of a targeted May 2027 commercial launch. The start-up is pursuing an air operator's certificate (AOC) and intends to start with cargo operations before deploying passenger aircraft on ACMI contracts.

Managing director Minh Nguyen told ch-aviation in an exclusive interview that AVi8 Airways was already negotiating with several lessors, although it had not yet disclosed any signed aircraft lease agreements.

"Right now, we're actively talking with lessors for the first two A321

freighters and another three A320 passenger aircraft," Nguyen said. "The aircraft market right now, there's not much availability. We have to take action fast."

The airline executive said AVi8 Airways expects its first aircraft in February 2027, ahead of commercial operations beginning in May that year.

"We will sign the LOI very soon for the first aircraft."

Launch strategy

Nguyen said AVi8 Airways had embarked on the Cambodian AOC process and intends ultimately to operate both cargo and passenger aircraft, though cargo will come first commercially.

"We plan to start cargo first," Nguyen said. "Operationally, we will start cargo first because here we already have a lot of demand for cargo operations."

The airline currently favours A321-200(P2F)s for its two freighters, although the aircraft remain under negotiation.

"We're in talks, and I think it's very promising that we're going for the P2F," Nguyen said, citing the conversion's cargo-loading configuration and its suitability for AVi8 Airways' intended operations.

The start-up's initial fleet plan therefore remains subject to aircraft availability and lease negotiations. Nguyen said the carrier was prepared to take whatever passenger or freighter aircraft becomes available first rather than impose a fixed delivery sequence.

Cambodia first

AVi8 Airways will establish its Cambodian operation before pursuing a

wider operation in Viet Nam. Nguyen said the carrier was already discussing potential wet-lease work with Vietnamese airlines and was also talking to existing AOC holders there about expansion.

"We're not only aiming at the Cambodian market. We are also in talks with some airlines in Viet Nam for wet-lease contracts, so we can get access to the Viet Nam market as well," he said.

AVi8 Airways had previously identified **Ho Chi Minh City** as a planned operating base alongside Cambodia. Nguyen said the Vietnamese operation remains part of the strategy but will follow the establishment of the Cambodian carrier.

"We're quite confident that not long after we establish in Cambodia, we can expand the market to Viet Nam," he said. "Viet Nam has a bigger charter market, as well as the market for cargo operations."

As ch-aviation previously reported, **AVi8 Air Capital** initially **described the planned carrier** as Viet Nam-based before AVi8 Airways subsequently emerged as a Cambodian start-up headquartered in Phnom Penh, with **Phnom Penh Techo International** identified as a planned operating base.

AVi8 Airways' business model will focus primarily on long-term ACMI contracts, which Nguyen said would provide more predictable aircraft utilisation. Charter flying could complement contracted capacity.

"Our preference is long-term ACMI contracts, because ACMI is long-term; we don't need to care too much about the market [fluctuations]," he said.

"The market here is not that big to afford four or five aircraft flying at the same time. So I think we want to start smart, with a long-term ACMI contract or a mix of the model."

The carrier does not intend to enter scheduled operations in the near term,

despite scheduled passenger services featuring in its earlier plans.

"In the [near] term, we don't plan to go into scheduled operations at all," Nguyen said. "Maybe in the long term this can change if we see the demand; then we will go for it. But right now, I think it's very difficult to compete with scheduled carriers."

Fleet and funding

AVi8 Airways intends to keep its initial operation within the **Airbus** narrowbody family. Nguyen said commonality between the A320 and A321 would reduce the need for separate crews, training, maintenance structures, and operational departments.

The airline is focusing on A320ceo-family aircraft rather than A320neo-family jets for its initial fleet.

"In the short term, we don't have a plan for neo jets because, as you already heard, they have problems with the engines," Nguyen said. "For an ACMI carrier, it's not really economical to run. We want to be efficient, so in the short-term plan we focus on ceo jets."

AVi8 Air Capital is a shareholder in AVi8 Airways, alongside an unidentified local investor and a Vietnamese group, Nguyen said.

"Right now, we start up with about USD8 million. That's the initial capital to get the airline up and running and acquire the first aircraft," he said. Nguyen said the existing shareholders had also committed additional investment to fund aircraft acquisitions.

Further capital could be injected as the carrier expands, although Nguyen did not disclose the size or structure of the commitments.

The airline's immediate priorities therefore remain concluding aircraft

leases and putting the first freighter and passenger capacity in place for the planned May 2027 launch.

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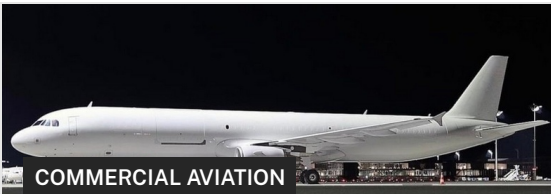
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