

Press release

Paris, October 25, 2023

During the 7th edition of the FII Forum, the Royal Commission for AIUla signs a multi-million SAR strategic security integration project to protect heritage sites and historic landmarks with French group Thales

- **SAR 159m agreement signed with leading French cybersecurity firm Thales at Future Investment Initiative in Riyadh will safeguard landmarks, buildings, and important locations across AIUla**
- **Advanced security and safety solutions will be integrated into RCU's smart digital platforms to provide 24/7 surveillance and control at public sites as well as buildings housing important archaeological artefacts**

In April 2018, Saudi Arabia and France signed an intergovernmental agreement on the sustainable development of the AIUla region and its transformation into a world-class cultural and tourist destination.

Born from this agreement, the French Agency for the Development of AIUla (AFALULA) aims to mobilize all French expertise (experts, operators, companies) and to support, within a co-construction framework, its Saudi partner, the Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU).

The Agency brings together some of the world's best experts in all the key areas of the project: museography, archaeology, architecture and urban planning, agriculture and botany, tourism, education, infrastructure, horses, security, water and environmental management.

The joint desire of Saudi Arabia and France is to implement, through the AIUla project, a new model of economic and touristic development focused on the preservation of the environment, respectful of history, territories and inclusive of the local population. This component of sustainable development is at the heart of the bilateral agreement signed between the two nations.

On October 25, 2023, during the 7th edition of the FII Forum held in Riyadh, a major partnership has been signed with the French group Thales for the sustainable protection of heritage sites and historic landmarks.

“The signing of this ambitious contract with the French group Thales demonstrates the multi-sectoral and high-level expertise we are making available to the Royal Commission for AIUla. We are fully committed within the framework of the intergovernmental agreement of 10 April 2018, alongside our Saudi partners, to make AIUla a global reference for sustainable development. This cooperation is also a reminder of the excellence of our French companies in cutting-edge technologies designed to facilitate the sustainable management of territories, to create responsible and safe environments and unique living spaces for all.” **Jean-Yves Le Drian, Chairman of AFALULA**



The contract signed with Thales covers the sustainable protection of AIUla, its historical treasures, its population and international visitors.

AIUla's world-renowned collection of ancient artefacts, important cultural landmarks, and heritage assets will be protected around the clock using the latest digital technology and surveillance equipment as part of a new SAR 159 million (\$42m) security agreement between Thales and the Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU).

This Strategic Security Integration Project will see experts from the French cybersecurity firm work closely with RCU to install and maintain a range of security devices and safety solutions. The project will safeguard and continuously monitor areas of cultural and historic importance across AIUla. It will also expand to key urban and rural sites for the protection of AIUla's community of residents, businesses, and visitors.

Home to numerous historic artefacts and ancient treasures of national and global importance, protecting AIUla County's considerable cultural cache from harm, including damage from vandalism or even theft, is a major undertaking that requires the proven expertise of international specialists Thales.

The agreement strengthens a partnership signed between RCU and Thales in Paris in 2021 to drive forward RCU's smart and sustainable city development goals across archaeology, tourism, culture, education, and the arts, in line with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 plan.

In order to guarantee the safety of everything from the Nabatean tombs of Hegra to natural formations such as Elephant Rock and other landmarks, the project will employ state-of-the-art security systems all connected to RCU's Integrated Smart Operations Centre for centralised and efficient operations, enabling security teams to respond to any and all violations or threats.

The latest agreement between RCU and Thales highlights AIUla's growing status as an important cultural, heritage, and tourism destination that attracts increasing numbers of visitors from around the globe each year, all eager to experience AIUla's unique living museum.

About AFALULA (French Agency for AIUla Development)

Born as a result of an intergovernmental agreement signed by France and Saudi Arabia in April 2018, the French Agency for AIUla Development (AFALULA) was founded in Paris in July 2018. In the spirit of collaborative development, AFALULA's objective is to support its Saudi partner, the Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU), in the sustainable economic, tourism, and cultural development of AIUla, a region with an exceptional natural and cultural heritage located in the north-west of Saudi Arabia. The Agency's mission is to mobilize all of France's expertise and know-how and to bring together the best operators and companies in the fields of archaeology, museography, architecture, urban planning, tourism, hotel management, infrastructure, education, security, agriculture, botany, and sustainable natural resource management.

About the RCU (Royal Commission for AIUla)

The Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU) was established by royal decree in July 2017 to preserve and develop AIUla, a region of outstanding natural and cultural significance in north-west Saudi Arabia. RCU's long-term plan outlines a responsible, sustainable, and sensitive approach to urban and economic development that preserves the area's natural and historic heritage while establishing AIUla as a desirable location to live, work, and visit. This encompasses a broad range of initiatives across archaeology, tourism, culture, education, and the arts, reflecting a commitment to meeting the economic diversification, local community empowerment, and heritage preservation priorities of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 programme.

About Thales

Thales (Euronext Paris: HO) is a global leader in advanced technologies, investing in digital and "deep tech" innovations – connectivity, big data, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and quantum computing – to build a confident future crucial for the development of our societies. The Group provides its customers – businesses, organisations and governments – in the defense, aeronautics, space, transport, and digital identity and security domains with solutions, services and products that help them fulfil their critical role, consideration for the individual



being the driving force behind all decisions.

Thales has 81,000 employees in 68 countries. In 2020 the Group generated sales of €17 billion.



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