

INSIGHTS

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A look at what's happening in and around Denel

left: Keynote speaker at the event, Minister of Public Enterprises, Mr. Alec Erwin.

DENEL AVIATION RECEIVES EUROCOPTER ACCREDITATION

by Sam J Basch

On 10 May, 2007 helicopter manufacturer Eurocopter formally certified Denel Aviation as a Eurocopter accredited maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facility for dynamic components on Oryx aircraft.

At the event held at Denel's Kempton Park facilities adjacent to OR Tambo International Airport Mr. Ismail Dockrat, CEO of Denel Aviation, received the coveted technical accreditation certificate from Eurocopter's Mr. Guy Joannes, CEO of Eurocopter Southern Africa.

Eurocopter helicopters that served with the South African Air Force (SAAF) and numerous other African air forces include the Alouette and the veritable workhorse of the sky, the Puma. The SAAF also operated the Super Frelon, now retired, whilst still operating the Puma's more modern derivative, the Oryx.

Keynote speaker at the event Minister of Public Enterprises, Mr. Alec Erwin, said: "Eurocopter's accreditation of Denel Aviation will make a significant contribution to the restructuring and turnaround of this Denel business. The accreditation also provides for young South African engineers and technicians to both to achieve fulfilment in their careers and expand our country's high technology capabilities. We are all aware of the critical need to retain and expand the skills base in our country, which is what Denel Aviation has achieved here."

According to Mr. Ismail Dockrat this certification gives Denel Aviation direct access to Eurocopter's expertise on technical matters and exposure to international best practice. "As from today a fully accredited Denel Aviation is better able and positioned to provide product lifecycle support to the SAAF," explained Mr. Dockrat.

Though phased out by the SAAF and replaced with more modern helicopters, the Puma and Alouette helicopters were traditionally the SAAF's "workhorses", extensively used for humanitarian aid, disaster relief, search and rescue, and transport missions.

The Oryx continues to fly with the SAAF, performing multifunctional missions in South Africa and on the African continent in the broader context of peacekeeping and humanitarian roles. They were used extensively during flooding in Mozambique some years ago.

Whilst the Oryx is soon to undergo a mid-life upgrade, it will require local support going into the future, especially taking into account the expected diverse operating profiles it will fly.

Over the years Denel Aviation has maintained this fleet of aircraft and has gained extensive knowledge and experience on these products. However, due to ever-stringent original equipment manufacturer (OEM) requirements and standards for



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continued overleaf

continued from page 1

servicing of these aircraft and their associated dynamic components, mainly in the interests of airworthiness and flight safety, Denel Aviation needed Eurocopter accreditation.

This was an essential requirement for the SAAF's Oryx programme.

For Denel Aviation to be accredited, Eurocopter followed a procedure that included an audit of:

- Denel's operational and management control of the maintenance depot;
- the availability at Denel Aviation of current Operational (O-), Intermediate (I-) and Depot (D-) - level maintenance technical documentation;
- "serviceable" tooling and specialised test equipment with up to date calibration certificates;
- Eurocopter trained Denel Aviation personnel; and
- the availability from Eurocopter of spares in support of the products being supported.

The accreditation had to be done strictly in accordance with Eurocopter procedures and standards.

The accreditation process started as early as January 2006 with a proposal from Eurocopter to train personnel in the area of composite materials manufacture. Composites are nowadays used extensively in aircraft manufacturing, e.g. helicopter rotor blades and fuselage sections.

In March 2006 Eurocopter supplied Denel Aviation with its O-, I- and D-level accreditation scope. Eurocopter trained 31 Denel Aviation technicians in various facets of airframe, dynamic components or composites maintenance. The composites maintenance training was completed in France.

"Today all of them are specialists in their specific area of maintenance on Eurocopter's Alouette, Puma and the Oryx range of helicopters," said Mr. Dockrat. "I'm proud to say, this process as noted by the Eurocopter technical specialists was achieved in record time, due mainly to Denel Aviation's extensive experience and knowledge of the Eurocopter product range."

Having undergone a final audit in December 2006 by technical specialists from Eurocopter France, Denel Aviation received confirmation on the successful outcome in February this year. At the time Eurocopter notified Denel Aviation's management that its facility would be certified as an accredited MRO centre.



The Oryx in action - lifting off with an SA Army rapid deployment force.



Mr. Guy Joannes (left) of Eurocopter hands Denel Aviation CEO, Mr. Ismail Dockrat the official Eurocopter accreditation certificate.



Approximately 400 people attended the function at Denel Aviation.



centre l to r: Denel Aviation CEO, Mr. Ismail Dockrat; Minister of Public Enterprises, Mr. Alec Erwin; CEO of Eurocopter Southern Africa, Mr. Guy Joannes; and Chief Director Acquisitions, Department of Defence, Maj-Gen. Otto Schür; celebrate the accreditation with some of the Denel Aviation helicopter maintenance team.