

All clear for landing

Tellumat joint venture SIA Solutions ushers in another aviation deal
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SIA Solutions, the 60-40 black owned joint venture company between empowered technology leaders Tellumat and Harambe Technologies, is continuing its impressive run in the civil aviation market with a contract to supply an approach system and refurbish an existing navigation aid for the Eastern Cape's Bhisho Airport.

In a provincial government tender for Bhisho Airport's complete refurbishment, SIA was contracted by tender appointee Ruwacon to supply specialist Instrument Landing Systems (ILS), and to conduct repairs of the airport's existing Very High Frequency Omnidirectional Radio Range (VOR).

"The deal confirms our leadership in ground-based navigational systems in South Africa," says Colin Meintjes, SIA Solutions' executive director. "We've remained focused on the aviation market since our inception in 2003, and are known for many leading technology deployments around the country."

Ntsane Kolisang, marketing manager at SIA Solutions, adds that the deal is proof also that empowered hi-tech firms can add value, both in terms of deep vertical expertise and prices that are palatable to the local market.

Other than SIA's history and its demonstrable value, its position of strength in the country's Eastern region also helped its cause. Kolisang says the company's ILS/DME (Distance Measuring Equipment) systems are operational in the airports of Port Elizabeth, East London, George and Durban.

The company's technical expertise and experience has been built up over years, since the time of Tellumat Navigation Systems, and its forerunner, Plessey. SIA Solutions is today the leading provider of ILS/DME systems in the SA civil aviation market. Its installations cover 76% of the leading civil airports.

Some 70% of these feature technology from SIA's main supplier, Selex Systemi Integrati (SSI). SSI's successful operation in a preponderance of SA's airports, and its compliance with Recommended Practices of the International Civil Aviation Organisation and the SA Civil Aviation Authority, has made it a preferable technology in civil aviation, Kolisang says.

Given the large number of SSI deployments in the region, Bhisho Airport will benefit from the availability of spares and relevant technical expertise. On that note, Kolisang reveals that skills transfer made up an important part of the contract. "Our technical staff have received extensive training on the technology. Some of the airport's technicians will further be trained on the maintenance of the systems."

In this transfer of skills lies the greatest benefit of the deal, both for Bhisho and SIA Solutions, he adds. "This contract has allowed a leading BEE technology company in the field of aviation to expand, by training more historically disadvantaged individuals recently employed by us, and to spread our influence by training customer personnel. This has allowed us to show that industry can lend credible support to the enterprise and public sector end-user community, and that BEE is not just a concept – it is real."

Employing a system of manual labour, as opposed to machine-based work during civil construction, the project has further provided jobs in the region – another imperative of the tender.

Anatomy of a deal

- An open tender by the Eastern Cape Provincial Government for the airport's upgrading, including its runways, buildings, electrical systems and navigational systems, was awarded to Ruwacon.
- SIA Solutions was appointed by Ruwacon to supply, install and commission the ILS-DME and VOR repairs portion of the contract. Its credentials include extensive Selex Systemi Integrati (SSI) installations in country – the technology chosen for Bhisho's ILS-DME, and extensive refurbishment of SEL VOR, TACAN and DME technologies.
- An installation team of six people comprised highly skilled project management staff, technicians and engineers. The ILS work involved supply, installation and commissioning of the technology.
- Future support requirements may mean additional investment in SIA's SSI capabilities.