

New port helicopters take flight

[Richards Bay, South Africa, 3 October 2019] A guard of honour and ceremonial flyover were among the activities marking the official launch in Richards Bay on Thursday of Transnet National Ports Authority's (TNPA) two new port helicopters.

The event was attended by dignitaries including KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Ms Nomusa Dube-Ncube, Councillor Philisiwe Cele representing the District Mayor of King Cetshwayo District Municipality Councillor Nonhle Mkhulisi, Deputy Mayor of uMhlathuze Municipality Councillor Duduzile Sibiyi, as well as various industry principals.

Manufactured by Italian global high-tech company, Leonardo, the helicopters are now in service at the KwaZulu-Natal Ports of Durban and Richards Bay. They are used to transfer marine pilots onto and off visiting ships for the vessels to be guided safely and efficiently into our port waters.

Chief Compliance and Regulatory Officer for Transnet, Xoliswa Mpongoshe, representing Acting Group Chief Executive, Mohammed Mahomed, said the acquisition of the new craft under the company's fleet renewal programme was aimed at enhancing efficiency, safety and ensuring customer satisfaction.

"The new craft will bring benefits for our customers and improve the global competitiveness of our ports, resulting in economic benefits to the region," she said.

Socio-economic benefits

TNPA's Acting COO, Captain Rufus Lekala, said the port authority had been on a transformation journey and had invested a total of R500 million which included the helicopters as well as the training and development of aviation pilots and engineers.

"We have 26 pilots available, 20 of whom are from TNPA's training programme and 50% of these are women. TNPA's training programme started in 2012 has to date produced 20 helicopter pilots as well as 14 helicopter maintenance technicians. This programme is now insourced, meaning that all helicopters, facilities, operating licenses and aviation personnel belong to TNPA, and all operations are conducted by and under TNPA," he said.

All maintenance and training will also be done in-house, creating a completely new service to the benefit of TNPA customers.

Under the contract's supplier development commitments, a local aviation company based in Pretoria was empowered through this project, and 14 TNPA aviation personnel are receiving training at Leonardo's facilities in Italy with a further eight trained via an instructor who was dispatched to South Africa in July this year.

Enhanced operation

The Leonardo (AW 109SP) helicopters, valued at approximately R250 million in total, will replace helicopters that are reaching the end of their life cycle.

The Ports of Durban and Richards Bay are presently the only ports in TNPA's complementary port system which use helicopters to transfer marine pilots. However, the service will also be introduced at the Port of Cape Town. The new Cape Town helicopter is due in 2022.

Captain Lekala, said, "We now have four helicopters in our fleet for KZN and Cape Town will bring this to five. By acquiring these new helicopters, our intention is to provide a world-class marine service with improved ship turnaround times and reliability."

The AW109SP is a modern top-of-the-range light twin-engine helicopter with excellent operational flexibility as well as high safety levels through advanced navigation and situational awareness technology. The two new AW109 SP's are equipped with a harbour pilot shuttle kit, which features a hoist that enables this distinctive operation, as well as several other installations unique to Transnet's aircraft.

Ends

Below: Transnet SOC Ltd Chief Compliance and Regulatory Officer, Xoliswa Mpongoshe, Leonardo Senior Vice President Africa & Middle East - Global Sales, Gianfranco Sottotetti and KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Nomusa Dube-Ncube at the launch of Transnet National Ports Authority's new helicopters for the Ports of Durban and Richards Bay.



Below: One of Transnet National Ports Authority's new helicopters officially launched in Richards Bay on 3 October.



Below: Dignitaries celebrating the official launch of Transnet National Ports Authority's new helicopters on 3 October.



Below: Transnet SOC Ltd Chief Compliance and Regulatory Officer, Xoliswa Mpongsohe, Leonardo Senior Vice President Africa & Middle East - Global Sales, Gianfranco Sottotetti, KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Nomusa Dube-Ncube and Councillor Philisiwe Cele of King Cetshwayo District Municipality with some of the helicopter technicians being developed through TNPA's aviation programme.



About Transnet National Ports Authority

Transnet National Ports Authority (TNPA) is one of five operating divisions of Transnet SOC Ltd. The National Ports Authority is responsible for the safe, effective and efficient economic functioning of the national port system, which it manages in a landlord capacity. It provides port infrastructure and marine services at the eight commercial seaports in South Africa – Richards Bay, Durban, Saldanha, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London,

Mossel Bay and Ngqura. It operates within a legislative and regulatory environment and is governed by the National Ports Act (Act No. 12 of 2005). For more information visit www.transnetnationalportsauthority.net.

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