

Test pilots spread wings to Africa

Test pilots and flight test engineers from Denel Aviation are now taking their skills and experience to clients in countries across Africa.



The company now has a mobile telemetry support vehicle which is capable of supporting flight tests at remote locations, says Mike Kgobe, the chief executive officer of Denel Aviation. In the past this highly-specialised test flying could only be conducted within South Africa.

Kgobe says this is part of Denel Aviation's initiative to grow its business in Africa.

"We are taking our highly-skilled pilots and engineers as well as our state-of-the-art technology to the client."

The company is expanding its maintenance and repair services to the rapidly growing number of military and civilian aircraft criss-crossing the continent.

"We are playing an increasingly important role in supporting defence forces and the commercial aviation sector in Africa through flight testing and top quality maintenance," claims Kgobe.

Experimental flight testing is one of the specialised services provided by Denel Aviation. The test pilots and flight test engineers ensure that every aircraft that leaves the company's facilities following maintenance or repair work is in top shape and ready for full flying duties.

The Flight Test Centre at Denel Aviation offers a highly specialised service to the aviation market both locally and internationally. Combining state-of-the-art facilities and telemetry with world-class flight test personnel has contributed to the centre's growing reputation in the global aerospace community.

This is highly specialised flying," says Derick Matthee, the manager of the Flight Test Centre. "Only the best and most experienced pilots are entrusted with these responsibilities. Test pilot applicants need a minimum of 750 hours of pilot-in-command flying time and must be medically qualified to perform flight duties. The engineers need a bachelor's degree in math, science or engineering and must also be medically fit to fly," he says.

The elite group of experimental test pilots are adept in flying almost any type of aircraft - from fighter jets, to transport

aircraft and helicopters.

Denel Aviation Flight Test capabilities and resources allow the full cycle of system testing whether it is airborne or ground based.

Located at an elevation of 5 500 feet above sea level and with summer temperatures reaching 35°C the Flight Test Centre is suited for "hot and high testing" of helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft. It uses a 4 400m runway at the O R Tambo International.

Source: Denel

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