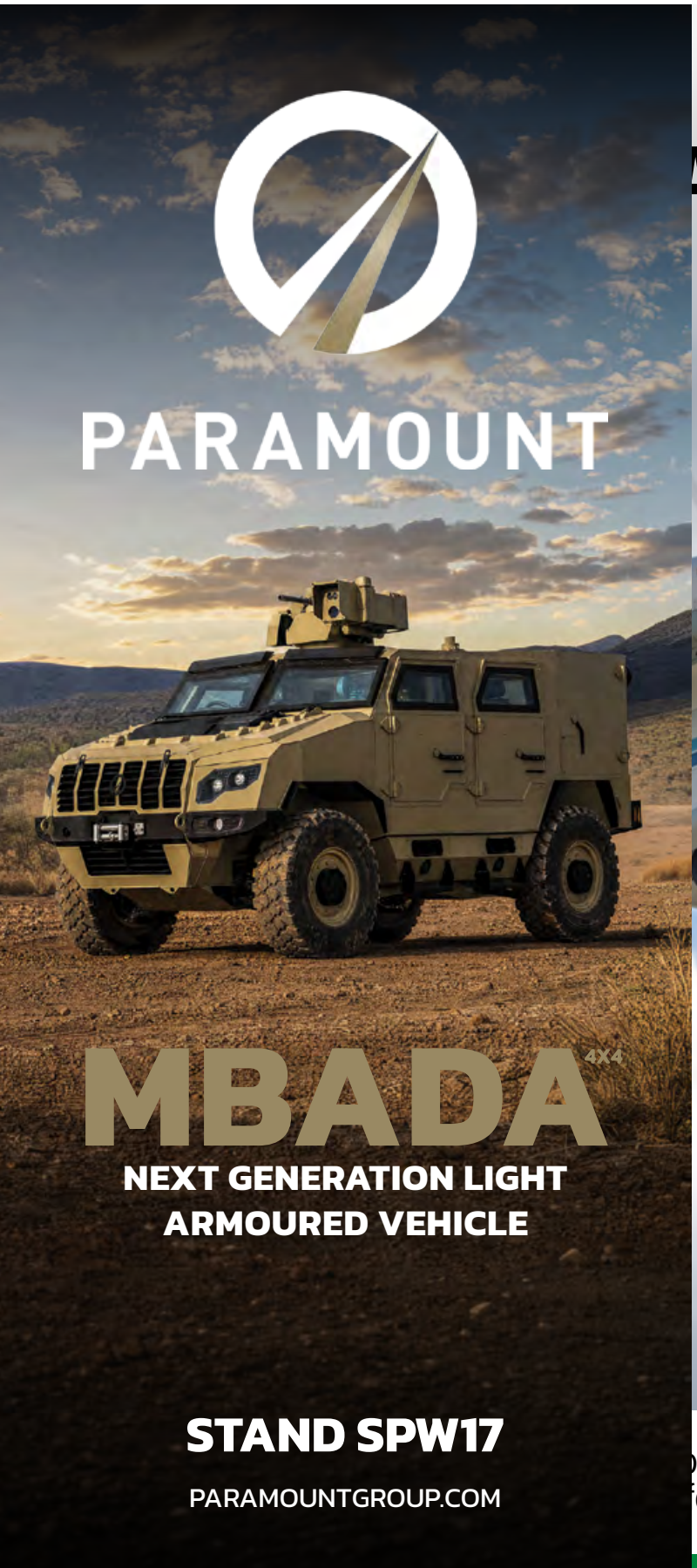
AFRICA AEROSPACE & DEFENCE
16-20 SEPT 2026

DAY 3

AAD2026 SHOW DAILY

THE OFFICIAL AAD 2026 DAILY | SOUTH AFRICA | 18 SEPTEMBER 2026

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C295 is Africa's workhorse'



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or SGD

Milkor and
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Paramount launches V-Raven UAV

Strong business growth for SGD

Milkor and Safran ink MoU

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Airbus pitches C295 as African workhorse

Angola's recently delivered C295 maritime surveillance aircraft is taking centre stage at Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) 2026 as Airbus positions the type as a multi-role solution for African air forces, including a potential replacement for South Africa's ageing maritime surveillance fleet.

The Força Aérea Nacional de Angola (Angolan Air Force) C295 on static display at Air Force Base Waterkloof is one of two C295s operated by Angola in a multi-role maritime surveillance configuration. The Angolan Air Force has three C295s, with the first (T-412), delivered in July 2024 in a tactical transport configuration. The two maritime surveillance aircraft (T-751 and T-752), followed in November 2025.

Speaking at AAD, Fernando Ciria, Product Marketing for Airbus Defence and Space (Chalets 1-3), described the C295 as a particularly relevant aircraft for African operators because of its combination of transport and surveillance capabilities.

The C295 can conduct conventional personnel and cargo transport, medical evacuation, vehicle transport and special operations support missions. Airbus also offers the aircraft in maritime surveillance and more demanding maritime patrol configurations.

For Ciria, that flexibility is particularly significant for smaller air forces, where fleet size and operating budgets can make it difficult to maintain dedicated aircraft for every mission.

The aircraft's appearance at AAD has particular relevance for South Africa. The South African Air Force (SAAF) has C47-TP Turbo Dakotas in its fleet for maritime surveillance duties. Airbus sees the C295 as a possible successor, with the advantage that the same basic aircraft can undertake both transport and surveillance missions.

Ciria specifically cited South Africa as an example of an operator using the aircraft for both roles. "This is our normal life," he said, pointing to operators that use the same C295 fleet for transport and surveillance. Such commonality can translate into lower operating costs and allow money saved in support areas to be directed towards other defence requirements.

The C295 is also designed to operate from austere locations, including unpaved runways. That characteristic is particularly relevant to African operators conducting missions far from established air bases and infrastructure.

One of the more significant features of Airbus's multi-role maritime surveillance configuration is that surveillance equipment is concentrated towards the forward section of the cabin, leaving roughly two-thirds of the cabin available for personnel, cargo or medical evacuation.

Airbus also offers palletised solutions. These can allow surveillance equipment to be installed as a roll-on/roll-off mission kit, enabling an aircraft to be returned to another role when required.

The maritime surveillance version uses Airbus's Fully Integrated Tactical System (FITS) mission system. The aircraft can be equipped with search radar, electro-optical sensors, an automatic identification system (AIS), magnetic anomaly detector etc. Maritime patrol configurations can also accommodate weapons such as torpedoes, missiles, mines and depth charges.

The Angolan aircraft at AAD represents the multi-role end of this spectrum, with its surveillance suite centred around a multi-mission radar, electro-optical system and AIS.

Ciria highlighted the aircraft's modern cockpit and said Burkina Faso was the first operator outside Canada of the latest avionics configuration. The aircraft can provide crews with modern electronic checklists, navigation information and approach data while retaining the relatively straightforward airframe and operating characteristics of the C295.

According to Ciria, more than 337 C295s have been contracted worldwide, with aircraft operated by 46 operators in 40 countries – with a number of repeat customers. He said 54 aircraft have been sold to African customers. Egypt is currently the continent's largest operator, with 24 aircraft in different configurations. Other African operators include countries that have acquired only a small number of aircraft, demonstrating Airbus's pitch that the platform can remain economically viable even for relatively small fleets.

With Angola's newest C295s providing a tangible example on the AAD static line, Airbus is making the case that the type can serve as a flexible workhorse for African air forces — including potentially replacing ageing surveillance aircraft while retaining a useful airlift capability.





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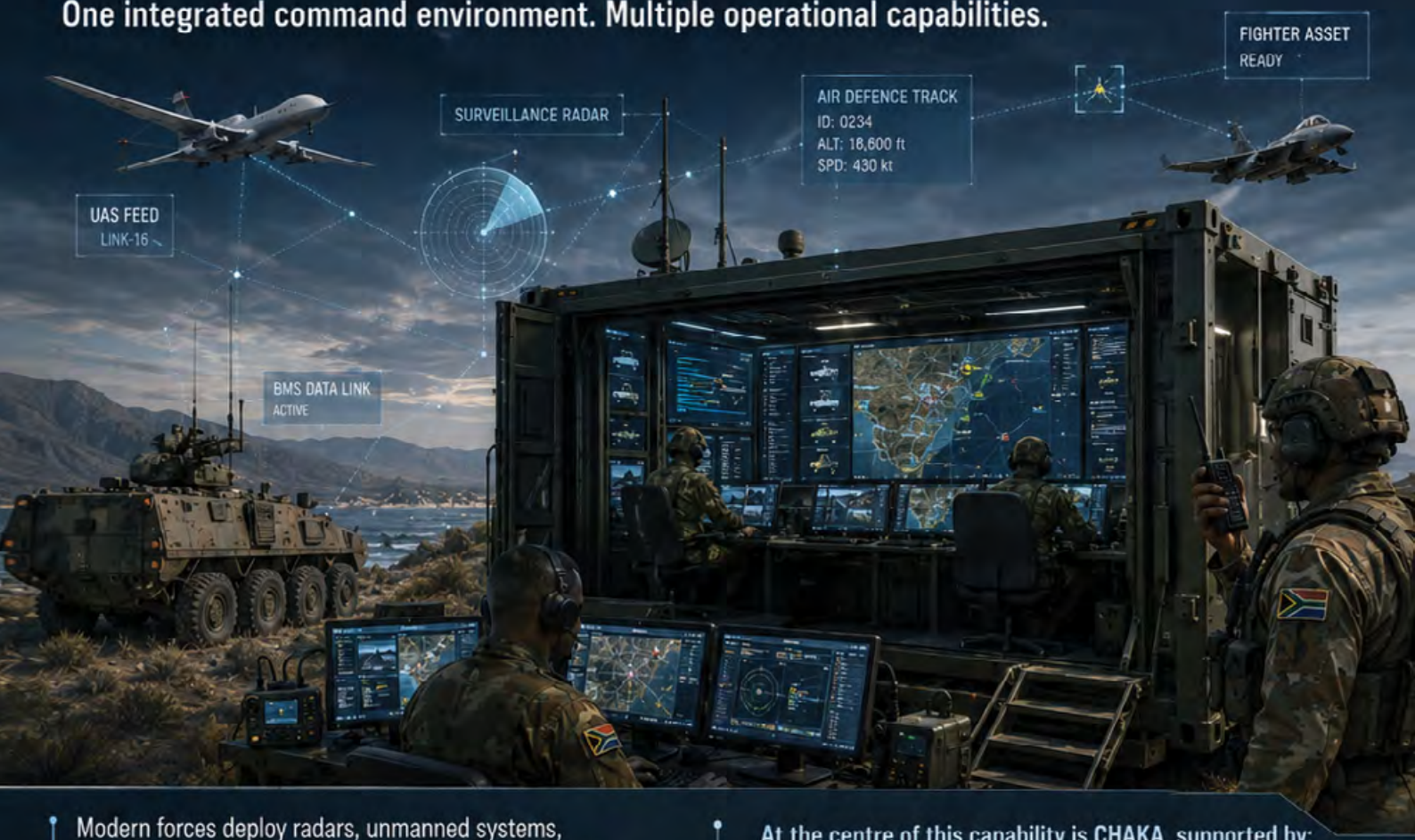
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SVI unveils Land Cruiser 79 six-wheeler Tactical Observation Vehicle

Armoured vehicle specialist SVI Engineering has revealed a new Toyota Land Cruiser 70 series six-wheeler Tactical Observation Vehicle at the Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) 2026 exhibition.

"SVI's new Tactical Observation Vehicle allows teams to operate autonomously for extended periods, all while providing the required tactical information. The combination of advanced battlefield-management systems, observation systems and a reliable Toyota platform ensures total operational readiness," said Jaco de Kock, CEO of SVI.

The company said AAD 2026 is the ideal setting for SVI to showcase the new Tactical Observation Vehicle, one of several 'light mobile brigade' solutions on display at the event.

Fitted with either SVI's 6x4 or 6x6 conversion to both increase carrying capacity and improve off-road performance, the Land Cruiser 79 Single Cab can furthermore be optionally equipped with the company's field-proven Level B6 armouring package, which provides protection against assault rifles (including AK-47, R1 and R5).

Meanwhile, the vehicle's extended load area plays host to a dedicated box body, which includes an air-conditioning system, an 8 kW inverter and even a basic kitchen. This set-up is ready to accept an expanded solar photovoltaic (PV) system, if required.

Serving as a Command & Control centre, the platform – which can also be used to underpin a 6x6 ambulance solution – comes fitted with the Hensoldt Bushbaby 200 long-range electro-optical surveillance system. It also features African Defence Systems' AS4000, an integrated battlefield management and fire control system developed specifically for indirect-fire applications. A radar system supplied by Reutech complements the above to allow detection of both ground and airborne targets.

AS4000 connects the information required by command, observation, fire-control and launcher elements within a single digital environment. The architecture allows the co-ordinated flow of operational information between authorised system elements.

The wider AS4000 architecture also supports interfaces to data-communication devices, digital radios, launcher-control systems, muzzle-velocity equipment, meteorological systems, inertial-navigation systems and observer sensors — with the final interface architecture defined per programme.

SVI has a sizeable presence at AAD 2026, with its key defence vehicles on display: the MAX 3 and MAX 9 armoured personnel carriers and MAX Recon 6x6 rapid deployment tactical vehicle. A MAX SWAT multi-role vehicle is at AAD 2026 in military colours – the type was recently taken into service by the City of Cape Town for its SWAT and Metro Police units.

On the non-military side, SVI is showcasing its Jeep 6x6 conversion (Jeep Gladiator Maximus 6x6 from sister company Ulterio Motiv). It is also highlighting its ultra-luxurious armoured Mercedes-Benz Sprinter, which is billed as an ideal form of protected transport for state presidents, military generals and other high-ranking officials.

"Heads of state and military commanders require a mobile command environment with the requisite protection, all without sacrificing operational readiness. Our custom B6-armoured Sprinter delivers just that, allowing leaders to conduct critical strategic work in privacy, luxury and – above all – security. It's a first-class experience akin to that of a private jet for the road," said de Kock.

A bulkhead separates the front seats – which are intended to be occupied by a close protection officer (CPO) driver and an additional security detail – from the private rear quarters. The rear passenger area features two luxury seats, a pair of fridges, a dedicated kitchen area and even an enclosed restroom, the latter complete with toilet facilities.

The converted Sprinter retains Mercedes-Benz's proven 2.0-litre, four-cylinder OM654 turbodiesel engine, delivering peak outputs of 125 kW and 400 Nm to the rear wheels via either a six-speed manual gearbox or a nine-speed automatic transmission.





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AAD2026

AAD Conference Programme

Taking place from 16–18 September 2026 at Air Force Base Waterkloof, the AAD 2026 conference brings together senior military leaders, government officials, defence industry executives and technology innovators to explore the trends shaping Africa's defence future. Day three has a Commercial and Military Aviation focus, which will be unpacked at the Seminar Venue in Hangar 5 on 18 September as follows:

\\\ DAY THREE – 18th September 2026: Commercial and Military Aviation

07:30 – 08:30	REGISTRATION, REFRESHMENTS AND EXHIBITION VISIT
08:30-08:40	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR HAMILTON WENDE War Correspondent, Author, Journalist and Professional Speaker
08:40-09:10	KEYNOTE ADDRESS: MILITARY AVIATION AS A CATALYST FOR AFRICA'S SECURITY, RESILIENCE AND CONTINENTAL CONNECTIVITY - Lieutenant Gen. Carl Moatshe, Chief, South African Air Force (SAAF)
09:10 – 09:40	SECURING AIRPORT INFRASTRUCTURE: INTEGRATED PROTECTION FOR HIGH-TRAFFIC HUBS MC de Beer, CEO, Milkor Saudi
09:40 – 10:10	THE USE OF UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEMS (UAS) FOR COMMERCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND MILITARY OPERATIONS Dean Polley, Founder & Chief Executive Officer, SSASS Holdings
10:10 – 10:40	SOUTH AFRICAN AIR FORCE FUTURE COMBAT CAPABILITY BEYOND 2050 Lieutenant Colonel Scott Logie, South African Air Force (SAAF); Base Aviation Safety Coordinator, Air Force Base Makhado
10:40 – 11:10	MORNING REFRESHMENTS, NETWORKING AND EXHIBITION VISIT
11:10 – 11:40	THE CURRENT STATUS OF MILITARY AVIATION IN AFRICA AND THE OPERATIONAL READINESS OF AFRICAN AIR FORCES Kaval Shah, Regional Sales Manager, Pratt & Whitney Canada
11:40 – 12:25	PANEL DISCUSSION: ADDRESSING THE SKILLS SHORTAGE IN THE AVIATION INDUSTRY CHAIR: Reshika Singh, Human Resources Executive, Federal Airlines Panelists: • Ryan van Wijk, CEO, Alt Academy • Shaun Ledlie, Managing Director, Kershal Aviation; Director, The Drone Council of South Africa • Timo Eckardt, Head of Customer Support Africa, Airbus • Kariska Engels, Executive Manager: Human Resources, Airlink • Jason Pretorius, Director: Asia West. Milkor
12:25 – 12:40	THE ROLE OF AN AVIATION REGULATOR IN ECONOMIC GROWTH AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION Dean Khumalo, Executive Aviation Safety Operations, SA Civil Aviation Authority
12:40 – 13:40	LUNCH, NETWORKING AND EXHIBITION VISIT
13:40 – 14:10	THE EVOLUTION OF AVIATION SAFETY WITH TECHNOLOGY AND AI Vaughn Gruneberg, Manager, Flight Safety & OHSE, Solenta
14:10 - 14:40	THE ROLE OF COMMERCIAL COMPANIES IN DUAL-USE AVIATION AND CIVIL–MILITARY PARTNERSHIPS Thomas Kruger, Director, Hussar Security & Defence Solutions
14:40 - 15:10	ADDRESSING CYBER SECURITY CHALLENGES IN AVIATION Thokozani Miya, Founder & Director, Neo Aviation
15:10 - 15:30	AFTERNOON REFRESHMENTS, NETWORKING AND EXHIBITION VISIT
15:30 - 16:00	MAPPING AEROSPACE CRITICAL MATERIAL SUPPLY CHAINS Fiona Macdonald, Senior Analyst, Project Blue
16:00 - 16:30	CLOSING KEYNOTE ADDRESS: WHAT DOES THE FUTURE OF AVIATION LOOK LIKE? Rennie van Zyl, Independent aviation expert; former Chief Director, Civil Aviation
16:30 - 16:35	CLOSING REMARKS FROM THE CHAIR
16:35	END OF CONFERENCE DAY THREE

For more information on the AAD 2026 Conference, visit: aadconf.aadexpo.co.za

AAD2026
SHOW DAILY

ADVERTISING INDEX DAY 3

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Denel and Sparcx collaborate on aerospace, UAV opportunities

Denel Aerospace and South African engineering company Sparcx have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to explore potential collaboration across aerospace engineering, research and development, industrialisation, customisation and technology commercialisation

The MoU establishes a framework for the companies to identify and evaluate opportunities for collaboration, with a particular focus on Denel Aerospace's Fixed-Wing Vertical Take-off and Landing (FW-VTOL) unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). Among the opportunities being explored is the integration of this capability into Sparcx's public-safety offering, as well as joint market engagement across the parties' respective customer bases.

Under the MoU, revealed during Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) 2026, Denel Aerospace and Sparcx will also explore opportunities for collaboration and knowledge exchange in research and development, industrialisation, customisation and the commercialisation of intellectual property. This could include the joint development or customisation of identified subsystems for next-generation manned and unmanned aerial platforms.

Tsepo Monaheng, Group CEO of Denel, said; "this collaboration reflects the importance of bringing together South African aerospace and engineering capabilities to explore new opportunities in a rapidly evolving technology environment."

Sujo Mulamattathil, Managing Director of Sparcx, said: "There is significant value in bringing South African aerospace capability together with the integrated technologies increasingly being used in public safety and security. Unmanned aerial systems can provide valuable situational awareness, but their real value grows exponentially when the information gathered forms part of the operational and more importantly, evidence ecosystem. Improving public safety in South Africa is the fastest way to increase GDP and consequently create jobs across ALL sectors."

"Our collaboration with Denel Aerospace gives us an opportunity to explore how locally developed aerospace capability can be applied alongside modern public-safety technology, while supporting South African engineering, skills development and industrialisation. Additionally, it opens up the opportunity to take domestic products to global customers. AAD is an important environment in which to begin that conversation with defence, law-enforcement and other potential users in light of the recent developments of the South African National Defence Force being deployed domestically to support the South African Police Service and Border Management Authority."



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Paramount unveils V-Raven VTOL UAV

Paramount Aerospace Systems (Stand SPW17) has revealed a new fixed wing vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), which evolved from its N-Raven programme. Designed for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) and light attack, it can be armed with weapons such as the new LongClaw glide bomb.





V-Raven represents a significant evolution in both the aircraft and the operational concept behind the original N-Raven programme, Paramount said, noting it has moved from the original catapult-launched concept towards a returnable VTOL aircraft family capable of operating from dispersed locations without a runway, catapult or fixed launch infrastructure.

The development comes as African armed forces face increasingly complex security challenges across vast and often difficult-to-access areas. From the Sahel to northern Mozambique, forces require persistent surveillance to monitor remote territories, track movements and improve situational awareness in environments where conventional aviation infrastructure may be limited or unavailable.

"The V-Raven has been developed for the realities of the modern African battlefield," said Sello Ntshiele, Paramount Aerospace Systems. "Vast operating areas, remote terrain, dispersed threats and the increasing use of drones mean that forces need to be able to see further and stay on station longer. V-Raven brings those capabilities together in a highly flexible, reusable unmanned system."

V-Raven is designed to address these requirements through a returnable, reusable ISR and light attack capability. Unlike expendable loitering munitions, the aircraft takes off vertically, conducts its assigned mission and returns to land for subsequent use. This enables the platform to provide persistent surveillance while offering a different operational model and through-life economics from single-use unmanned systems, Paramount explained.

The ISR configuration is equipped with an electro-optical sensor system providing day-and-night surveillance capability, allowing operators to assess points and areas of interest, monitor movements and identify potential targets. The platform supports automatic target tracking and can accommodate multiple electro-optical and infrared sensor options according to mission requirements.

The V-Raven family is being developed to support more than one mission configuration. The ISR configuration is intended for persistent surveillance and reconnaissance, while a separate ISR and light-attack configuration is planned to integrate precision-guided glide munitions for selected targets.

The light-attack configuration displayed at AAD 2026 – where the aircraft is fitted with Rheinmetall's new LongClaw glide bomb - illustrates the planned integration of precision-guided weapons within the V-Raven architecture. Paramount said it will mature this capability through a phased programme of systems integration, ground testing and flight trials, allowing the platform and its mission systems to be progressively developed and validated.

"What we are unveiling at AAD is the next stage of the V-Raven journey," said Ntshiele. "It is a common aircraft architecture that can evolve as operational requirements develop. The immediate focus is a highly capable ISR platform, while the family architecture provides a pathway towards additional mission configurations, including light attack."

The petrol-powered V-Raven offers up to eight hours of endurance, a range of up to 1 200 km and a cruise speed of approximately 140 km/h. Its communications range with the ground station is up to 150 km. An electric configuration provides up to two hours of endurance and a range of up to 250 km.

Both configurations use VTOL operation, allowing V-Raven to be deployed rapidly from dispersed or difficult locations without the need for conventional launch and recovery infrastructure. The aircraft has a wingspan of 3.6 metres, a fuselage length of 2.1 metres and a maximum take-off weight of 65 kg.

V-Raven forms part of Paramount's expanding portfolio of aerospace and unmanned systems, reflecting the company's focus on developing mission-ready capabilities for Africa's evolving security environment and international markets, the company said.

Development of the original N-Raven loitering munition began in 2021. The N-Raven – also on display at AAD 2026 - weighs 55 kg and has a speed of 180 km/h and loitering endurance of two hours for the electric version, and 4.5 hours for the petrol version, and range of up to 100 km. It has a wingspan of 3.6 metres and carries a 13.5 kg payload.

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Reutech industrialising new surveillance radar

South African radar specialist Reutech Radar Systems (RRS), a business in the Reunert Applied Electronics Segment (Stand SPW14 in the static display park), is in the process of industrialising its new RSR102 Low-Cost Radar and expects significant orders for the X-band land and perimeter surveillance system.



Harald Bielfeld, the CEO at Reutech Radar Systems, said he expects high volumes of the RSR102 to be sold, as the radar is ideal for perimeter surveillance and very affordable for mines and to protect critical infrastructure, for example. It has already been delivered to its first customers for perimeter security.

The RSR102 is optimised for detecting human activity at a range exceeding 600 metres. It can automatically detect and recognise moving targets such as personnel, vehicles and other moving objects. Its small size, low weight, low battery power consumption and ease of operation make the unit ideally suited as an Intruder Detection System tailored to monitor and protect assets and restricted areas.

As the RSR102 is a low-cost, small, lightweight, low probability of intercept (LPI) product, it is ideal for covert operations. Its low transmitted power levels inherently increase reliability and reduce component cost, providing a cost-effective solution for short-range and intrusion monitoring radars, Reutech Radar Systems noted.

Each radar unit covers a 90-degree sector and to secure full perimeter coverage four units can be installed to obtain 360-degree coverage. The radar can automatically cue a camera to further identify and track targets.

The RSR102 forms part of Reutech Radar Systems smaller entry point radar systems designed for perimeter and border protection. Another newer product is its RSR905 multi-mode ground surveillance radar, which complements the RSR903 ground surveillance radar.

The RSR903 lightweight radar has an instrumented range of 30 km and can detect pedestrians at 8 km, small vehicles at 15 km, and large vehicles at 20 km. The Ku-band radar weighs 20 kg and can be powered by a generator, batteries, solar panels or grid power. It can scan in panoramic, sector or staring modes. Applications include game and livestock protection, border surveillance, ports protection etc.

The RSR903 has been acquired by the South African Border Management Authority (BMA) and a customer in South-East Asia. The BMA may acquire additional units. The South African National Defence Force is also allocating budget to acquire RSR903 radars for border security.

Reutech Radar Systems RSR905, flagship of its ground surveillance radar portfolio, operates in the X-band and has a longer range, with instrumented range standing at 50 km. It can detect pedestrians at 15 km and armoured vehicles greater than 20 km and provides 200 square kilometres of coverage instantaneously.

According to Reutech Radar Systems, the RSR905 can automatically classify pedestrian and vehicle targets and is ideal for battlefield and border surveillance, critical infrastructure protection, industrial complex protection, and private security, amongst others. It can be tripod- or vehicle-mounted or part of a fixed installation.

Bielfeld said the RSR905 is entering the market and currently being manufactured for a customer. He noted that the radar market is very competitive, but Reutech Radar System's speed of production, price, and quality give it a competitive advantage. The company owns its own intellectual property and is not affected by US ITAR restrictions, further enhancing competitiveness.

These new radars build on the heritage of Reutech Radar Systems' RSR904 ground surveillance radar, which is used in the Meerkat wide area surveillance system deployed in the Kruger National Park to combat wildlife poaching. The Meerkat system has been in use since 2017 with positive results in protecting endangered species.



Saab Grintek Defence sees strong business ahead

Saab Grintek Defence (SGD - Chalets 9-11), the 100 percent owned local subsidiary of Swedish defence and aerospace company, Saab AB, expects strong sales growth in the years ahead.











Sara Radu, the recently appointed President and Managing Director of SGD, speaking at Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) 2026 at Air Force Base Waterkloof, said the company was in a good position with a strong order book.

"We expect strong growth in all areas of our business," she said.

For the past five years, over 99 percent of SGD's revenue has been from international sales. Radu expects this to continue in view of the strong demand for defence products. SGD currently sells its products to approximately 25 countries around the world.

The Centurion-based company, which is one of the largest local defence companies, specialises in electronic warfare systems, including self-protection suites for military aircraft, land vehicles, and naval vessels, radio frequency systems, and avionics.

Previously, Radu, who took up her appointment at SGD in July this year, worked for Business Sweden, a consulting body jointly owned by the Swedish government and the private business sector. As Trade Commissioner and a Country Manager, she worked on developing business for Swedish companies in Southern Africa. Prior to that, she advised Swedish companies on doing business in the wider African region and the Middle East.

An engineer by training, Radu has also held senior positions at Atlas Copco, the Swedish multinational industrial company, Epiroc, the mining equipment manufacturer, and Polarium, which specialises in lithium battery energy storage solutions.

Radu said the company has a strong product portfolio and a favourable competitive position due to its location in South Africa.

Over the past five years, SGD sales have risen fivefold and its number of employees, which now stands at about 500, has grown by 40 percent.

The company has developed a close relationship with engineering schools at universities across South Africa and earlier this year received 500 job applications. Of those, 38 candidates were selected for further testing on their coding abilities and in the end, just nine were given jobs.

SGD's VP and Head of Strategy and Country Manager, Dr Nivan Moodley, said the company has a key advantage in its ability to develop and integrate larger platforms. He said that, while the company has many of its own customers, Saab's global presence in a wide variety of defence domains has allowed considerable growth and a ramp-up in production.

He said the company has a strong competitive advantage in electronic warfare. "We are particularly strong in the production of radio frequency and microwave components."

The company does not publicly divulge its sales figures or any breakdowns of these. However, Moodley said SGD's largest customer base is in India, where it supplies the country's air force with the SA-developed Integrated Defence Aids Suite (IDAS). Different versions of the flagship product are in use on the South African Air Force's Rooivalk helicopter, the Oryx helicopter, and a wide variety of other aircraft across the world.

IDAS, which has gone through a number of versions, integrates radar, missile, and laser warning and countermeasure management features.

Radu said the company will continue to develop its local parts supplier base. Currently, 85 percent of the parts used by SGD are locally sourced.

Milkor and Safran sign MoU on optronics and navigation integration for UAVs

South African defence company Milkor Group (Stand 4W6, Hangar 4) and France's Safran Electronics & Defense (Chalet 21) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to explore the integration of Safran's airborne optronics, position-navigation-timing (PNT) systems and related technologies onto the Milkor 380 medium altitude long-endurance (MALE) unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) and future platforms, including the larger Milkor 780.



The agreement was formalised this week in Pretoria during the Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) 2026 exhibition. Alexandre Ziegler, Director of the Defence Division at Safran Electronics & Defense, and Julian Coetzee, CEO of Milkor, signed on behalf of their respective companies. In a statement accompanying the signing, Ziegler noted that the partnership will enable Safran's optronic and navigation systems to be integrated into drones exported by Milkor worldwide, highlighting collaboration with "this very dynamic and innovative group in the rapidly growing tactical drone market."

Under the MoU, the parties will work in good faith to define potential workshare arrangements and explore mutually beneficial opportunities of cooperation associated with integrating Safran's equipment on the Milkor 380 and future platforms. The companies may also pursue joint marketing, promotional and communication activities including participation in trade shows. The MoU is intended primarily to facilitate discussions and express the parties' current business intentions, they said.

The collaboration builds on clearly complementary strengths. Safran Electronics & Defense brings established expertise in airborne optronics, resilient PNT solutions (including inertial and GNSS technologies) and guided weapons. Milkor contributes proven capabilities in the design, development and manufacture of unmanned aerial systems. The Milkor 380, Africa's largest indigenously developed MALE UAV, offers endurance of up to 30–35 hours, a range exceeding 4 000 km and a payload capacity of around 220 kg. It is already in production, has secured export interest and continues to attract attention for intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and strike missions. The larger Milkor 780 remains under development and is expected to expand the family's operational envelope further.

This latest partnership continues Milkor's pattern of international collaborations aimed at enhancing the sensor and mission-system suites available on its UAV platforms for global customers, particularly in Africa, the Middle East, Europe and other export markets. For Safran, it expands the reach of its defence electronics portfolio into the fast-growing unmanned systems sector and underscores the growing role of cross-border technology partnerships in delivering integrated, export-ready solutions.



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AI-driven maintenance and logistics could decide mission success - Armscor

Armscor is looking at AI solutions to create predictive maintenance, smart logistics and enable digital military supply chains for the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), which it hopes will boost operational availability of prime mission equipment and lower costs too.

Speaking at the Future of Warfare symposium on the first day of the Africa Aerospace and Defence Conference at Air Force Base Waterkloof, Armscor's senior logistics engineer for research and development Thabang Sebapu said: "The difference between mission success and mission failure comes down to one question: the right capability at the right place and the right time."

"Traditional maintenance only tells us when the equipment has failed and when to do the service," he said, noting that predictive maintenance allows for pre-emptive interventions, with smart logistics ensuring that the right parts and the right technicians are in the right place at the right time to maintain equipment before it fails.

AI-driven maintenance, logistics and supply chains can reduce maintenance costs and enhance operational availability. Traditionally maintenance was reactive, "fix it when it breaks", he said, which then evolved into preventative ("maintain it at regular intervals so that it doesn't break"), then to condition-based (where maintenance is performed prior to failure by using sensors), to predictive, which forecasts precisely when the equipment will break, allowing technicians to maintain it accordingly beforehand, and finally prescriptive, where the machine helps decide how to avoid predictable failures.

"They do this by using sensors, digital scopes and ultrasound tools that let us check the internal machinery without taking the engine part," said Sebapu.

Predictive maintenance is particularly relevant for military equipment subjected to far harsher use than civilian equipment, but with an even higher requirement for operational availability. "Equipment failure can lead to mission delays or even failure," he said.

Smart logistics moves the supply chain away from human intensive paperwork and creates efficiency, allowing for synchronised movement of personnel and equipment. "Instead of waiting for a unit to report on what is required, we use operational data and inventory to anticipate the required items," he said, be it fuel or medical supplies.

Armscor was not advocating a digitised maintenance and supply chain system for the sake of change, Sebapu said, but to guarantee core capability for commanders: "The equipment must be available, the spare parts must be ready, the maintenance resources must be positioned so the force can sustain its operations."

This, he said, was the true benefit of predictive maintenance, smart logistics and a digital military supply chain – but the implementation would not be easy, with some of the challenges including, but not limited to, issues around data ownership, limited infrastructure, skills shortage, legacy platforms, funding and cultural limitations.

Repeating the quote famously attributed to a US Air Force general, Sebapu said: "we used to say ammunition, fuel and parts win wars. In 10 years, we'll say data wins wars – and predictive maintenance is how you turn raw data into combat power."

Powerful attack drones on show

In keeping with the proliferation of drones on the modern battlefield, the Czech Republic's STV Group (Stand 4CE1, Hangar 4) is showing its Demon FPV-L system and ammunition at AAD 2026 this week.

The group is continuing the tradition of military manufacturing when the 'First Military Ammunition Factory' was established in Polička in 1920. The STV Group is now the largest ammunition manufacturer in the Czech Republic.

Its Demon FPV-L is a battle-proven drone, "built on real combat experience to ensure rapid and safe deployment in demanding operational environments". It has an operational range of over 23 km without payload. Its range comes down to 11.5 km with the FPV-S60-57ED payload and a 15 km fibre-optic cable. The drone has a cruising speed of 85 km/h carrying the same payload and 8 minutes flight time. It has an operational altitude up to 100 metres above ground level.

It boasts high manoeuvrability and outstanding flight performance, which are critical for mission readiness. With its open architecture, the Demon can be quickly adapted for evolving operational conditions and mission requirements. The company states that thanks to modularity and seamless hardware integration, the Demon FPV affords maximum versatility in usage.

A smaller version, called Demon FPV-S, is also on display. Among the FPV ammunition available for these drones are the FPV-PG-7MD and 7ED anti-tank warheads, the FPV-TB-7MD and 7ED thermobaric grenades and the S60-57MD and 57ED high explosive fragmentation grenades.

The company states that its UAV-HEAT-90MD/ED anti-tank warhead, weighing 4 kg, has penetration up to 500 mm rolled homogeneous armour.





Air forces worldwide face growing pressure to produce mission-ready pilots and aircraft technicians more quickly while contending with instructor shortages, ageing fleets, rising training costs, pilot attrition and reduced flying hours. At the same time, increasingly sophisticated aircraft and evolving mission requirements demand higher levels of proficiency, safety and operational readiness. Traditional training models often struggle to meet these demands efficiently, creating a need for more scalable and integrated approaches to force generation.

Drawing on decades of experience supporting military and civil aviation operations, aerospace maintenance and aviation training programmes across multiple aircraft platforms, ST Engineering's One-Stop Flying & Maintenance Training Services addresses these challenges through a comprehensive training ecosystem. Few organisations can integrate flying training, maintenance training, simulation, digital learning, aerospace engineering expertise and AI-enabled analytics under one roof. By bringing these capabilities together within a single framework, defence organisations can accelerate competency development, improve training effectiveness and optimise the utilisation of aircraft, simulators and instructors.

For customers, this integrated approach delivers tangible operational outcomes. Commanders gain greater visibility of trainee progression, instructors can identify performance gaps earlier, and training managers can make more informed decisions on resource allocation. By linking training with operational and maintenance realities, organisations can shorten competency development timelines, improve graduation rates, optimise aircraft and simulator utilisation, and generate mission-ready personnel more efficiently.

While the challenges facing air forces are often similar, training requirements vary significantly between organisations, aircraft platforms and operational missions. ST Engineering delivers bespoke solutions closely aligned with real-world operational and sustainment requirements. This enables customers to partner with an organisation that understands the entire aviation capability lifecycle—from training and force generation to operational deployment and fleet support. Solutions can support fixed-wing, rotary-wing and mixed-fleet operations and can be customised for a spectrum of training needs.

For aircrew development, structured pathways encompass flying skills, instrument procedures, advanced aircraft handling, crew resource management, emergency procedures and mission-oriented training. Through realistic operational scenarios, trainees develop the judgement, situational awareness and decision-making skills essential for military aviation operations, creating a safer and more mission-ready aircrew pipeline. Advanced simulation and digital learning technologies further enhance training effectiveness while reducing dependence on live aircraft. High-fidelity simulators and computer-based training systems allow trainees to practise routine, abnormal and mission-specific scenarios in a safe, controlled and repeatable environment before progressing to flight operations. This broadens training opportunities, improves instructional consistency, reduces training risk and optimises aircraft utilisation.

The future of military aviation training lies not simply in more flying hours. The ecosystem is further strengthened through AI-enabled analytics and data-driven training management. Training data generated across classroom instruction, simulator sessions and flight activities can be analysed to identify performance trends, monitor proficiency and support earlier interventions. By analysing training performance across classroom, simulator and live-flight environments, instructors can identify proficiency gaps earlier and tailor interventions more effectively, helping reduce training bottlenecks and improve readiness outcomes.

Mission readiness depends not only on pilot proficiency, but also on aircraft availability and fleet reliability. Leveraging its extensive aerospace engineering heritage, ST Engineering provides comprehensive maintenance training covering aircraft systems, avionics, diagnostics, troubleshooting, inspections and sustainment practices. By developing maintainers alongside aircrew, customers benefit from improved fleet availability, enhanced safety performance and more effective sustainment operations.

As air forces face growing pressure to generate readiness more efficiently, the ability to integrate flying, maintenance, simulation and digital technologies within a single training ecosystem is becoming a strategic advantage. Through its One-Stop Flying & Maintenance Training Services, ST Engineering helps defence organisations accelerate force generation, enhance fleet readiness and build sustainable aviation capability for the future.

Visit ST Engineering at **Booth 4CW6 (Hangar 4)** during AAD 2026 to learn more.

ABOUT ST ENGINEERING

ST Engineering is a global technology, defence and engineering group serving customers in more than 100 countries. With over 50 years of aerospace expertise, ST Engineering's Defence Aerospace business provides aircraft MRO, engineering, tactical datalink, and one-stop flying & maintenance training services. The company is a Lockheed Martin-approved C-130 Hercules Service Centre and Centre of Excellence for the C-130 and L-100 fleets with comprehensive capabilities spanning maintenance, modernisation, missionisation and lifecycle support, helping operators worldwide enhance readiness, extend service life and sustain mission effectiveness.

“The spectrum enables the force, but it can also expose the force”

The question of enabling or achieving spectrum dominance was a recurring theme on the first day of the Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) 2026 Conference on 16 September. Ryno van Staden, Head of Sales and Marketing at Hensoldt GEW (Chalets 12-13), sought to address the challenge of achieving spectrum dominance in multi-domain operations, examining how land-based electronic warfare has evolved from a standalone capability into a critical enabler of integrated military operations.



Van Staden began his session, entitled ‘The future of land EW: Enabling spectrum dominance in multi-domain operations,’ by grounding his presentation in one simple question: “What design principles should shape future land EW capabilities?”

Modern systems provide invaluable opportunities to observe, understand, and act, but their electromagnetic emissions also create a risk. “The spectrum enables the force,” he said, but “it can also expose the force.”

The true challenge, he said, is not to transmit more power or more frequently, but “to use the spectrum intelligently, deliberately and in support of the mission.”

According to van Staden, the most meaningful or practical way this challenge can be addressed is for electronic warfare, cyber activity, spectrum management, intelligence and command and control capabilities to operate as part of an “integrated ecosystem”.

He pointed to the concept of Cyber Electromagnetic Activity, or CEMA, describing it as a framework that “helps connect those activities and transform information into coordinated action.” The objective, he said, “is clear: it is decision advantage.”

However, as electromagnetic spectrums proliferate, volume becomes a particularly difficult challenge to overcome. “Future electromagnetic environments will generate and is generating more information than any operator can process manually,” van Staden said.

As a result, he argued that software-defined defence has become particularly important. However, he cautioned that “software-defined defence is not simply about updating software faster. It changes the relationship between hardware and capability.”

At this point, van Staden turned to the question of AI (artificial intelligence) integration, contending that rather than replacing human judgement, the objective is to use AI integration as a means to achieve “better-informed, human decision-making.”

Returning to what he described as the core message of his presentation, namely the continual evolution of the EW environment, “these changes do not wait for scheduled acquisition cycles,” he said, adding that if there is one thing that we have learned from the Ukrainian conflict, it is that it is no longer viable to field a capability and expect to keep it for a period of time and undertake a modernisation programme at a later stage.

According to van Staden, this is where a key advantage of software-defined defence can be found. Capability, he argued, increasingly resides in “data, algorithms, and configuration,” enabling electronic warfare, cyber, ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance), and spectrum management to be reconfigured and evolve for new missions “without replacing entire systems,” as and when operational environments require.

Van Staden described his central message as “when forces understand earlier, decide faster, and act with greater confidence, they create the operational conditions required for spectrum superiority and mission success.”

“Technology creates potential, integration turns this potential into understanding, decision-making turns this understanding into action, and adaptation ensures that the advantage can be sustained as the operational environment evolves,” he added.

“The future of land electronic warfare is not fundamentally about generating more electromagnetic effects. It is not fundamentally about deploying more sensors, and it is definitely not about collecting more data. It is about creating a decision advantage within a contested electromagnetic environment,” he emphasised.



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Visit us at the 25th Africa Aerospace & Defence Show, Hangar 2, AFB Waterkloof, 16-20 September 2026

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Hensoldt introduces KENIS sensor and secures major customer order at AAD 2026

Hensoldt South Africa (Chalets 12-13) has marked the launch of its KENIS 1280 AK thermal imaging sensor as a standalone product with a significant customer agreement signed during the Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) 2026 exhibition.





Hensoldt South Africa and Estonia-based HEVI Optronics signed an agreement for the supply of 200 KENIS 1280 AK sensors, which will be integrated into HEVI's systems for long-range surveillance and Counter-Unmanned Aerial System (C-UAS) applications. The agreement builds on HEVI's previous procurement of 150 KENIS sensors and further strengthens the cooperation between the two companies.

The agreement represents an important milestone for Hensoldt South Africa as it expands the availability of the KENIS technology beyond its own optronic systems and into the wider market for high-performance sensor solutions, the company said.

"The KENIS 1280 AK has been proven in our own systems for more than five years. Making it available as a standalone sensor is a natural next step, and securing an order of this scale at AAD is a strong validation of the market opportunity," said Sunette Van Rensburg, Head of Sales, Optronics at Hensoldt South Africa.

The KENIS 1280 AK is a cooled mid-wave infrared (MWIR) thermal imaging sensor designed for long-range surveillance, target identification and C-UAS applications. It has already been deployed as a core sensor in Hensoldt's flagship ARGOS-15 and BushBaby 200 systems for more than five years.

The strategy to offer the sensor as a standalone product reflects growing demand from system integrators seeking proven, high-performance thermal imaging technology that can be incorporated into their own solutions, Hensoldt South Africa said.

The sensor is designed for integration into a broad range of applications, including stabilised airborne systems, land and naval surveillance, border and coastal security, situational awareness and C-UAS solutions. Its compact size, weight and power requirements also support integration into systems where space and available power are constrained.

At the heart of the KENIS 1280 AK is a high-resolution 1280 × 1024 MWIR detector, combined with a 30× continuous optical zoom and Hensoldt South Africa's proprietary video-processing technology. Together, these capabilities provide operators and automated systems with detailed thermal imagery for detecting, tracking and identifying targets at long range.

For HEVI Optronics, the KENIS 1280 AK forms part of its approach to delivering high-fidelity sensing capabilities for its HeviTrack-M platforms. "HEVI Optronics has standardised the integration of the KENIS 1280 sensor suite from Hensoldt South Africa to meet the growing demand for high-resolution thermal imaging in long-range detection and C-UAS applications," said Kristjan Tiimus, Chief Executive Officer of HEVI Optronics.

The KENIS 1280 AK is the first sensor from this portfolio that Hensoldt South Africa is making available as a standalone product. Its established use within Hensoldt systems provides system integrators with access to technology that has already been fielded and matured in demanding operational environments, the company said.

"The agreement with HEVI Optronics demonstrates the potential of this approach and opens further opportunities for Hensoldt South Africa to support customers developing the next generation of electro-optical and multi-sensor systems," Hensoldt South Africa said.

The company offers a comprehensive range of products, systems and services across defence and civil markets, from electronic warfare and optronics, spectrum monitoring and security solutions, to radar, IFF and datalinks. With more than 700 South African employees across five sites in South Africa, it is the Hensoldt Group's largest industrial base outside of Europe and one of the largest defence and security electronics companies in South Africa.


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Five-point plan to grow SA's defence exports

One of the many outcomes of the inaugural Defence Industry Lekgotla in July was a five-point plan to grow the South African defence industry (SADI).







The plan was presented by the Localisation and Export Commission, one of six Lekgotla work streams. Michelle Nxumalo, Chairperson of the Aerospace, Maritime and Defence Industries Association of South Africa Export Council (SAAMDEC), said the Commission believes the South African defence industry can aim to triple export sales to about R30 billion a year and to do so needs to address export growth, localisation and industrial development, national strategic alignment, arms control regulatory framework, and funding.

With regard to export growth and market expansion, Nxumalo pointed out that insufficient domestic procurement limits the development of industrial scale and export competitiveness. Stronger market intelligence is needed to penetrate key regions and obtain government-to-government support.

The Commission recommended positioning South Africa as a preferred defence partner by strengthening diplomatic channels (such as through defence attaches) to promote SADI products; integrating defence into diplomatic induction programmes; and producing intelligence reports and lead-reporting support. A contracting entity should be established for defence contracts to facilitate government-to-government deals. Furthermore, defence should be integrated into state visits and business forums: the President and Ministers should be chief promoters of SADI products in targeted markets. While there has been an increase in foreign state visits, few have had a defence component, with President Cyril Ramaphosa's visit to Brazil in March 2026 a notable exception.

Nxumalo also recommended that South African National Defence Force (SANDF) procurement should be aligned with exports so local products can be acquired by the home military, therefore strengthening export readiness.

Key departments and stakeholders required to achieve these goals include the Department of Defence (DoD), SANDF, Armscor, the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (the dtic), Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI), Denel, the Presidency and Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO).

On localisation and industrial development, Nxumalo noted that localisation programmes are applied inconsistently and are constrained by insufficient structured incentives, coordinated procurement guidance and integrated frameworks that effectively bridge domestic production. She recommended the establishment of a coordinated procurement system through Armscor for common-use equipment across the security cluster.

Products such as small calibre weapons, ammunition, personal protective equipment, textiles and ballistic equipment should be locally manufactured. Such a proposal – for the SANDF, police, correctional services and other sectors – was made years ago but never proceeded further.

The Commission also recommended establishing a mechanism whereby the Security Cluster (SANDF, Border Management Authority, South African Police Service) and Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) provide evaluation reports on market ready technologies such as armoured personnel carriers and small arms through pilot projects.

Other recommendations include establishing a Defence Skills Academy, including the South African National Service Institute (SANSI), to build relevant capabilities; establishing dedicated economic zones for defence and advanced manufacturing; and using production assets such as Denel's drone manufacturing capacity to drive joint technology development.

The arms control framework was repeatedly brought up as a hurdle during the Lekgotla, with export control bottlenecks resulting in lost contracts, penalties and reduced competitiveness. The Localisation and Export Commission recommended establishing an interdepartmental task team to develop a framework to modernise defence export regulatory processes. Administrative reform would cover the creation of a digital data repository portal; digitalisation of applications to fast-track approvals; and increasing capacity at the Directorate Conventional Arms Control (DCAC).

Regulatory reform would include a review of the National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC) and NCAC Act as well as a possible appeals committee for denied applications.

In terms of stakeholder engagement (DoD, NCACC,

DCAC, SADI), the Commission proposed hosting annual industry workshops across multiple provinces, conducting one-on-one performance reviews with companies, and establishing a forum as a central interaction point.

In terms of national strategic alignment, Nxumalo emphasised a lack of alignment between government and industry, with siloed departmental approaches hindering the development of a unified national vision for defence industrialisation.

The Commission recommended establishing a National Defence Solutions Centre as a centralised one-stop hub for defence industry advancement, export facilitation and strategic capability development. This would host regular multi-stakeholder events such as biannual defence industry days. In addition, a multi-sectoral steering committee should be established to map strengths, gaps, redundancies and opportunities across departments and industry. This would benefit from a digital coordination platform, and two or three high impact use cases used to build preconfigured turnkey solutions.

Another recommendation is to launch a formal government/industry/academia defence collaboration platform to foster integration across sectors and define collaboration agreements, data sharing protocols, intellectual property frameworks and security clearances for participants.

Key stakeholders regarding strategic alignment would be the DoD, SANDF, Armscor, DTIC, DSTI, Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), Denel, SADI, and academia. AMD has already started engaging with Unisa as an academic partner.

With regard to funding, the Commission noted limited access to finance and limited awareness of available export-risk instruments constrains exporters and weakens the sector's ability to close international opportunities. It recommended promoting existing Export Credit Insurance Corporation of South Africa (ECIC) export credit solutions to unlock commercial bank and direct foreign investment funding for exporters as well as using trade credit, working capital, bonds and credit instruments to support export transactions.

The Commission also suggested piloting a resource-based alternative defence funding model (barter agreement) and fast tracking the establishment of the South African Export-import Bank to facilitate direct lending to exporters – the Eximbank is planned to be operational in 2028.

In conclusion, Nxumalo said the Commission reached the consensus that South Africa has the industrial capability to achieve the goal of R30 billion a year in defence exports, but needs better coordination and collaboration to make this happen.



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Discover More at Stand **20N1**

Accord makes AAD debut with GNSS and anti-drone jamming systems

Bangalore-based Accord Software & Systems is using its first appearance at Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) to showcase a portfolio of electronic warfare systems that includes long-range GNSS jammers and wideband anti-drone technology, as India increasingly opens the door to pursue defence exports to friendly countries.

Accord Software & Systems may not be a new name in India's defence and aerospace industry, but its presence at AAD marks a significant development for the Bangalore-based company.

Established in 1991, Accord has traditionally built its business around software and hardware engineering, with expertise spanning avionics, satellite navigation, semiconductor technology and real-time embedded systems. It has now expanded that portfolio into electronic warfare, including satellite-navigation jamming and counter-uncrewed-aircraft systems.

The company describes its systems as having been "battle proven" through Indian defence use and said all three Indian armed services have employed its equipment.

According to Rohit Pajhal, Accord's AVP for Business Development, as the company has supplied its GNSS jamming and anti-drone systems to India's defence services, it has now received permission to engage with potential customers overseas.

Rather than selling the systems directly to an overseas customer, Accord said prospective exports are handled through Indian Government-to-Government channels.

"If we get a confirmed interest from South Africa, we take it through the Defence Attache," Pajhal explained. "Government agrees for what all things we can give. So, we give that configuration to that country."

That export opening has made AAD an important opportunity for Accord to introduce its capabilities to African and other international defence delegations.

At the centre of the company's display is its drone jammer. Pajhal claims the company's directional configuration can achieve a jamming range of 80 km and beyond, while an omni-directional configuration can provide a protective "bubble" of approximately 10-15 km around a site.

Accord said the equipment can be deployed in several configurations, including fixed ground installations, vehicles and naval platforms. The company has also developed a more compact version mounted on a Toyota Hilux for users requiring greater mobility.

A directional system could be used when the threat direction is known. Pajhal cited the example of a border area where an operator expects unmanned aircraft to approach from a particular direction.

The omni-directional configuration, meanwhile, is intended for protection of critical sites such as government facilities, refineries and air bases.

The company said its systems have already been deployed by Indian security and defence organisations, including aboard Indian Navy vessels.

One of Accord's selling points is the degree of software control built into its jamming systems. Pajhal said operators can configure the system for different engagement ranges, including settings of 20 km, 40 km and up to the system's maximum claimed range of more than 80 km. The system can also divide the available spectrum into different target bands, allowing operators to select which frequencies are to be jammed.

The company also said the system can be integrated with other battlefield sensors.

"If radar picks up something, we can integrate that input to our system. Automatically, this antenna will rotate in that direction and will start jamming," Pajhal said.

That approach is intended to allow detection and electronic attack functions to be integrated rather than operated as entirely separate systems.

The Satellite Navigation System (SNS) Jammer is designed to interfere with signals from major global navigation satellite systems, including GPS, GLONASS, BeiDou and Galileo. Accord said its system can generate GNSS jamming signals against receivers used in airborne, naval and land-based strategic systems.

"We are not doing the brute jamming kind of thing," Pajhal said, describing the system as using the company's own patented technology to operate at what he characterised as a relatively low signal level.

That capability is particularly relevant to the counter-UAS mission, where the RF environment can involve multiple drones operating simultaneously and potentially using different communications links.

The company said its anti-drone systems are already being used by Indian border-security organisations to counter unmanned aircraft carrying drugs, weapons and other illicit cargo across India's borders.

Accord's appearance at AAD comes as Indian defence manufacturers increasingly look beyond the domestic market. He said that Accord is also in discussions with potential customers in Asia and other regions, although any prospective export remains subject to Indian government approval.

For Accord, however, the message at AAD is that technologies developed initially for India's own security requirements are now being positioned for international customers.



Armscor enables SMMEs to build defence industry of the future

With Day 3 of Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) 2026 in full swing, South Africa's defence industry is showcasing its technology, unmanned systems, aircraft and engineering expertise. Yet the industry's future also depends on empowering Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) with the skills and capability to compete in this complex field.

"Transforming the defence industry cannot be simply about having emerging businesses participate. It is about empowering these businesses to participate sustainably and competitively within the defence value chain," said Armscor CEO Adv Solomzi Mbada.

The sector has high technical, compliance and capital requirements. At Armscor's March 2026 Supplier Information Day, hosted with AMD (Aerospace, Maritime and Defence Industries Association of South Africa) and WIDSA (Women in Defence South Africa), the theme "From Participation to Prosperity" highlighted the need to help SMMEs move beyond access towards sustainable growth.

Government and private sector specialists discussed funding challenges, supply chain processes and intervention strategies facing women- and youth-led SMMEs. Supplier information initiatives form part of Armscor, WIDSA and AMD's collaboration to improve transparency and access for previously excluded SMMEs.

"For Armscor, supplier information days provide the opportunity to engage with emerging enterprises. The ultimate aim is information that leads to capability, partnerships and sustainable participation. This is the progression we want to promote," said Mbada.

PROVIDING SMMES ACCESS TO MILITARY VETERANS

In August 2025, Armscor, in collaboration with the Department of Military Veterans, hosted the first Military Veterans' Supplier Information Day at the CSIR Convention Centre in Pretoria. This event sought to provide military veterans and their SMMEs access to procurement opportunities, funding and sustainable economic participation. "Armscor has been deliberate in giving military veterans access to business opportunities, skills development and enterprise support," said Mbada.

The Defence Sector Code is another framework Armscor uses to advance transformation. "The Defence Sector Code can be a catalyst to get private and public sector players to participate in empowerment initiatives and benefit veterans and their families," Mbada said. Armscor plans to hold the event annually, in addition to engaging on a regular basis in between the events.

CREATING TECHNICAL CAPABILITY THROUGH DRONES

Another example of Armscor moving from engagement to enterprise development is its Drone Pilot Training Programme. In May 2026, the programme was launched by Armscor in collaboration with Ntsu Aviation Academy as a part of Armscor's Enterprise and Supplier Development initiative. Ten selected SMMEs joined the programme, including businesses owned by women and youth and beneficiaries linked to military veterans. Mbada said participants will also receive an aviation support package, including a drone kit and operating licence, to help them establish sustainable operations.

PREPARING SMMES FOR EMERGING MARKETS

The programme is especially relevant at AAD, where unmanned technologies are central to the future of aerospace and defence. SMMEs participating in the programme include Adroit, Blu Transfuxion Logistics Solution, Coalition Trading, Drobotics Systems, Grath Tech, MaZwide Scaff and Construction, Mfalme Tembo, Telgocraft, Tlou Aviation Consulting and Nhanha Engineering.

Enabling SMMEs has strategic importance for South Africa's defence industry. As South Africa's defence acquisitions agency, Armscor depends on a supplier ecosystem able to provide the products, services, technologies and expertise the sector requires.

According to Armscor Deputy Chairperson Margaret Ndlovu, Armscor's role includes building a resilient, innovative and transformed defence industry where underrepresented groups can find their place. "In this context, AAD gives us an important opportunity to show our capabilities. When capable SMMEs are developed, the impact goes beyond individual entrepreneurs. They contribute innovation, specialised skills, employment and additional capability to the industrial base," said Mbada.

With Day 3 of AAD underway, emerging enterprises can see both the complexity of the defence industry and the opportunities it offers.

Through its initiatives, Armscor links information, skills development, enterprise support, partnerships and procurement opportunities. The objective is not to lower defence-industry standards, but to help SMMEs build the capability to meet them.

"Supplier engagements are the opportunity to unlock meaningful participation, forge partnerships, and collaborate towards building an inclusive economy," concluded Mbada.





Incomar unveils Peregrine Avionics Suite for small-to-medium UAVs and munitions

Pretoria-based aerospace engineering house Incomar has put its Peregrine Avionics Suite on display at Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) 2026, positioning the modular system as a locally developed answer to growing local and international demand for military-qualified avionics for unmanned aircraft and precision effectors

The Peregrine Avionics Suite is a rugged, military-qualified modular avionics system designed specifically for small to medium unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and munitions. At its core sits a high-performance Peregrine Flight Computer, around which Incomar has built a family of modular peripheral functions – including Air Data Sensing, Ethernet Switching and a range of platform-specific interfaces.

The result, according to Incomar, is a scalable avionics architecture that can be tailored to a variety of platforms and mission requirements without forcing integrators back to the drawing board for each new platform.

A MODULAR ARCHITECTURE FOR A FRAGMENTED MARKET

The small-to-medium UAV and loitering-munition segment has become one of the most contested in global defence, with operators demanding platforms that are cheaper, faster to field and easier to sustain than traditional manned aviation. Common to almost all of these programmes is the need for a trusted, qualified avionics stack that can be dropped into different airframes with minimal re-engineering.

Peregrine is aimed squarely at that need, Incomar said. Rather than a single avionics unit, it is a suite: a flight computer as the anchor, with modular peripherals stacked around it to suit the platform. Air Data Sensing supports the flight control and navigation loops, Ethernet Switching handles onboard data distribution, and platform-specific interfaces allow integration with mission payloads, effectors and ground links.

Incomar described the offering as providing "a complete avionics solution ready for integration into any platform" – language that reflects the company's broader turnkey approach to system integration.

BUILT ON INCOMAR'S FLIGHT-TEST HERITAGE

Founded in 1999, Incomar started life as a flight test and integration organisation and has since grown into a full-service aerospace engineering company. Its in-house disciplines now span aircraft and unmanned aerial platform development; avionics, electronics and software; ground control and mission planning systems; airborne test pod development; missile system components and sub-systems; aircraft stores integration and release clearance; and experimental flight test.

Crucially for a system like Peregrine, the company can fully test and implement its own hardware and software using in-house flight test aircraft, military-trained Class I and II experimental test pilots and flight test engineers. That means the avionics suite is not just designed and manufactured locally – it can be flight-qualified locally as well, an important consideration for customers wary of long overseas certification loops.

PART OF A WIDER UNMANNED PORTFOLIO

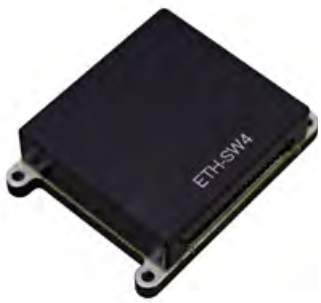
Peregrine is displayed at AAD 2026 alongside the rest of Incomar's unmanned and mission-systems portfolio, including the IBIS reusable jet-powered aerial target, the Gannet family of one-way attack munitions, the SAHM quadcopter interceptor, the Portable Ground Control System (PGCS) and the IMPACT mission planning and ground control software suite.

Viewed together, the product line describes a coherent local capability stack – from airframes and effectors, through avionics and ground control, to mission planning software – that positions Incomar as a growing South African player in the modular unmanned systems space, the company emphasised.

The Peregrine Avionics Suite is on show at the Project CLASSS stand in Hangar 2.







Safomar Aviation Group looks to the future as it celebrates 40 years at AAD

Safomar Aviation Group (Chalets 17-19) marked a milestone week at Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) 2026, celebrating four decades of heritage, completing a landmark Enstrom 480B handover, and demonstrating the collective strength of the Group's integrated aviation and aerospace capabilities at Air Force Base Waterkloof.

As AAD enters its final trade day, Safomar reflects on a week defined by meaningful engagement, strong industry interest and a celebration of the people, partnerships and achievements that have shaped the Group over 40 years. The Safomar cocktail function set the tone, honouring the organisation's journey while looking ahead with confidence to the next four decades of growth, collaboration and opportunity.

The evening also revealed the meaning behind the name Safomar, answering a question often posed to the Group: Southern African Flight & Aerospace Operations Maintenance Aviation Resources.

However, beyond the acronym, the name carries deeper heritage. Safo, derived from "safe", reflects Safomar's unwavering commitment to safety, care and responsibility, while mar, drawn from "maritime", speaks to the Group's origins and its longstanding connection to the sea.

SIGNIFICANT PARTNERSHIP MILESTONE

A highlight of the celebration was the official handover of the new Enstrom 480B (ZT-RSY) to SAPY. Safomar Group CEO Shai Shalem and SAPY Managing Director Majid Zarrebini addressed guests during the ceremony, marking another significant milestone in their partnership and in the continued growth of the Enstrom platform across Southern Africa.

"AAD allows us to celebrate where we have come from, but more importantly to show the market where Safomar is going. Bringing our businesses, partners, aircraft and technologies together in one environment demonstrates the strength of the Group and the value of an integrated African capability. As we enter our 40th year, we are proud of our heritage and genuinely excited about the next 40 years," said Shalem.

Zarrebini commented: "SAPY is proud to mark the delivery of the new civilian Enstrom 480B in South Africa alongside Safomar Aviation Group as they celebrate an impressive 40 years in aviation. This milestone reflects the strength of our relationship with Enstrom Helicopter Corporation as a local brand ambassador, and Safomar's long-standing impressive role in representing and supporting the Enstrom brand in Africa."

Across the trade days, Safomar's static display at AAD drew substantial interest. The showcase features a diverse collection of rotor-wing and fixed-wing aircraft, including a UH-1D Super D sold by Safomar Aviation, multiple Enstrom 480Bs and 280FXs, and aircraft from the Safomar Aviation Operations training fleet.

INTEGRATED VALUE PROPOSITION

The Safomar chalet has further reinforced the Group's integrated value proposition. By bringing all business units under one roof, Safomar demonstrates that it is not a collection of standalone entities, but a unified organisation capable of connecting aviation, aerospace, maintenance, training, flight operations, technical support, advanced technologies and specialist resources through a single network.

Visitors also engaged directly with demonstration models and equipment from DroneShield, Shield AI and Eagle Copters, alongside booths staffed by representatives from L3Harris, Trakka, Helitune, Enstrom, Goodyear Aviation Tyres and other Safomar partners. Together, they form a concentrated showcase of the products, services and technologies available through Safomar Aviation Group.

NETWORKING AND ENGAGEMENT

One of the strongest outcomes of AAD 2026 has been the quality of networking and direct engagement. Face-to-face discussions with government representatives, defence organisations, operators, OEMs, partners and industry leaders, both African and international, have been productive, insightful and commercially meaningful.

For Safomar, AAD remains a uniquely relevant platform, offering a diverse, high-value market environment in which the Group can demonstrate not only individual offerings, but how its collective capabilities integrate to deliver end-to-end solutions. These engagements have strengthened existing relationships, opened new commercial pathways and created opportunities that will extend well beyond the exhibition.

As the final trade day begins, Safomar's focus remains on deepening those conversations and building on the momentum of the week. The celebration marked 40 years of Safomar, and the opportunities emerging at AAD 2026 are already helping shape the next 40.



Armscor calls for deeper trust and collaboration between state and industry

Sipho Mbhokota, Armscor COO, speaking on the second day of this year's Africa Aerospace and Defence Conference at Air Force Base Waterkloof, focused not only on the importance of effective acquisition for modern militaries but also on the challenges and opportunities involved.

His session was entitled 'From defence requirement to operational capability: The role of strategic acquisition'. A particular highlight came during a question-and-answer session. Asked what trust between the public and private defence sector practically means for day-to-day operations, Mbhokota said, "currently, we sit with an acquisition process that only starts engaging industry at a further stage. Industry itself is not aware in terms of the pipeline that is coming through, and in certain instances we sit in a situation where you find industry was not ready to fulfil the requirement."

According to Mbhokota, this failure to involve industry early in the process has sometimes meant that the state has had to import solutions.

"I don't understand why we have to be that secretive about what we see of the future, what we plan for the future. Yet we expect from a government or public sector perspective, we expect industry to be reactive and to be able to fulfil those requirements," he said.

Allowing industry to see potential future defence pipeline needs would allow for industry to better prepare for them, and help avoid costly procurement errors.

"Industry knows slightly more about technologies than their users," he said, arguing that they may be able to offer advice based on which government or defence could avoid procuring something that may be redundant in the short to medium term.

Mbhokota concluded by reiterating his call for action: "We need to think differently, we need to act differently, and we need to act together."

"We can never get to a situation where we allow AI to run away with us"

The world is on an exponentially accelerating timeline towards Artificial General Intelligence but there is not enough debate about the inherent dangers of that, according to Wayne Dalton, Senior AI officer at the Cyber Security Institute.

"We can never get to a situation where we allow Artificial Intelligence (AI) to run away with us," he said at the Future of Warfare Symposium on the first day of the Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) 2026 Conference at Air Force Base Waterkloof.

The development of AI has occurred in three waves with the first wave being classical AI, using machine learning, while the second wave was a narrow application blending supervised and unsupervised learning and the third type is reinforcement learning, the most powerful form of AI.

"The world was underestimating the scope, scale and speed of AI evolution," said Dalton adding, "this is the time we should be talking about what it means when we talk about human control."

The Global Commission on Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain (GC REAIM) on which Dalton served, came up with four variations on the meaning of human control that goes beyond humans mechanically approving what is happening to human agency.

"If you want human control, you need human agency, you need legal accountability and you need moral responsibility."

Meaningful human control can be divided up into four different situations of human agency: human in the loop (low autonomy), human on the loop (active supervisor), human in command (preset parameters managing risk) and finally human out of the loop where AI is fully autonomous.

It was vital, he said, to distinguish between AI capability and use cases and to help do this, he and his team came up with Military AI Responsibility Contextualisation (MARC) framework to create the context to allow for responsible use.

The context looks at three axes; the spectrum of conflict (peace, war or grey area), the type of war (offensive kinetic or non-kinetic, defensive kinetic or non-kinetic or service and support) and finally the domain (sea, air, land or cyber) to properly define the problem and its responsible solution.

The GC REAIM had come up with five core recommendations. These include the enforcement of strict guardrails prohibiting AI from autonomously selecting and engaging targets; banning AI from nuclear command and control; the implementation of responsibility by design; embedding legal and ethical safeguards; and the standardisation of testing, evaluation, verification and validation.

"We have to invest in our defence colleges and the military academy. We should be investing in data literacy and AI literacy for our tactical components, not just our technical teams," he concluded.



Ammunition stockpile management for defence readiness

Ammunition stockpile management is increasingly becoming a strategic defence readiness issue. For defence forces across Africa, the challenge is no longer how much ammunition is held in storage, but whether that ammunition is safe, secure, serviceable, operationally relevant and sustainable throughout its lifecycle.

Large and ageing stockpiles can create significant safety, security, financial and operational risks. Ammunition that is poorly stored, inadequately monitored or retained beyond its useful service life can become a liability rather than an operational asset. At the same time, disposing of ageing ammunition and replacing it entirely can place significant pressure on constrained defence budgets.

"The strategic answer is therefore to move from a predominantly reactive approach to integrated ammunition lifecycle management," said Maximilian Froch, CEO of Rheinmetall Denel Munition (RDM – Chalet 37).

FROM STOCKPILING TO LIFECYCLE MANAGEMENT

A modern ammunition management system should consider the complete lifecycle of ammunition: planning, acquisition, production, storage, accounting, surveillance, maintenance, operational use, replenishment, demilitarisation and disposal.

"The critical question should not simply be: How much ammunition do we have? It should be: How much ammunition do we have that is safe, secure, serviceable, operationally relevant and sustainable?" Froch emphasised.

SAFE AND SECURE STORAGE

"Ammunition storage is the first line of defence in managing stockpile risk," Froch explained. "Appropriately designed ammunition storage facilities provide the physical environment required to protect personnel, communities and the ammunition itself."

RDM has capabilities relevant to the design and development of ammunition storage infrastructure, supporting defence in addressing both safety and capacity requirements.

KNOWING THE CONDITION OF THE STOCKPILE

One of the most important elements of lifecycle management is shelf-life surveillance. Froch pointed out: "A structured surveillance programme can establish a baseline of the stockpile and assess ammunition according to its technical condition, age, configuration and serviceability. This enables defence to make investment decisions based on evidence rather than assumptions."

EXTENDING THE LIFE OF EXISTING CAPABILITY

"An ageing ammunition item should not automatically be regarded as an item that must be discarded," Froch noted. "Where technically feasible and economically justified, ammunition may be suitable for upgrades, refurbishment, requalification or shelf-life extension."

DEMILITARISATION AS RISK REDUCTION

Where ammunition is obsolete, unsafe, surplus or technically beyond economic recovery, controlled demilitarisation becomes an essential part of stockpile management. "Strategically, demilitarisation should be viewed as the controlled removal of risk from the defence stockpile," Froch explained.

PRODUCTION CAPACITY AS PART OF STOCKPILE MANAGEMENT

Stockpile management cannot be separated from ammunition production capacity. Froch stressed: "A defence force requires an appropriate balance between stockholding, consumption, replenishment requirements and available industrial production capacity. Stockpile management and industrial capacity should therefore be considered together."

TOWARDS A PROACTIVE MODEL

"The strategic objective must be to shift defence away from a transactional model of acquire, store, accumulate, dispose and towards a proactive, integrated lifecycle approach," Froch said.

This modern framework plan (store, surveil, extend, use, replenish and demilitarise) ensures readiness is sustained, relevance is preserved, and risk is reduced across every stage of capability management.

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE DEFENCE READINESS

"Ammunition should not simply be managed as a stockpile. It should be managed as a lifecycle capability: safe, secure, serviceable, sustainable and ready when required," Froch concluded.



ShadowfaxUAS unveils SF45 VTOL fixed wing UAV

ShadowfaxUAS has officially launched the first and largest of its three latest-generation unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), the SF45. Building on the company's earlier SF30 UAV, the long-endurance Group 3 fixed-wing VTOL (Vertical Take-Off and Landing) UAV represents a significant step forward for the South African unmanned aerial systems manufacturer, offering a heavier-payload and longer-range capacity for persistent intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) operations.



Founded in 2020, the Cape Town-based ShadowfaxUAS is an independent, privately owned and funded UAV manufacturer with in-house control over the entire development and production cycle, from airframe design to composite manufacturing, avionics integration and testing.

In response to changing market requirements and international geopolitical shifts, ShadowfaxUAS over the course of two years developed two different long-endurance platforms. The SF45 was developed as a heavier-payload Group 3 platform alongside the yet-to-be-launched SF25, a smaller Group 2 offering which will be available with electric and petrol propulsion formats.

The SF45 has a 40 kg maximum weight, a maximum 8 kg payload capacity and a 4.3 metre wingspan. The aircraft has a datalink range of up to 150 km. When carrying a 1.5 to 3 kg payload, the aircraft has a maximum 10 hour flight endurance, depending on configuration, enabling a sortie range of over 1 000 km at a maximum altitude of 3 000 metres.

A key hallmark of this generation of ShadowfaxUAS UAVs is their patented quick-swap forward propulsion system that allows the entire propulsion unit to be swapped out, in the field, in less than a minute, which maximises platform availability and utilisation, and which also allows the propulsion unit to be easily maintained in a workshop environment.

In addition, the SF45 also employs ShadowfaxUAS's patented payload balancing technology which maximises duration by eliminating the need for ballast while enabling easy payload exchanges in the field.

The SF45 has been primarily designed around ISR operations, with obvious use cases including communications relay, signals intelligence and maritime patrol and surveillance, as well as counter-poaching and counter-insurgency operations. The SF45 can also be used in a range of alternative settings, such as mining, agriculture, and conservation, where it can monitor far larger areas than multi-copter UAVs.

The SF45 is ITAR (International Traffic in Arms Regulations [United States]) free and competitively priced when compared to premium Western systems of similar mission capability, positioning it well for the export and domestic markets.

Over the course of the next several months, and once the requisite performance validation testing has been completed, ShadowfaxUAS's product range is set to be expanded with the launch of two smaller Group 2 fixed wing VTOL UAVs, the SF25E (electric) and SF25G (petrol and electric). Like the SF45, these UAVs have been developed entirely in-house. Payload for the SF25 series is 4 kg (all-up weight is 25 kg) and wingspan 2.98 metres.





AISI celebrates 20 years of strengthening SA's aerospace industry

The Aerospace Industry Support Initiative (AISI) is marking 20 years of being a key enabler of innovation, localisation and industrial growth across South Africa's aerospace, defence and marine sectors.

The government-funded initiative has evolved over the past two decades from a niche aerospace support programme into a broader catalyst for advanced manufacturing. Funded by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (the dtic) and hosted by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), AISI was established in 2006 with an original focus on aeronautics and defence. Today, its mandate has expanded to include marine and other advanced manufacturing industries, prompting discussions around renaming the programme to the Advanced Industry Support Initiative to better reflect its wider role.

Rather than competing with universities or research institutions, AISI focuses on supporting industry partners while facilitating collaboration across South Africa's national system of innovation. Companies can partner with universities and the CSIR, with AISI providing funding to the industrial partner while helping facilitate access to specialist expertise where required.

The programme's objectives extend beyond technology development to include technology-based supplier development, industrialisation of technology, transformation, job creation, import substitution and export promotion.

Through its Aerospace and Defence Programme, AISI provides funding of up to R1.725 million per project, including VAT, for technology development projects at Technology Readiness Level 4 or higher. Additional support is available for process optimisation and standards accreditation for SMMEs (Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises). However, feasibility studies, equipment purchases, software licences and infrastructure development fall outside the programme's mandate.

Several recent success stories include OnTrack Technologies, which developed and integrated an electric self-launch propulsion system for the Jonker Sailplanes JS2 glider, positioning South Africa among the few countries capable of producing electric propulsion systems for light aircraft. The project also supports the growing global shift towards greener aviation technologies. OnTrack Technologies has also used AISI support to help Jonker Sailplanes develop a near-vibration-less aircraft engine, and its JS5 glider.

Avior Labs received support to industrialise production of its Elevation unmanned aerial vehicle, enabling higher production rates while reducing manufacturing costs and lead times. The UAV has subsequently achieved the necessary South African Civil Aviation Authority approvals for commercial operation.

Other examples included Lightweight Structures' work on composite radar enclosures for Hensoldt's next-generation marine radar systems, and LS Multicopter Projects and Services, which developed a radio frequency direction-finding antenna capable of supporting border security and defence applications. Both projects have already generated commercial interest, with international sales underway and follow-on development continuing.





More efficient permit system needed for SA defence industry

Enhancing the efficiency, predictability, and responsiveness of the defence permit approval system is needed to strengthen South Africa's position as a trusted and responsible defence exporter in a time of huge export demand, the Aerospace, Maritime and Defence Industries Association (AMD) of South Africa maintains.





Speaking at the inaugural Defence Industry Lekgotla in July, AMD Executive Director Sandile Ndlovu told the 300 attendees that South Africa already possesses the defence industrial capability to compete globally but requires regulatory certainty.

"The challenge is whether we can collectively create an enabling environment that allows this capability to flourish at the pace demanded by an increasingly competitive global marketplace," he said. "Today, a defence contract is won long before the first piece of equipment leaves a production line. It is won through speed. It is won through credibility. It is won through certainty. It is won because governments and customers have confidence that commitments made will be commitments honoured."

He emphasised that competitiveness is no longer determined solely by the quality of the products South Africa manufactures - it is increasingly determined by the efficiency of the ecosystem within which those products are conceived, developed, certified, financed, marketed and exported. One of those components, perhaps one of the most important, is regulatory certainty, Ndlovu said.

He reiterated that the National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC) performs an indispensable function, ensuring South Africa is a responsible exporter of defence products and adheres to international law and ethical governance. "Industry is therefore not advocating for weaker regulation. Nor are we asking Government to compromise oversight. What industry seeks is a regulatory environment that is predictable, responsive and internationally competitive."

Around the world, defence procurement has become increasingly time-sensitive. Customers expect certainty and programme schedules are often measured in weeks rather than months. Production planning depends upon predictable approval processes. Delivery commitments influence future contracts. In such an environment, delays, however well intentioned, carry commercial consequences. An export opportunity postponed is often an export opportunity lost. "The international marketplace does not pause while administrative processes are completed. It simply moves on," he cautioned. "For that reason, we respectfully submit that enhancing the efficiency, predictability and responsiveness of the permit approval system will strengthen, and not weaken South Africa's position as a trusted and responsible defence exporter."

Michelle Nxumalo, CEO of the AMD Export Council (SAAMDEC), said NCACC bottlenecks and challenges are well documented and have resulted in many lost contracts over the years. Solutions are required so South Africa can compete globally.

Speaking during a breakaway Lekgotla session, Ndlovu highlighted that the last time NCACC legislation was reviewed was in 2012 – it is supposed to be reviewed every decade to keep pace with developments, but was not reviewed in 2022 as prescribed. One of the biggest challenges is the NCACC committee only meets once a month, meaning it can take months for an export or import permit to be approved – something not helped by the fact that the ministers on the committee have very little time available to process applications.

The Lekgotla heard that some countries put certain items on a green list and certain countries on red and green lists, which significantly speeds up exports as not every item has to be approved one at a time. In China, for example, it is possible to obtain a permit within three weeks – in some European countries it can be five days, but in South Africa it can easily take three months. In one instance with Poland, a 155 mm ammunition export permit was put on hold for years, resulting in Poland cancelling the contract with Rheinmetall Denel Munition and turning to another supplier.

Ndlovu said that while AMD works well with the Directorate for Conventional Arms Control (DCAC), the NCACC Act needs to be brought up to date to improve competitiveness. AMD has estimated that billions of rands worth of exports could be unlocked if export permit processes are streamlined.

In conclusion, Ndlovu said that together with Government, the defence industry can restore confidence in South Africa's defence industrial capability. "Together, let us position our country among the world's most respected defence manufacturing nations. Together, let us create sustainable sovereign capabilities that strengthen the South African National Defence Force while opening new international markets. Together, let us build factories that create jobs, laboratories that generate innovation, and technologies that carry the South African flag into markets across the world."

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Denel making progress with Middle Eastern G6 upgrade

Denel is making steady progress with a nearly R2 billion G6 howitzer upgrade for a client in the Middle East, which includes building an upgrade facility in the customer country.



The $105 million (R1.7 billion) contract covers vehicle upgrades (hydraulics, electrical systems, air conditioner), new powerpack, fire control system (gun control, laying and navigation, software, and electrical systems) as well as integrated logistic support, testing, evaluation, and integration.

Delivery of the upgrade facility is due to take place in March 2027, with the delivery of the first battery of upgraded vehicles in June 2028, to be followed by a second battery in June 2029, and a third in June 2030.

The project is divided into two phases: one in South Africa and one in the client's home country. South African activities include modification of the first vehicle, technical evaluation, operator and maintenance training, and design and manufacture of the upgrade facility in the customer country.

Phase two includes commissioning of the upgrade facility in the customer country, the upgrade and servicing of the guns, delivery of upgraded G6s, training, and interim support. The whole project is expected to take five years and involve 18 G6s. To date, the first upgraded vehicle has been completed and finalisation of the project baseline is due in December.

The 155 mm G6 6×6 self-propelled artillery system was, at the time of its introduction into service in the late 1980s, regarded as one of the most mobile self-propelled howitzers ever developed – road speed is 85 km/h and cross-country speed 30 km/h. The G6 is in service with the South African Army (67 delivered), United Arab Emirates (78 delivered), and Oman (24 delivered).

The towed G5 and self-propelled G6 remain among the most effective artillery systems in the world today – in November 2019 a G6 set a record by firing a velocity-enhanced projectile out to 76 km. Range with standard high explosive rounds fired from a 45 calibre barrel is 30 km, 39 km with base bleed, 42 km with 52 calibre base bleeds rounds, and over 50 km with velocity-enhanced long range projectiles.

Schmidt & Bender launches regional marketing push for rifle scopes

Schmidt & Bender (Stand 3W7, Hangar 3), the German manufacturer of high-end rifle scopes, has launched a regional marketing effort to sell its scopes to militaries in Southern Africa.

The manufacturer of high-end scopes distributes its hunting and competition shooting scopes in South Africa through Ultra Nexus.

As part of its new push to sell scopes into the regional defence market, Schmidt & Bender took a stand at Africa Aerospace and Defence 2026, the first time it has done so since 2014.

The company's initial target markets in southern Africa for its military scopes are Angola, Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa. The company has appointed Thomas Burchert, a former German Navy Captain, as its senior consultant to market its scopes in the region. Burchert was the German military attaché in South Africa from 2009-12 and from 2022 to 2025.

The family-owned company was founded in 1957 and began making military scopes in the late 1970s. Its range of scopes includes those for use on assault rifles and sniper platforms. Its best-selling military scope is the 5-25x56 PMII rifle scope, which is used by military, police, and special forces in the US, UK, France, Germany, South Korea, Italy, Canada, Lithuania, and 20 other countries.

Burchert said Schmidt & Bender is the most used rifle scope brand among NATO members. Part of the reason for this is the ability of the company's scopes to withstand the harshest conditions.

Schmidt & Bender scopes sell at a premium compared to those of other manufacturers, but the company argues that their high quality means that their lifecycle costs are ultimately lower.

The German armed forces require that the rifles they use should last 15 000 shots before replacement. Burchert said there are many cases of the company's scopes lasting for more than 100 000 shots, and some of the company's military scopes have been in service for more than 20 years.



CSIR studies Ratel modernisation

The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR – Stand 4W10, Hangar 4) has been examining a possible life extension of the South African Army's Ratel infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs) as a research tasking.

According to Sipho Mbhokota, former Executive Manager of the CSIR's Defence and Security Cluster, the Defence Materiel Division's Directorate Technology Development (DTD) asked the CSIR to assess options on how it can examine extending the useful life of the Ratel.

A request for information (RFI) was issued last year in this regard by the CSIR as a research study. The CSIR's Landward Defence Evaluation and Research Institute (LDERI) receives funding from the Department of Defence to provide the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) with fast and easy access to a sound and experienced knowledge base at the CSIR. With this expertise at hand, the Department of Defence is supported in defining future operational requirements, making smart acquisition choices and exploring and developing leading-edge technologies, the CSIR explained. LDERI areas of work cover Mobility, Vehicle and Crew Survivability, Firepower and Soldier systems.

While Mbhokota said the CSIR was not at liberty to share RFI findings, he did say the CSIR had presented them to the Landward Technology Steering Committee.

The RFI invited qualified bidders to propose suitable Ratel modernisation solutions, either through an upgrade programme and/or a life extension programme. "The information gathered through this exercise will enable an understanding of the available modernisation options, industry capabilities, cost structures, and implementation considerations relevant to addressing Ratel IFV component obsolescence and performance," the RFI stated.

Project Hoefyster to replace the SA Army's Ratels has been delayed significantly. Consequently, the SANDF has had to consider alternatives over the short to medium term, including possible Ratel modernisation. Several local companies have already developed Ratel upgrade/modernisation solutions, such as OTT Solutions with its Ratel SLEP (Service Life Extension Programme). This upgrade is focusing on a new sighting system and engine and transmission.



Sherp to the rescue

The utility of the 4x4 Sherp multi-purpose amphibious vehicle – locally marketed by DCD Defence - was once again evident in a rescue operation in the Drakensberg mountains.

Following heavy snowfall in mid-August that left four hikers and a caretaker stranded at the Sentinel Peak Car Park, DCD Defence made a Sherp available to rescue teams, which included members of SARZA, a volunteer search and rescue organisation. The Sherp, along with SARZA 4x4s fitted with snow chains, braved snow, rain and gale-force winds to reach the stranded hikers and bring everyone down safely.

The mid-August rescue, following an extreme cold front that brought snow, rain and strong wind to much of South Africa, was not the first in KwaZulu-Natal. In September 2024, DCD deployed a Sherp following heavy snowfall that amongst others trapped motorists on the Van Reenen Pass.

The Sherp was also in action along South Africa's borders over the 2026 Easter period, when DCD Defence deployed the Sherp and two Springbuck armoured vehicles to support the operations of the Border Management Authority (BMA) at select border posts. The capability of the Sherp to move in difficult terrain was cited as a factor in enhancing the effectiveness of the BMA's border patrols.

The Sherp multi-purpose amphibious vehicle is offered by DCD for military, search and rescue, mining, private and other applications. It is manufactured by Quadro International. In 2018 the company became an official provider for the United Nations and in 2019 received a UN award. More than a thousand vehicles have been sold around the world – most customers are non-private entities, including NGOs and mining companies.

The Sherp Pro can carry six people or more than 1 000 kg payload. It has a top speed of 40 km/h on land and 6 km/h on water. It can operate in -40 to +40 degree conditions. The vehicle is equipped with a unique air-circulation system that uses exhaust gases to inflate or deflate the tyres as required. The tyres are connected by a pneumatic circuit that allows the driver to adjust the tire pressure to different terrains and payloads.



SAS Isandlwana refit to be completed in 2027

Armscor and the South African Navy have set the new date for the completion of the SAS Isandlwana's refit as October 2027, leaving the SAS Amatola as the current operational Valour class frigate in the SA Navy.

Contracted out to Sandock Austral Shipyards, the refit has been beset by delays from the onset, with even the start date having been delayed by two months to May 2024. The project is approximately halfway complete, with more than R178 million spent of R597 million budgeted for the project.

There are a number of reasons for the delays, including original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) with long lead times, and the identification of additional OEM repairs as well as "scope creep". The most prominent example of consequences of this scope creep involves the Isandlwana's engines. The OEM, Rolls-Royce, made it clear that the work required to overhaul the twin main propulsion units would require them to be shipped to Turkey. The overhaul is expected to be completed in March 2027, with the units expected to return by May 2027.

Renk, the OEM, has advised Armscor and the Navy that the ship's principal gearbox requires a major overhaul as a result of a foreign object which had passed through the main toothing, damaging two teeth. At present, Renk's estimated timeline for the repairs and overhaul is 18 months, potentially pushing the SAS Isandlwana's refit completion date back to March 2028. However, discussions are underway to reduce this timeline.

Despite delays, the SAS Isandlwana refit has recorded a number of meaningful achievements. These include the successful completion of the hull blasting and prime coating processes, tolerance checks on the controllable-pitch propeller shaft having been carried out, the W6 maintenance and overhaul of Diesel Generator 2 having been successfully completed, while the Water-Jet overhaul has started.

The SAS Amatola is the only one of four SA Navy Valour class frigates operational. At the beginning of 2026 she embarked on the South African Navy's first external deployment in a decade, a 98-day voyage that took the frigate to Visakhapatnam, India, in February 2026, to participate in the prestigious International Fleet Review (IFR) 2026 and Exercise Milan. On the return voyage, Amatola conducted goodwill visits to China, Malaysia, Kenya and Tanzania.




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