

Two new helicopters to service ports of Durban, Richards Bay

Transnet National Ports Authority (TNPA) has commissioned Leonardo S.p.A., formerly Leonardo-Finmeccanica, Finmeccanica and AgustaWestland, to manufacture, supply, and deliver two new helicopters to service the Ports of Durban and Richards Bay. The AgustaWestland (AW 109) helicopters, valued at around R250 million, are expected to be delivered by June 2019.



The AW109 series includes a twin engine and a harbour pilot kit that features a hoist to enable this unique operation.

Leonardo S.p.A. is an Italian global high-tech company headquartered in Rome and is described as one of the key players in aerospace, defence, and security. South Africa is understood to be one of only three countries in the world that offer the unique Helicopter Marine Pilotage Service.

TNPA chief executive, Shulami Qalinge, said: “Richards Bay and Durban are the only ports in our complementary port system which use helicopters to transfer marine pilots onto and off visiting vessels. We have an existing fleet of three AW109 helicopters and this purchase forms part of the Fleet Replacement Programme.

“We are therefore delighted that we are now in a position to respond to long-time industry calls. The acquisition of new helicopters has been a priority for us under the Transnet Market Demand Strategy which among others seeks to improve operational efficiency and safety in our ports.”

The contract for the new helicopters includes a 25% supplier development obligation by the global supplier to ensure that the contract creates socio-economic benefits within South Africa. These would include job creation, skills development and where the possible use of local, empowered companies and local materials or parts.

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