

# Simon's Town naval base to become 'government garage'

Simon's Town naval base will become the 'garage' for the maintenance of the government's maritime fleets. This, announced by President Jacob Zuma in his State of the Nation speech last week, is set to inject billions of rands into maritime development and skills training.



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The announcement was cautiously welcomed, but there was also concern about the potential involvement of a Chinese company in the project.

Zuma said the navy was preparing to adopt the 'government garage' concept for all state-owned vessels in Simon's Town. This, he said, included the maintenance and repair of government-owned vessels through the NavyArmscor-Denel partnership.

The concerns, though, are around the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Denel and Poly Technologies, a Chinese business.

## The agreement

The agreement, signed in September, is focused on Simon Town's dockyard management and helping to rebuild the country's maritime capabilities.

The memorandum has positioned the two businesses well in terms of securing construction deals for the building of offshore and inshore naval maritime patrol boats.

Defence analyst Helmoed Heitman welcomed the move to create a 'maritime garage'. "This is long overdue. There is a desperate need for such a facility." But he cautioned against allowing the Chinese "or any other foreign power" to gain a foothold in a strategic asset such as a naval dockyard.

*Source: The Times*

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