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South African Air Force Intercontinental Air Transport System: In Support of Diplomacy

Internationally Africa is perceived as a continent with huge untapped potential. It is therefore high on the international agenda. South Africa is perceived as either one of the key players on the continent or, for some, the gateway to Africa. From this perspective South Africa must have an excellent capability to maintain diplomatic relations with BRICS, the AU, African Nations and others. Related activities can take the form of, for example, trade delegations to South Africa's trading partners, diplomatic interventions between conflicting sides in Africa or participation in urgent international security planning sessions. Promoting security in Africa has a major and long term peace dividend. The return on an investment in security for Africa and South Africa is substantial.

The South African Air Force (SAAF) is required to provide a mission ready intercontinental air transport capability. The requirement is urgent and important. Over the past few years, the availability of the inter-continental aircraft of SAAF has been problematic making it difficult for the SAAF to fulfil its responsibility. The absence of the Boeing Business Jet (BBJ) and other VIP aircraft for four months during its scheduled maintenance periods aggravates the vulnerability of the SAAF in providing the indicated service. The chartering option proved unreliable and introduced certain risks. There is an increased requirement for long range flights to the Far East and other parts of the world. During such long flights teams should be able to work and have the ability to communicate securely. In the case of flights involving representatives of the RSA interacting with other countries, the ability to arrive fresh at a destination across multiple time zones, is important.

The SA Air Force therefore has a need to increase their current capacity to provide intercontinental air transportation to members of the SA Government. The current fleet of VIP aircraft cannot sustain the current air transport requests from the SAAF VIP clients, as tasked. The aircraft is operated by 21 Squadron, AFB Waterkloof in Centurion/Pretoria. The operating conditions out of this base have a key effect on the ability of the aircraft to achieve maximum payload/range due to density altitude constraints during the hot summer months. The Required Operational Capability (ROC) for the capacitation of VIP transportation, dated 24 January 2012, was approved.

The additional capacity will complement the current capability. Therefore the Request For Information (RFI) is intended to provide information on both a 5500 Nm and 7200 Nm capability with 18 or 30 passengers respectively.

The published Request for Information is aimed at obtaining information that will assist Armscor in identifying possible options to satisfy the South African Air Force's (SAAF's) requirement to expand their current intercontinental VIP transport capability. The RFI aims to obtain information on the affordability of different options and different finance options of the eventually selected option. It is not a binding document. The leasing of used aircraft as an interim solution is an option to ensure availability of aircraft by March 2016, possibly followed by the purchasing of long term solutions.

Once the information has been received and analysed, the tender process will start with a Request for Proposal.

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