

Orlando poised for M&S growth

Orlando, Fla., economic development officials say their region, already regarded as the biggest hub for military training and simulation in the world, could stretch its muscles even more as manufacturing jobs increase amid an already-strong engineering presence in the area.

The Orlando region, which has about 150 companies and roughly 17,000 industry employees involved in military and commercial training and simulation, according to local officials, has always been strong on the services side, said Russ Hauck, executive director of the National Center for Simulation, which is based in the city. "But now we're seeing more manufacturing being done here than has ever been before," he said.

Hauck said he believes Orlando has been too skewed on the services' side of modeling and simulation, but a homegrown manufacturing base — bolstered in part by a wave of incoming medical simulation-related jobs — bodes well for diversity for the future.

Medical simulation has a promising future, Hauck said, and the central Florida region is moving to grab a good share of the market. The University of Central Florida is building a new medical school, the U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command has increased medical simulation

work, and companies such as Forterra Systems are establishing a presence locally. And the Department of Veterans Affairs is building a new hospital.

"All of that will touch Orlando in many different ways and that will include simulation," said Jackie Kelvington, a consultant for the Metro Orlando Economic Development Commission.

The Army's Program Executive Office for Simulation, Training & Instrumentation is based in Orlando, and its annual control over military contracts is expected to increase to about \$3 billion annually over the next few years. That office drives much training and simulation spending within the service and, combined with having the Naval Air Warfare Center's Training Systems Division and the Marine Corp Systems Command Program Manager for Training Systems based there, puts Orlando in good shape, according to Hauck.

Hauck said he wants to conduct an impact study next year of the region to more fully determine how many simulation-related jobs there are in Orlando and a breakdown of those jobs.

Although a rivalry of some sorts has developed over the past few years in developing jobs within the training and simulation industry with the Hampton Roads region of Virginia — Suffolk, Va., is

home to U.S. Joint Forces Command — Hauck said it is "a healthy competition" between the regions. "Some say we're doing different things; others say Orlando is trying to grab all the glory," Hauck said with a smile.

Orlando's perception, he added, is that it is more a research and development area for training devices, while southeastern Virginia concentrates more on exercise and experimentation.

But Hauck said officials, including politicians, from the two areas are developing good relationships, and a team of military leaders from "Team Orlando" — which comprises the local senior military leaders in Orlando from the four services — visited the Hampton Roads region recently to make sure "we're not stepping on each other's toes." Hauck said he doesn't believe Joint Forces Command wants to be in the acquisition business, "so there's a role there for Orlando play."

Growth in military simulation jobs has been steady since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, but that almost assuredly cannot continue at the same pace, Hauck said. So Orlando is looking to widen its modeling and simulation market beyond the Defense Department. That effort includes the gaming industry, civilian medical simulation technology and the entertainment industry.

Quick Quotes

From the 30th anniversary IMAGE 2007 conference in Scottsdale, Ariz., in July.

"IG capacity is now exceeding what can be built at acceptable cost. It's no longer 'can my system take it?' It's 'can I afford to build it?'"

Philippe Perey
Keynote speaker and CAE engineering director of visualization products

"Realism is in the eye of the modeler, his or her boss, and ultimately the customer."

Gary Lynch
U.S. Coastal & Hydraulics Laboratory engineer

"Hoo-ah!"

Conference attendee at the back of the room, responding to a speaker comment that Rockwell Collins' EP-1000 and EPX-5000 systems are the only remaining custom-built image generators

Soldiers interact with Iraqis — portrayed by role players — at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La.

into the rotational exercises via scenarios involving multinational operations. Those training exercises typically extend for days but have stretched to days since November 2002 cause of the war in Iraq. C said it employs about 1,500 and part-time people to staff the JRTC.

Cubic wins new deal for U.S. Army training

The U.S. Army has awarded Cubic Corp. another contract that could extend to 10 years and be worth \$468 million to provide realistic predeployment training to troops at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Polk, La.

The new contract took effect in July and follows on the heels of a similar contract that kicked in during 2001 at the JRTC and was valued at about \$375 million. Under the new award, Cubic Applications Inc. will increase support



CUBIC CORP

levels in the areas of role playing, battlefield effects, tactical engagement systems support and exercise support groups. Those missions provide support to rotating units for transportation, sustain-

ment supplies, live-fire support and air-delivered resupply.

Cubic Application's job as JRTC mission support contractor will be to assist the center in fully integrating all participants

Nexter debuts training software package

Nexter Systems launched its Generic Virtual Training (GVT) tool, an integrated software package that provides training in the operation, maintenance and diagnostics of complex systems, at the Paris Air Show.

Nexter, formerly Giat Industries, is better known for developing new generation tanks, armored fighting vehicles and artillery systems synonymous with the Giat brand. The introduction of a software training package takes it in a different direction.

Company chief executive Luc Vigneron said initiatives such as GVT mark the direction Nexter is likely to take in the future.

"We have a strong but small team of 10 to 20 people involved in this and have invested about 2

million euros (\$2.7 million) in development of the package," he said at a Paris press conference.

GVT is both generic and configurable, providing significant flexibility for the designers and developers of training systems — especially for vehicle, aircraft or complex systems maintenance training. The tool set can be implemented in three major modes: total immersion — in which the trainee uses an HF microphone and stereoscopic goggles as his or her interface with the software; a nonimmersive desktop mode in which the trainee uses a PC with two flat screens, a microphone and two loudspeakers; and a portable version for use with a laptop computer.

"The principal objective is the immersion of the student in a



The Generic Virtual Training tool has a total-immersion mode.

NEXTER

structured real operational world to facilitate accelerated learning," Vigneron said.

"We believe this is a unique training tool that enhances securi-

ty and safety of trainees, as well as significantly reducing the cost of training," he said.

— Tim Mahon

Italy to buy M-346 trainers

The Italian Ministry of Defence announced that the country's Air Force would buy up to 15 Alenia Aermacchi M-346 advanced trainers, thus securing the first crucial production order for the aircraft.

Alenia Aermacchi, a unit of Finmeccanica, has two prototypes of the M-346 flying and has started work on the first of 12 low-rate ini-

tial production aircraft, which incorporate new landing gear and a higher use of composite materials than the prototypes. The aircraft is short-listed for the United Arab Emirates's trainer competition and has been test-flown by the Italian, Greek, UAE, French, Singapore, Indonesian and Polish air forces.

Alenia Aermacchi also proposes using the aircraft for the Euro-trainer program. Company CEO Carmelo Cosentino told TSJ at the Paris Air Show that the current stalled state on the program is temporary.

"The issues are really nothing to

do with the responsibility of the industrial partners — there are other concerns that require resolution first. But Italy has the platform," he said, asserting that the M-346 is the only aircraft that meets the combined requirements of the Euro-trainer program partner nations.

In addition to fielding the aircraft in the UAE, where a decision could be forthcoming before year's end, the M-346 will be a contender in the Greek trainer competition (which is expected to be formally launched in late 2007 or early 2008) and Singapore.

The Italian Air Force order is a

major boost for the program. "We hope to finalize the contract before the end of this year — but early 2008 will not be a tragedy, either," Cosentino said.

Asked whether a twin-engine trainer poses additional maintenance and life-cycle costs, Cosentino said such an aircraft is a far safer solution, adding "the life-cycle costs [of the M-346] are no greater than for any single-engine aircraft in the same category — and certainly less than any aircraft with a thrust reverser."

— Tim Mahon

INDEX TO ADVERTISERS	
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Boeing	7
CAE	52
Cubic	5
DCI	21
Digimotion	27
General Dynamics	2
L3	11
MetaVR	9
Presagis	19
RGB Spectrum	47
Rockwell Collins	15
SAIC	51
VEDP	37

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