

L-3 AMI opens new manufacturing facility

D.R. STEWART | Tulsa World
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New 60,000-square-foot facility a model for the future

Celebrating their move to a 60,000-square-foot plant in Broken Arrow on Thursday, executives and employees of L-3 AMI anticipate a bright future beyond their traditional markets.

The new facility — 50 percent larger than the company's three former plants in Broken Arrow — is specifically designed for the production of flight simulator and training systems.

It will also give the company more room to expand into new markets that L-3 AMI is courting, said Greg Campbell, L-3 AMI's vice president and general manager.

"AMI is on target for record-breaking bookings, record-breaking sales and will exceed our 2009 annual operating plan commitments," Campbell told 75 civic, political and business leaders at the company's open house.

"We have added 30 employees over the last five years. Since 2001, we have almost tripled annual bookings and tripled annual sales."

Such growth should continue for the company, which now employs 100, he said.

"We're aggressively pursuing new captures, new strategic partners and new markets. And our new building positions us well for continued success," Campbell said.

L-3 AMI's future looks assured because it is not content with its accomplishments, its executives said.

And its roots run deep in the simulator industry.

It was founded in 1981 by Maurice Arnott as a manufacturer of simulated instruments for military and commercial customers.

In the 1980s, AMI was one of nearly a dozen flight simulator manufacturers in the area, which gave Tulsa the reputation as "the flight simulator capital of the world."

In 1987, Arnott sold AMI to Rediffusion Simulation Inc. of Tulsa, which sold it the following year to Hughes Simulation Systems Inc.

Under Hughes, the product line grew to include cockpit components for the military and commercial markets.

The company's primary focus, however, was on producing training systems for military jets.

In 1997, AMI was sold to Raytheon Systems Co., which sold it in 2000 to L-3 Communications, a New York company with 66,000 employees and \$14.9 billion in annual revenue.

L-3 directed the Tulsa company to support another subsidiary, L-3 Link Simulation & Training of Arlington, Texas, which produces the software and visual systems for the training hardware manufactured by the Broken Arrow company.

L-3 AMI specializes in production of simulated fixed-wing and rotary-wing cockpit hardware systems, which include a training device's instruments, flight controls, seats, panels, wiring and cabling.

The company is manufacturing flight simulators for F-16, F/A-18 and F-22 fighters; the A-10 ground support jet; and the Bell 412SAR, CH-47 Chinook, OH-58 Kiowa, UH-60 Blackhawk and AH-64 Apache helicopters, as well as simulated maritime control consoles and nuclear power plant operator consoles.

"The core of our business — 80 percent — is military fast-jet simulation products," Campbell said.

"Simulators are so realistic they can actually run the mission in a training environment. And simulators don't burn fuel, cause maintenance issues or kill people."

L-3 AMI designs its training systems, builds components and manufactures the "cockpit" hardware.

"We have 15 simulators on the floor now," Campbell said. "Typically, it takes six to seven months to complete a simulator.

"Since L-3 acquired AMI, the company has just rocketed and has diversified its products. This building gives us great position for future growth."

L-3 AMI

Plant / Offices: 374 W. Vancouver St., Broken Arrow.

Business: Designer and manufacturer of training equipment hardware for flight, maritime and power generation simulators.

Employees: 100.

Customers: Army, Air Force, Lockheed Martin Corp., Boeing Co., airlines and simulator companies.

Parent company: L-3 Link Simulation & Training, Arlington, Texas.

Source: L-3 AMI