

MSI wins \$2.3M in Air Force contracts

BY KEVIN ROBINSON-AVILA / JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

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A B-52 flies over New Mexico on a training mission in 1999. Technology from ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Albuquerque engineering firm Management Sciences Inc. could help extend the lives of B-52 bombers. (File photo)

Albuquerque engineering firm Management Sciences Inc. won \$2.3 million through two Air Force contracts to deploy a real-time monitoring system for military aircraft and to continue building a new cyber threat detection and data-protection system.

The Small Business Innovation Research grants include a two-year, \$1.8 million “phase III” award for the company’s proprietary monitoring system, which provides a continuous flow of information to Air Force personnel on the health of

electronics, engines and other components in military aircraft. MSI built the system over 13 years through previous phase I and II SBIR grants.

The phase III funding is now aimed at delivering a dozen fully finished systems for deployment on different types of aircraft, said project manager Kenny Blemel. It's part of Air Force efforts to extend the life of legacy craft through real-time monitoring of functions to detect problems and fix them before they force the military to ground vehicles.

"It's both software and hardware we developed for health management and prognosis of systems," Blemel said. "It can help extend the life cycle of aircraft and improve the cost effectiveness of military expenditures, allowing the Air Force to build fewer planes as older ones are moved out to pasture."

The system could be deployed on multiple types of aging aircraft, such as the B-52 bomber in use since the 1950s, and the MQ-9 Reaper, an unmanned aerial vehicle first deployed about 15 years ago, Blemel said.

MSI, a homegrown company that launched in 1976, is a small, family-run engineering firm known for creating novel monitoring systems for military vehicles and aircraft. It's received more than \$20 million in SBIR grants from different branches of the military to develop its technology, which has previously been deployed on ground vehicles and some Navy aircraft.

"The technology has evolved over time," said MSI Business Development Director Charmaine Tunell. "The original idea for these monitoring systems started in the early 2000s. We've further developed and fine-tuned it to make it better and adapt it for changing needs."

The second SBIR award is a 15-month, \$500,000 grant to continue developing a new software system to detect cyber threats in imbedded computing devices and to protect data transfer of classified information, Tunell said.

The two contracts together will expand MSI's local workforce by seven people, two of whom have already been hired, Blemel said. The company currently employs 14 at an 8,000-square-foot facility near Uptown Albuquerque.