Siemens participates in the ongoing management of the ASTRID network service center

Siemens was chosen by ASTRID to provide services as part of the ongoing management of the “ASTRID Service Center”. This contract has a term of four years and ensures continuity of the service offered by the center to some 20,000 existing users (up to 40,000 in the future) of this network, which is essential to national security.

Set up in 1998, ASTRID is a specific telecommunications network dedicated to Belgium’s emergency and security services: local police, federal police, fire service, civil protection, customs service, emergency assistance (“Service 100”), state security service, national defense, coastguard, etc., helping them to work together throughout all of the provinces of Belgium by linking base stations, terminal equipment and integrated control centers. ASTRID, a public limited company, was set up by the federal government to meet this need.

The ASTRID Service Center (ASC) is the contact point for the approximately 20,000 ASTRID users for matters concerning subscription management and contracts, and provides first- and second-level telephone support (helpdesk) for the different systems used on the network. In 2005, ASTRID issued a Europe-wide invitation to tender in order to identify an experienced service provider that could provide round-the-clock first-level telephone support. Siemens was chosen following in-depth negotiations with a number of potential service providers.

Siemens is responsible for ensuring that there are qualified staff on site at the center, for which it has prepared a customized schedule, in conjunction with ASTRID, to ensure that the staff in question have a higher level of expertise in telecommunications networks than actually required. The contract also covers the provision by Siemens of
any additional services that are required in the event of special events (visits of heads of state), major disasters or significant network expansions.

“This contract is important for Siemens because it demonstrates this network operator’s confidence in the reliability of our operational services,” highlighted Vincent Simonart, Vice-President of Siemens Communications. “It also opens up some interesting possibilities for working even closer with the Belgian public authorities in the field of networks and security.”

About ASTRID
ASTRID stands for “All-round Semi-cellular Trunking Radiocommunication network with Integrated Dispatchings”. This high-technology TETRA radio communication network for voice and data replaces the old methods of mobile communication used by the emergency and security services. As set out in its management contract (Royal Decree of April 8, 2003), ASTRID covers all emergency and security services in Belgium: local police, federal police, fire service, civil protection, customs service, emergency assistance (“Service 100”), state security service, national defense, coastguard, etc. The ASTRID-users advisory board, which is made up of members of the emergency and security services, represents the interests of all users.

As a part of domestic state security policy, the ASTRID network is also available to private bodies that provide emergency services or that encounter public safety issues when serving the public. Private ambulance services, hospitals, public transport, water and electricity distribution companies, cash transportation companies, security companies, etc. can all make use of the ASTRID network according to the conditions set by the Ministry.

About Siemens Communications
Siemens Communications is the largest division of the Siemens group and one of the main players in the global telecommunications market. It offers a full portfolio of innovative solutions for voice and data communication. This vast offering covers a range of products from end-user devices to complex network infrastructures and services, both for companies and fixed or mobile telephone operators. In fiscal 2005 (to September 30) the division achieved sales of around €13 billion and employed 54,500 people. More information on Siemens Communications can be found at http://www.siemens.com/communications

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