

## SA scientists look to produce titanium cheaply

South African scientists are developing a new way of making powdered titanium, potentially halving the cost of producing the metal used in a range of high-tech manufacturing from military aircraft to artificial limbs, Reuters Africa reports.

The government has set aside R100 million for the project over the next three years, on top of R108 million already invested.

A research team member said he was hoping to have a pilot plant up and running next year and producing 2KG of powdered titanium per hour. Titanium is normally produced as a batch of metallic sponge which is then melted to form ingots. The new process, however, allows for continuous production, which will help saving costs - the scientists claimed it could reduce current prices by up to 50 percent. Also, instead of a metallic sponge, a more advanced titanium powder is produced.

According to Reuters Africa, David van Vuuren, metals and metal processes research group leader at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), said that, should they succeed, South Africa would be in a position to build a commercial plant by 2018. "We predict big saving that will position us competitively in the global market for primary titanium metal, mill products or finished components," he said

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