

# Sixty years of mapping all over the world

**The history of FINNMAP spans six decades and several continents – from Finland to the far reaches of the globe**

The story of FINNMAP began in 1951 when a company called Kunnallistekniikka Oy was founded to offer engineering services to Finnish municipalities. Very soon the company decided to focus mainly on surveying and mapping services.

In the early sixties, the company started doing small assignments and subcontracting work abroad. For the purposes of the export business, the company took on the name Finnmap Engineering Company.

The company's own Pilatus Porter aircraft even went on a photography assignment to the Svalbard islands in the Arctic Ocean, where it had to be transferred by freight ship.

It was in 1971 when the company received its first major foreign assignment: the 1:50,000 scale mapping of the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania. The project was a success and opened doors to large scale foreign projects. It also provided many unforgettable experiences, such as a nocturnal visit by lions at the camp site of the surveying crew.

## Desert sand and discipline

During the 1980's FINNMAP secured many large contracts in Middle Eastern countries such as Libya, Saudi-Arabia and Egypt and gained a reputation as a provider of quality results. It was in 1980 that the young engineer **Paavo Martinmaa**, now going on 31 years in the company's service, was first engaged in his first foreign mapping project in the Libyan Sahara.

"I was greatly impressed by the amount of preparation needed for surveying work conducted in the desert and the disciplined navigation methods used during the assignments. At that time with no GPS technology, it was difficult to navigate aircraft accurately in areas, where there were no visible landmarks, only even and smooth sand," says Martinmaa.

At the end of the decade, as work started to decrease in the oil countries, focus started shifting to Southern Asia with development cooperation projects secured in Bangladesh and Nepal. The 1:50,000 and 1:25,000 scales mapping of Nepal was the first project in which GPS data was used to reduce field work. This area was a focal point for the company throughout the 1990's.

## Growth and development

In 2004 FM-International was sold to the PASCO Corporation, its long-time partner in large scale development cooperation projects. With the support of the new parent FM-

International has been able to continue expanding its operations even further to areas such as Middle America.

PASCO has also invested strongly into developing the offering of the company. Recent acquisitions include a digital aerial photography camera, a laser scanner and two aircraft for photography and scanning assignments. In 2010 FM-International bought the share majority of the Belgian company Aerodata with funding from PASCO.

“The turnover of FM-International has increased rapidly during the ownership of the PASCO Corporation and the recent investments are a great basis for further growth and development in the future,” Martinmaa states.

(Information on the company’s first 30 years is based on Mr. Martinmaa’s interview with a former FINNMAP executive Mr. Sven Wik)

FM-International Oy FINNMAP is an independent, privately owned consulting company with major activities in land management and administration, remote sensing, digital mapping, surveying and GIS.

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