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Gulf Coast Aerospace Coalition Launches Aerospace Marketing Efforts in Hamburg, Germany

Five counties in Northwest Florida, with the closest proximity to the Airbus assembly line under construction in Mobile, Ala., have formed the Gulf Coast Aerospace Coalition, which is aimed at attracting European-based aerospace supplier companies to Northwest Florida. The coalition is being led by the economic development leaders in Bay, Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa and Walton counties.

The coalition believes the Gulf Coast's strategic location in northwest Florida creates significant opportunities for aerospace suppliers because of the recent expansion of aviation original equipment manufacturer, or OEM, assembly plants in the Southeastern U.S. Not only is the Airbus facility in Mobile just 50 miles west of Pensacola, but the region also has connections along Interstates 10 and 95 to other operations, including Boeing Charleston, S.C., Gulfstream in Savannah, Ga. and Embraer in Melbourne and Jacksonville, Fla.

The coalition will launch a three-pronged marketing approach in Hamburg, Germany, Airbus' headquarters in Germany and the final assembly site for the A320 aircraft. The first tactic of the strategy is to participate in a sponsorship and speaking opportunity at the Global Aerospace Supply Chain Conference in Hamburg, Dec. 4 - 5. This will position the region as a strong contender in the international aerospace industry through numerous networking and promotional opportunities during the conference.

The second tactic revolves around the conference as two teams of economic development professionals are deployed around Europe for individual meetings with aerospace-related companies. During the meetings, the teams will work to better understand the company's potential plans for expanding into the U.S. and have the opportunity to tout the Gulf Coast's assets and present a business case for Northwest Florida.

Finally, the third tactic comprises of hosting the first Northwest Florida Leadership Forum in Hamburg. A small group of elected officials and community leaders will be invited to participate in the forum to understand Airbus' potential impact on the region; to provide critical insight into the needs of aerospace supplier companies, including specialized training; and to become enhanced ambassadors for the region's international economic development efforts.

The objective of this multi-layered strategy is to bolster Northwest Florida's visibility to the European aerospace community, encouraging more companies to consider the region for a new location project.

The Leadership Forum will be held in Hamburg Dec. 8 - 11. The first day will consist of European speakers focused on the following topics:

- The potential for growth and expansion of the European aerospace industry
- Education and skills training expectations of German/European manufacturers
- Competitiveness factors for success in attracting aerospace suppliers
- International cultural protocol

During the second day of the forum, delegates will tour industry-related assembly and training facilities.

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As Northwest Florida and Santa Rosa County, in particular, continue to compete in a global economy for high-quality companies and jobs, it is imperative that a team of professionals be laser-focused on this strategy. Similar international marketing efforts have proven successful. By deploying these three international marketing efforts, in conjunction with an overall economic development plan, Northwest Florida can be positioned as a viable contender for U.S. operations of European-based suppliers to Southeastern U.S. OEMs in the aerospace industry.

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