

AIRBUS MEETS WITH OHIO SUPPLIERS

KETTERING, Ohio - An overflow crowd of 350 manufacturing executives from across Ohio, including more than dozen from Greater Cincinnati, came here Tuesday to pitch their expertise and capabilities to European

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Allan McArtor, Airbus Americas chairman, said his company was more than willing to listen.

"We're here because we like what you do," the former Air Force Thunderbirds pilot told the large and small manufacturers at the daylong procurement summit at the National Composite Center in this Dayton suburb.

Airbus, which produces military and commercial aircraft, does more business in Ohio than any other state. Its annual purchases of aerospace parts and other services is more than \$4 billion, or 40 percent of the \$10 billion it spends in the United States annually. "This is all about creating jobs," U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, who joined with Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland in emphasizing building on the state's aerospace heritage which dates to Dayton's Wright Brothers.

"Ohioans don't know how big the aerospace business is in the state," said Brown, who helped organize the event here and an earlier Airbus supplier event in Cleveland in December which drew about 200 manufacturers.

Organizers ran out of room at the Cleveland event, and despite expanding capacity for the event here ran out of room again, said Gary Conley, president of TechSolve, the Bond Hill manufacturing assistance organization that helped organize both events. McArtor, who said Airbus would reach out to those who couldn't attend the events in person, said his company appreciates the manufacturing excellence of Ohio companies.

The more than 1,200 companies in the state's aerospace industry, ranging from Evendale-based GE Aviation to small, family-owned businesses, employ more than 120,000, officials said. With the U.S. economic recovery still tentative, more Ohio manufacturers want to join the aerospace party. "We're looking to expand, so the timing of this event was perfect," said Randy Roth, business development manager for Batavia-based Milacron Inc, who was there pitching Milacron's capabilities in one-on-one meeting with Airbus and its other top suppliers. "The economy's still tough and we're looking for business anywhere we can get it."

The 126-year-old manufacturing icon, which emerged from bankruptcy reorganization last summer, is expanding beyond producing plastic-making machinery and industrial fluids. Milacron is also marketing the metal-working capability of its operations in Batavia and Mount Orab to new industries such as aerospace and wind turbines and other renewable energy sources, he said.

Despite ups and downs in the aerospace business since Sept. 11, McArtor said the industry is "seeing recovery, although we're not there yet." He said industry growth is being fueled by demands for more fuel-efficient and less polluting aircraft. GE Aviation, Airbus' largest and oldest supplier in Ohio, was one of the major vendors participating in the event.

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Brown visited GE Aviation's Evendale headquarters Tuesday afternoon to meet with employees and show his support for continued Defense Department funding for GE's alternative engine for the Joint Strike Fighter. The program, which supports nearly 1,000 jobs at GE and among its area contractors, was maintained in the fiscal 2010 Pentagon budget but faces another challenge to remain in the 2011 federal budget.

From the desk of Mike Boyer

