

For Immediate Release

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North Carolina mobilizes to expand its defense cluster

North Carolina's economic developers are teaming with corporate partners to position North Carolina as *the* destination for defense-related investment.

The upcoming Association of the U.S. Army (AUSA) 2011 national conference and expo Oct. 10-12 in Washington, D.C. will provide a glimpse of their fire power as more than a dozen companies plus the state's many defense business support organizations will be out in force to make sure the industry knows what the state can offer them.

"We have one of the largest concentrations of U.S. military installations in the world and a unique mix of R&D assets, talent and existing industry that makes our state a prime spot for growing defense-related companies," says Wayne Watkins, project manager for Wake Economic Development, who is coordinating North Carolina's presence at AUSA. "We want to make sure the industry knows what we have to offer when they make their business investment and location decisions."

North Carolina will be the only state in the nation to host its own pavilion at AUSA. A dozen N.C. defense companies have invested \$5,000 each to make a strong showing. The pavilion will showcase the extensive array of resources available in the state to support defense companies. A North Carolina Reception on Oct. 10 will allow the state's delegation to network with defense companies and expand their connections with U.S. Army decision makers, companies that service and supply the military, site selection consultants who help those companies make location decisions, and media who cover the sector.

Meanwhile, economic development partners across the state are taking their collaboration to a new strategic level through the newly formed N.C. Defense Council for Economic Development. Gov. Bev Purdue, who a decade ago as lieutenant governor rallied state leaders to pursue defense business development in the face of Base Closure and Realignment, has formed this new alliance to accelerate the effort. The council is believed to be the first statewide alliance in the country formed to promote the growth of a defense cluster.

North Carolina boasts the fourth-largest military presence in the nation, with seven military installations and 14 U.S. Coast Guard facilities. Fort Bragg, the largest U.S. Army installation in the world, is now home to the U.S. Forces Command and U.S. Army Reserve Command.

The Fayetteville area, home to Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base, is one of North Carolina's traditional hubs for military contracts and other defense businesses.

The Fort Bragg Regional Alliance (formerly the BRAC Regional Task Force) in Fayetteville, who will be an exhibitor at the show, is coordinating the participation of the economic developers from its 11 member counties surrounding Fort Bragg including Moore County. Pat

Corso, Executive Director of Moore County Partners in Progress, will be attending the Expo and participating in all of the North Carolina-focused events including the Reception on the 10th.

“This is my first time attending this Expo, although Ray [Ogden] has attended the past several years”, said Corso. “I’m looking forward to making contact with many defense companies and seeing what opportunities may exist for locating some of them in Moore County.”

The defense sector has also expanded rapidly to other regions.

North Carolina’s Eastern Region has a large and growing array of aerospace companies, an integrated and well-developed training and education system devoted to science, technology, education and mathematics education and the aerospace sector, as well as several unique assets to serve the industry. Eastern North Carolina is home to the third-largest concentration of military personnel in the nation. The bases there house the majority of the military’s first response forces and spend millions of dollars annually for the goods and services of companies in the region.

The Research Triangle Region is fast becoming a center for defense technology companies. A unique combination of technology assets and clusters enable advances in areas as diverse as biological agents and infectious diseases, pervasive computing, and interactive gaming and e-learning. Combined, they support innovation that helps the U.S. military combat terrorism and secure the nation from 21st-century threats.

Across the state, in Charlotte, several new defense-related companies have moved in and many companies in the area’s traditional industries have received defense contracts. Among them are Bank of America, Barrday, Curtiss-Wright Controls, General Dynamics, Goodrich Corporation, Ingersoll-Rand, Michelin Aircraft, Microsoft Corporation, Northrop Grumman Space & Technology and Tessera Digital Optics.

The breadth of N.C. organizations coming together in the new statewide defense alliance offers telling evidence of the strength and depth of assets the state now brings to this cluster. Joining the Governor’s Office in the alliance are the N.C. Department of Commerce, University of North Carolina system, N.C. Community College System, the state’s economic development partnerships and Small Business and Technology Development Center.

Added to that is the support network – an impressive array of organizations formed in recent years specifically to promote defense business development: N.C. Defense Business Association, Military Business Center, N.C. Military Foundation, Fort Bragg Regional Alliance, Partnership for Defense Innovation, Defense & Security Technology Accelerator and Institute for Defense & Business.

There are the companies – scores of defense-related businesses that are driving growth in this sector, including those supporting the AUSA pavilion in October: ABB, BRS Defense, BSCI, CC Intelligent Solutions Inc., Combat Medical Systems, Corvid Technologies, IEM, MSI Defense Solutions, PowerAnalytics, Roush Yates, TigerSwan Inc. and Williams Software.

And there is talent – a skilled and educated workforce that includes an army of former military retirees and service people who remain in the state after retiring or leaving military service. They add a wealth of specialized knowledge and skills that local defense employers find invaluable.

For more information on the state's defense cluster and its AUSA marketing effort, contact Wayne Watkins at 919-664-7043 or wwatkins@raleighchamber.org.

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