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News

STIMULUS TRACKER: Weighing in on stimulus' impact on defense

Thursday, October 7, 2010

By JASON SIEDZIK

Drivers throughout Connecticut have seen the signs on roadways. Across the state, repaving and construction work has been underway since the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, work made possible due to the nine-figure stimulus package.

The Department of Transportation has been one of the more prolific recipients of stimulus funds, as evidenced by the figures posted on recovery.gov. However, the stimulus picture for Connecticut does not leave room for the defense industry.

Adam Liegeot, spokesman for Governor Jodi Rell, could not name any defense-oriented companies in Connecticut that received stimulus funds. Representatives from Northrop Grummon and General Dynamics also stated that neither had received any funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Rob Doolittle, vice president of communications for General Dynamics – the parent company of Electric Boat in Groton – confirmed that the company had not received any money under the stimulus act, and that any hiring in the past year was unrelated. Similarly, Northrop Grummon has several positions posted on their Web site, in both Norwalk and Groton, but none connected to stimulus funds.

Further northwest, in Torrington, Altek Electronics had not received any funds directly, according to company president Richard Razza. Military applications only account for a small part of his company's business, though; Razza estimates that portion at approximately 10 percent. However, regardless of the industry – most of Altek's work is in the commercial, industrial and medical sectors – business has been booming recently.

"It's been a very good business for the past several years," said Razza.

Altek was not immune to the recent recession, suffering a 30 percent dip in 2009. However, the drop was a minor stumble in an otherwise decade-long steady pattern of growth. Razza attributed the improvement in business to other, unrelated factors, such as changes in organizational philosophy. The recent economic downturn pushed companies to reevaluate their needs, moving to just-in-time manufacturing and other, similar systems. "They're not going to carry the inventories and overhead," said Razza. "They're going to get what they need when they need it."

As a contract manufacturer, Altek builds parts for a number of contractors, including military applications. Although Razza could not elaborate on the company's military clients, the Altek president remarked that "it's been a very good business for the past several years."

While Razza conceded that it might be possible that clients received stimulus funds and sought Altek's services, he

added that "I've never heard it come up once." Regardless, his company has benefited from underlying factors, even if the stimulus package did not have a direct impact.

"We've been holding our own," said Razza, "and it seems like it's starting to pick up again."

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WASHINGTON, D.C. —Senators Dodd (D-CT) and Lieberman (ID-CT) and Representative Larson (CT-01) today applauded the Air Force's decision to support Connecticut's defense industry by providing \$279 million to fund 22 spare F-119 engines for the F-22. The additional funding will ensure that Pratt & Whitney is able to continue production of the F-119 spare engines through 2012.

"This is a true testament to the important role Connecticut's defense industry plays in making sure our military is equipped to protect our nation," said Senator Dodd. "This funding will help keep production lines open while protecting the jobs of Connecticut's highly skilled engineers, machinists, and aerospace workers. I will continue to fight to preserve Connecticut's defense manufacturing base that supports both Connecticut's local economy and our national security."

"This is a good day for both the skilled workers at Pratt and Whitney and for the brave airmen who fly F-22 Raptor aircraft" said Senator Lieberman. "This contract will sustain jobs in East Hartford and Middletown while helping to spur Connecticut's economic recovery."

"This funding is the result of over a year's work by the Connecticut delegation to preserve the highly-skilled manufacturing jobs that work on the F-22 in our area," said Congressman Larson. "This means a year and a half's worth of work for our manufacturers and vast benefits to our local economy. I will continue to work to build on these jobs for the future."

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