

Development doubleheader at Plattsburgh International Airport

NEW TENANT ANNOUNCED AT AERONAUTICAL INSTITUTE GROUNDBREAKING

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PLATTSBURGH — There was a development doubleheader on the former Plattsburgh Air Force Base Thursday afternoon.

U.S. Congressman John McHugh and New York State Sen. Betty Little were among the dignitaries on hand as ground was broken for the Plattsburgh Aeronautical Institute and a new aviation-related tenant was announced.

McHugh said along with attracting new industry to the airport, the Aeronautical Institute "will provide opportunities for young people in the North Country to receive the kind of education that can be used here at home," McHugh said. "It allows them to stay here and build a brighter tomorrow."

It has been impressive to see the local governments and business leaders work together for a common vision to redevelop the air base, he said.

CV-TEC Director Dr. Barry Mack said, "This CV-TEC program for high school juniors, seniors and adults is the only fully articulated program for secondary and post-secondary students in New York state with both U.S. and international standards leading to an associates degree through our educational partner — Clinton Community College."

He went on to thank all the local, state and federal legislators, business partners and educational partners who have helped push the project forward.

He said the Aeronautical Institute still plans to open in the fall of 2007, and will be able to train 50-75 aerospace technicians in two to three years. Recent announcements have made it apparent the institute already needs to explore expanding, he said.

McHugh later made one of those announcements, telling the crowd Top Aces Consulting Inc., a Canadian-based company that offers combat support and consulting services to all branches of the Canadian Forces, plans to bring 15 to 18 full- and part-time employees to Plattsburgh through Execaire, its maintenance and technical sub-contractor.

"This is another positive step in the redevelopment of Plattsburgh and the North Country economic community," he said.

The company has leased Nose Dock 6, along the ramp on the east side of the runway, to house, maintain and repair portions of its fleet of 20 aircraft.

Company President Didier Toussaint said the company's 20 pilots are the sole supplier of operational

training to Canadian Forces branches under a five-year, \$150-million contract.

"There are many advantages of contracting with a civilian company. It is a chance to use the expertise of former fighter pilots who have moved on," Toussaint said. "It also saves the Canadian Forces money to use our services."

With support from McHugh and Little, the company is exploring chances to offer similar services to United States military, he said.

Crossborder Development Corp. President Mark Barie said Top Aces was referred to his company as its employees were having trouble getting across the border.

"When they told us they intended to set up in Florida, we told them to check out the used Air Force base in Plattsburgh. They did, and they loved it," Barie said.

He said the company brings a kind-of military presence back to Plattsburgh.

"Thanks to their decision, there will once again be fighter jets in the skies over Plattsburgh. I say welcome back," he said.

Little said when she was first elected, it was sad to see what had happened to the former air base.

"Now, when you see so much private sector investment and jobs, it's very exciting," she said.

She likened the Aeronautical Institute to a build it and they will come scenario.

"It is going to attract more business to this base. It already has, as seen by the Laurentian Aerospace announcement," she said.

Plattsburgh-North Country Chamber of Commerce President Garry Douglas said the Aeronautical Institute represents a marriage between education and economic development.

"It is imperative today, if you want to create jobs, you have to wed it to training and education," he said.

Douglas said CV-TEC and Clinton Community should be commended for their efforts.

"Here we have two institutions that had the leadership and foresight to do something together," he said.

Clinton Community College President Maurice Hickey said Mack, Aeronautical Institute Coordinator James McCartney and Clinton Community College Dean of Continuing Education Dave Lawliss, with the consulting assistance of Larry Trow at Pratt and Whitney, got the ball rolling.

"The recent announcement of Laurentian Aerospace cited several times today and of Top Aces today shows the correctness of their vision," he said. "Today we celebrate the efforts of the many who have brought us to this point today."