

Aero Gera getting a million-dollar boost

By Max Bakke

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WINDSOR — A \$1 million extension on Aero Gear Inc.'s multi-year, multi-million major military contract will allow the aerospace manufacturer to pilot current economic turbulence and escape company cutbacks, company officials said Wednesday.

The extension, announced by U.S. Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn., would allow the Windsor-based company that makes specialized gears and gear assemblies for aircraft engines, to continue its research and development of technology to refurbish and "re-manufacture" components for military aircraft, company president Douglas B. Rose said.

"Under this contract, our company has developed engineering methods to allow the military to repair gears and gear assemblies, rather than discard them," Rose said.

"We have found that refurbishing gears and gear assemblies tends to save the military 50 percent of the cost of a complete replacement of the component."

The contract is an extension of a \$11.1 million deal announced in 2006 with the U.S. Army's Benet Laboratories in Watervliet, N.Y., which will help the military keep older fixed wing aircraft and helicopters properly maintained and available when needed, according to Rose.

"This was demonstrated in a pilot for the U.S. Army's Corpus Christi, Texas, facility, where we used our new technology to successfully refurbish components for Apache, Black Hawk, and Chinook helicopters."

While Rose said the extension wouldn't necessarily allow Aero gear to expand its work force, it will allow the company to retain all of its 135 workers. That roster grew from 100 at the time the contract was announced.

Rose credited Dodd with the original contract and its recent extension. The senator visited the company's 52,000-square-foot plant off Day Hill Road on Wednesday.

"It's nice to see a place that's actually hiring people, and preserving and growing," the senator told employees. "Aero gear and their hardworking employees play a critical role in keeping our nation safe and ensuring that Connecticut remains on the cutting edge of important military technology."

The company started in 1982 with a single employee. It supplies products for most major aircraft engine makers, including Fairfield-based General Electric, East Hartford-based Pratt & Whitney, and Britain's Rolls-Royce, as well as aircraft makers such as Chicago-based Boeing Co. and Stratford-based Sikorsky Aircraft.