

Selfridge Air Base Crews Worry About their Future

by Gerald Scott
News Dept.

"Everybody is nervous." Or so said the blunt-speaking Col. Mike Thomas, base commander at Selfridge Air National Guard Base in Harrison Township.

SANG, as it is known, is vulnerable to losing a complement of A-10 Thunderbolt aircraft and the 500 to 700 jobs that go with it, all due to Pentagon defense cutbacks following the winding down of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Selfridge Public Affairs Office hosted a comprehensive base tour for local media last week, all to re-acquaint local reporters with just how big and busy the base, located along Lake St. Clair in Harrison Twp., really is.

"I enlisted on this base back on Dec. 21, 1984 - a red-letter day in the history of democracy," joked T/Sgt. Dan Heaton, a Roseville native and current base spokesman.

Heaton hosted the two-hour gray bus tour for media, which was an eye-opener for how big and involved in defense, intelligence, homeland security and military affairs that the base really is.

The public gets on base every other year for the bi-annual Selfridge air show, but it really only sees the flight line and airfield, which involves only part of the base's overall mission.

Rather, the media got the backstage tour that included visiting a variety of Homeland Security and other intelligence gathering operations that the base doesn't usually play up, all for understandable security reasons.

But suffice to say that each of the main military services, the Air National Guard, Coast Guard, plus Homeland Security, have significant operations on the base and these buildings impact national events and national security.

Much of the tour was held at the flight-line hangars, where the A-10 Thunderbolts, nicknamed the Warthog, are

serviced and repaired.

The complement of A-10s at the base could be removed and that's where the jobs vulnerability comes in - if the A-10s are either retired or moved to another base, or out of state, up to 700 jobs at Selfridge will be lost, or leave with the re-assignment.

Note that U.S. Rep. Candice Miller has been fighting in Congress to shape defense budget legislation such that the jets will survive at SANG.

"Since the president introduced his budget calling for draconian cuts to the Air National Guard, including the elimination of the 107th Fighter Squadron of the Michigan Air Guard based at Selfridge ANGB, I have been working with my colleagues in Congress to reverse those proposed cuts," U.S. Rep. Miller said in a statement.

"While I believe we need to look for savings everywhere in the budget, including the Department of Defense, it simply made no sense to me to look for those savings in the Air Guard which is the most cost-effective part of the Air Force - providing 35 percent of the air capability for 6 percent of the budget."

Historically, Air Guards across the nation actually operate more cost-effectively than the full-time air force does, in part because Guards usually don't re-assign airmen out of state and use mostly local industrial resources for aircraft repair and maintenance. Miller said she would continue to push to make current legislation reflect well on Air Guards across the country, including the Michigan Guard that is based at both Selfridge and Battle Creek.

"As a member of of the House National Guard Caucus, I was pleased to work with Caucus co-chair Representative Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.) to build a consensus to adopt provisions to the bill, which will protect the Air Guard across the nation from any aircraft or personnel reductions for one year, while a



PHOTO: GERALD SCOTT

Selfridge currently hosts a complement of A-10 Thunderbolt jet fighters as the Pentagon, Congress, the Air Force and Air National Guard continue to debate the air base's future workload.

fact-based, cost-benefit analysis is completed. I am certain that analysis will show the bang for the buck the taxpayers receive from the Air Guard."

As was pointed out on the recent media tour, Selfridge sure has a long and storied history in supporting U.S. military affairs.

In fact, officials said, Selfridge is the second-oldest active military airfield in the country, second only to Scott Air Force Base in Illinois - Scott opened about two weeks prior to Selfridge back in 1917, during World War I.

Otherwise, hundreds of pilots and air crews trained at Selfridge for World War II, Ko-

rea and Vietnam wars.

The base transferred ownership from the Air Force to the Michigan Air National Guard back in the 1970s.

Since then, the military services, the Coast Guard and Homeland Security have all added buildings and staff to the base to complement daily aircraft and flight operations.



PHOTO: GERALD SCOTT

Selfridge base commander Col. Mike Thomas says that everybody on the base is worried about the future. With the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan concluding, the Pentagon is shuffling which jets, and Thomas worries that Selfridge could be left in the lurch.

Selfridge was named after Lt. Thomas Selfridge, the first military aviator to die in a plane crash (with pioneer Orville Wright) back in 1908.

North American Results Uplift GM's 1Q Earnings

By TOM KRISHER
AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) - General Motors earned \$1 billion in the first quarter as a strong performance in North America helped it overcome troubles in Europe.

The results easily beat Wall Street estimates, lifting GM's stock price in pre-market trading last week Thursday, the day of the earnings announcement.

Despite problems, GM was able to post its sixth straight quarterly profit since its initial public stock offering in November of 2010.

GM said last week it earned \$1 billion, or 60 cents per share, in the quarter. That compared with \$3.2 billion, or \$1.77 per share, a year earlier, when earnings were boosted by the sale of GM's stake in a parts company.

Revenue rose 4 percent to \$37.8 billion.

North America clearly is pulling the company along. GM earned \$1.7 billion before taxes in the region. Sales rose by 19,000 vehicles to 703,000, and the company got higher prices for cars and trucks. The average price that U.S. customers paid for a GM vehicle during

the quarter was up \$166 from last year to \$32,421, according to the Edmunds.com auto website.

But GM lost \$256 million before taxes in Europe and took a \$590 million charge due to a change in the region's pension values. While cost cuts helped narrow the loss from \$562 million in the fourth quarter, vehicle sales fell as well - by 36,000 to 398,000.

"The U.S. economic recovery, record demand for GM vehicles in China and the global growth of the Chevrolet brand helped deliver solid earnings for General Motors," said Dan Akerson, chairman and CEO. "Europe remains a work in progress."

Chief Financial Officer Dan Amman wouldn't predict when Europe would return to profitability and said there won't be any "big bang" moves to get there. "It's an ongoing set of actions," he said.

GM's struggles in Europe mirror the region's overall economy, which likely has slipped into a recession. Other automakers, including Ford Motor Co., also are losing money there.

Economists think the 17 countries that use the euro are already in a recession. Output is expected to have shrunk

slightly in the first quarter after a 0.3 percent decline in the final three months of 2011. Two quarters of falling output is a common definition of recession.

Unemployment is 10.9 percent in the euro countries, the highest since the currency was introduced in 1999, and that figure masks an even worse situation in southern Europe. Spain and Italy are struggling with shrinking economies and budget woes, while Greece, Portugal and Ireland have needed bailout loans from the other eurozone countries and the International Monetary Fund.

Besides North America, there were other bright spots for GM. The carmaker posted an

\$83 million profit in South America, helped by new models for the region.

The company earned \$529 million pretax in Asia.

Analysts said that there were some signs of trouble in the U.S., GM's home market. Its share of sales fell by 1.2 percentage points in the first quarter to 14.3 percent. The company's share of the global market dropped 0.1 percentage points to 11.3 percent.

Excluding one-time charges, GM earned 93 cents per share from January through March.

That result soundly beat Wall Street estimates.

Analysts had forecast 85 cents on revenue of \$37.9 billion, according to FactSet.

Facebook Stock Offering Should Boost Economy

By BARBARA ORTUTAY
AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) - Facebook, the company that turned the social Web into a cultural and business phenomenon, is worth as much as \$95 billion, according to the price range for its upcoming initial public offering of stock.

Facebook's IPO, expected in a couple of weeks, would be the biggest ever for an Internet company.

Facebook disclosed the price range of \$28 to \$35 per share in a regulatory filing last week (that is about the same range that GM gave on its IPO, too).

At the high end, Facebook and its current shareholders could raise as much as \$13.58 billion - far more than the \$1.9 billion raised in the 2004 offering for current Internet IPO record-holder Google Inc. The IPO valued the company at \$23 billion. Google is now worth about \$200 billion.

Facebook Inc.'s IPO has been highly anticipated, not just because of how much money it will raise but because Facebook itself is so popular. The world's largest online social network has more than 900 million users.

CEO Mark Zuckerberg, who turns 28 this month, has emerged as a wunderkind leader who's guided Facebook through unprecedented growth from its scrappy start as an online hangout for Harvard students.

Facebook's offering values the company at \$76 billion to \$95 billion, based on the ex-

pected number of Facebook shares following the IPO. That's about 2.74 billion, according to Renaissance Capital, an IPO investment adviser. The value is set by multiplying the number of shares by the expected stock price.

Facebook's next step is an "IPO road show," where executives talk to potential investors about why they should invest in the stock. Just last week, Facebook posted a version of its road show online, with appearances from Zuckerberg; Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg; finance chief David Ebersman and other executives.

The company said that putting the road show online was consistent with its focus on "authentic, engaging information."

"We think people's lives will be better and really that the whole world will function better when there is more information and understanding out there," Zuckerberg says in the video, wearing a T-shirt and jeans as he usually does.

One of the most eagerly anticipated IPOs in history, Facebook's was preceded by those from smaller social Web companies such as professional networking service LinkedIn Corp. and online game maker Zynga Inc.

Facebook's stock is expected to price on May 17 and make its public trading debut on May 18. Facebook plans to list its stock on the Nasdaq under the symbol "FB."

The actual price could be higher or lower than Facebook's given range, depending on investor demand. Online reviews site Yelp Inc., for example, set a price range of \$12 to \$14 and priced at \$15 when it went public in March.

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