GLOBAL AEROSPACE LEADERS VISIT WICHITA, HIGHLIGHTS REGION'S GROWING INDUSTRY MOMENTUM

By Emily Barnwell

Over the course of one week, the Wichita region welcomed senior leaders from some of the world's most influential aerospace and space organizations, reinforcing south-central Kansas' reputation as one of the world's most important aerospace ecosystems.

In April, executives from RTX Corporation, NASA, and Airbus visited the region for a series of tours, industry events, and supplier engagements that highlighted Wichita's manufacturing expertise, engineering talent and robust supply chain.

The visits were made possible through the leadership and advocacy of U.S. Senator Jerry Moran, who continues to connect global aerospace leaders with the companies, workforce and innovation driving the region's economy.

The Partnership was proud to help coordinate these engagements alongside Senator Moran, local companies, universities, and community partners to showcase the region's capabilities at a pivotal moment for aviation, defense and space exploration.





RTX Leadership Explores Wichita's Aerospace Supply Chain

On April 2, the Partnership collaborated with Senator Moran to host Christopher Calio, Chairman and CEO of RTX Corporation, along with a delegation of senior supply chain and operations leaders.

During their visit, RTX executives toured local aerospace suppliers, gaining firsthand insight into the advanced manufacturing capabilities that support global aerospace and defense programs.

The visit culminated with a community reception at Exploration Place, bringing together regional manufacturers, elected officials and education leaders to discuss the future of the industry.

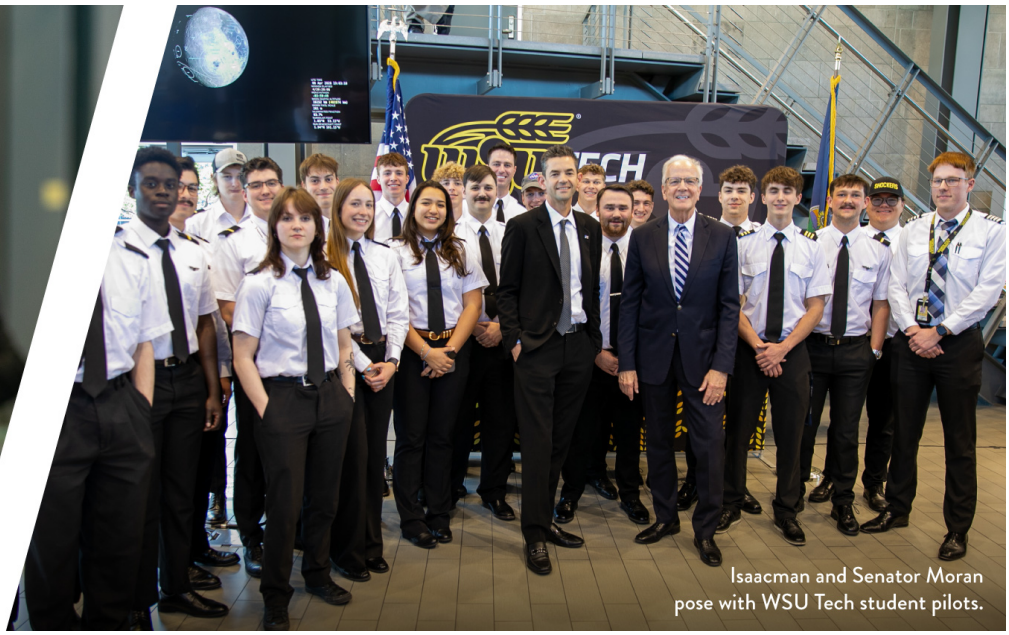
"Kansas's skilled workforce and robust supplier network play a critical role in the modernization of the aerospace industry," said Calio.

Senator Moran noted that Wichita's workforce is often the reason leading companies choose to engage with the region.

"Any CEO who comes to visit us, we can't let them leave without knowing the efforts underway in training, educating a highly motivated workforce. What happens at WSU and WSU Tech, and what happens in our other colleges and in K-12 education, is the determining factor. We can bring someone here to see what we have; they want to know how well we can continue to do this," shared Senator Moran.

RTX's engagement stemmed from a conversation between Senator Moran and Calio at the 2025 Paris Air Show, demonstrating how global relationships can translate into meaningful opportunities for regional suppliers.


Jared Isaacman, Administrator of NASA


Isaacman and Senator Moran pose with WSU Tech student pilots.

NASA Administrator Highlights Wichita's Role in the Future of Space

Just days later, on April 6, Kansas welcomed Jared Isaacman, Administrator of NASA, for a visit focused on the region's expanding role in space and defense innovation.

The day began at the Cosmosphere, where Isaacman and Senator Moran participated in a ribbon-cutting for the Hall of Space Museum before touring exhibits that celebrate the history of American space exploration.

Isaacman then visited Wichita-area manufacturers, which contribute to aerospace and defense programs supporting national missions.

The visit concluded with a community reception at the National Center for Aviation Training, where industry, education and government leaders discussed opportunities tied to NASA's future missions, including the Artemis Program.

The timing of the visit made the moment even more significant.

Just hours before Isaacman spoke in Wichita, astronauts aboard the Artemis II mission reached the Moon's gravitational sphere of influence, traveling farther from Earth than any other humans.

During that historic mission, Isaacman chose to be in only three places while the spacecraft was in flight: Kennedy Space Center, Johnson Space Center and Wichita, Kansas.

"This is just the opening act of a series of Artemis missions as America returns to the lunar surface," Isaacman said. "This mission and those that follow are only possible because of the work done in places like Wichita, the Air Capital of the World, with the highest concentration of aviation manufacturing employment anywhere in the nation. This city represents some of the best in American engineering and innovation."

Senator Moran emphasized that Wichita's workforce and innovation ecosystem are central to the region's growing role in

space exploration.

"We are moving in the right direction. What we have to offer NASA and NASA contractors is a workforce, an environment, technology, a set of engineers, and something called innovation and hard work," Moran said. "The intangibles are here in Kansas."

Companies across Kansas directly contribute technologies, components and expertise that support NASA's exploration goals.



Robin Hayes, Chairman and CEO of Airbus in North America

Airbus Supplier Day Strengthens Global Connections

The week concluded with Airbus Supplier Day on April 8, hosted at Wichita State University's Digital Research and Transformation Hub.

The event brought together regional aerospace suppliers with senior leaders from Airbus, including Robin Hayes, Chairman and CEO of Airbus in North America. It gave Wichita-area manufacturers the opportunity to meet directly with Airbus procurement, engineering and strategy leaders to explore new supply chain partnerships.

"Kansas has long been a hub for aviation, and the ecosystem here — that includes Wichita State University, the Greater Wichita Partnership, the National Institute for Aviation Research, and local and state leaders — is why we will continue to invest here," Hayes said during the opening program.

Hayes also highlighted Airbus's growing footprint across the United States and its strong connections to the Wichita region.

U.S. Impact

- 7,000+ Airbus employees.
- 275,000 American jobs supported through Airbus spending in the U.S.
- 2,000+ U.S. suppliers across 40 states.
- $15+ billion spent annually in the U.S.

Wichita Impact

- 300+ engineers and staff at Airbus' Wichita facility.
- 75,000-square-foot engineering facility supports design and analysis across Airbus commercial aircraft programs.
- 12 regional supply chain partners.
- $225 million spent with Wichita suppliers in 2025.
- Nearly $400 million in additional orders in the pipeline.
- $270,000+ in scholarships awarded to Wichita students over two decades.
- 30+ interns hired through the WSU Applied Learning Program in the past five years.
- 115 WSU alumni currently work at Airbus in Wichita.

Together, Hayes said, the combination of talent, suppliers and strong community partnerships is what makes Wichita such a valuable part of Airbus' global aerospace network.

The program also included remarks from Senator Moran, Kansas Lieutenant Governor David Toland, Wichita Mayor Lily Wu, WSU President Dr. Rick Muma and Partnership President Jeff Fluhr.

Aerospace Momentum

These visits reflect a broader trend: global aerospace and space companies are increasingly looking to Wichita as a strategic partner.

In addition to these recent engagements, Blue Origin, Lockheed Martin Space, Northrop Grumman, SpaceX and United Launch Alliance have also engaged with the region's aerospace supply chain in recent years.

By bringing together global companies, local suppliers, education partners and government leaders, the Partnership is proud to help showcase the capabilities that continue to power the Air Capital of the World.


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