



News Release

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Military Equipment Repairs Focus of New Research Center

PIERRE, S.D. – A new 2010 research center headquartered at South Dakota School of Mines and Technology will focus on developing and certifying repair processes that extend the useful life of military equipment.

“This initiative involves a wide range of industry partners in South Dakota and across the nation, along with the Department of Defense,” said Gov. Mike Rounds. “The applied research conducted at this center could save our Department of Defense hundreds of millions of dollars, potentially create another mission for Ellsworth Air Force Base, and help expand South Dakota’s economy.”

The Repair, Refurbish, and Return to Service Applied Research Center will develop, certify, and implement innovative methods to refurbish and return to service vital military equipment. “The near-term goal is to build our research capacity in this field, with an objective to position SDSM&T as an official Department of Defense University Affiliated Research Center,” said Robert T. Tad Perry, executive director of the South Dakota Board of Regents.

SDSM&T intends to collaborate with South Dakota State University, Western Dakota Technical Institute, industrial partners such as H.F. Webster Inc. and RPM & Associates in Rapid City, and corporations such as Boeing, GE Aviation, Pratt & Whitney, Lockheed Martin, Rolls Royce, and Friction Stir Link to use the processes developed and certified by the center to repair military and civilian equipment. The center’s director, William J. Arbegast, will oversee projects conducted by faculty members, graduate students, and undergraduate students from multiple disciplines working with industry partners.

The Air Force estimates its costs for planned depot maintenance and engine repair exceed \$2 billion annually. In an effort to control costs, the Air Force has slowed procurement of new airframe systems, extending the mission service life for existing systems. “This applied research center will develop, test, and evaluate repair of military equipment, benefiting from the close proximity of Ellsworth Air Force Base,” noted Richard Benda, South Dakota’s secretary of Tourism and State Development. “I see real potential to expand existing South Dakota businesses, not to mention the possibility of attracting large defense contractors or manufacturers to South Dakota,” he said.

The state previously established seven 2010 research centers to grow South Dakota’s economy by targeting investments in specialized research at the public universities. State resources supported these centers in their first five years of operation, after which they were to become self-sufficient and sustained only through outside funding. State funds that supported the four original centers can now be redirected to this and similar research initiatives, with no additional funds needed to support the new center.