

A Burgeoning Aerospace Industry in Costa Rica

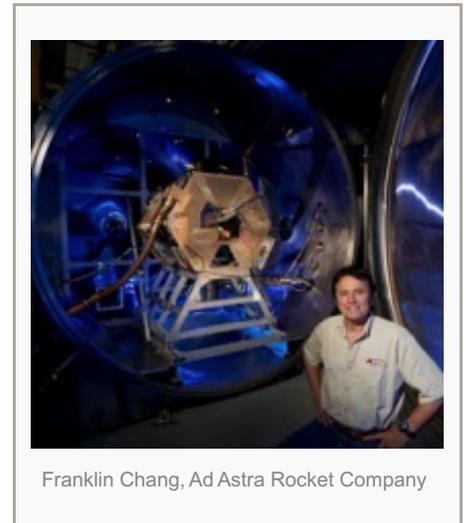
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By Jaime Lopez

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San Jose, March 2016. Aiming to put Costa Rica on the world map of aerospace industry, a group of 25 companies in sectors such as electronics, metalworking and specialized services came together to create the Costa Rica Aerospace Cluster (CRAC). This group seeks to position the country as a solution provider for the international aerospace industry.

The Costa Rica Aerospace Cluster comprises [AD Astra Rocket](#), Atemisa Precision, Avionyx, Camerica, Camtronics, Central America Silicone Supplier, COOPESA, Ten Orlich Precision, DIFACOM carbon fiber, Irazu Electronics, L-3 Communications, Microfinish, Oberg Costa Rica, Okay Industries Costa Rica, Olympic Precision Machining, Optyma, Preinsa, Sensors Group Costa Rica, SERPIMETAL, Sertex Technical Services, Specialty Coating Systems Costa Rica, Techshop International, TAGOSA, TICO ELECTRONICS and Utitec Medical. These companies have the support and assistance of strategic allies like PROCOMER, [CINDE](#), INA, UCR, RERI, INTECO, DGAC, AEA and CICR.



The consortium was officially launched today, under the [III Space Technology with Human Dimension Workshop](#) by UNOOSA. The event was attended by the Minister of Foreign Trade, Alexander Mora; PROCOMER General Manager, Pedro Beirute Prada; the President of the cluster, Marko Mileta; CINDE Marketing Director, Karin Lachner and former Costa Rican astronaut Franklin Chang.

The cluster began last year, after PROCOMER identified the intention of the companies to work together, an interest that arose after the event Aerospace Meetings Central America, which was held in Costa Rica in January 2014. From that year, the formal process of shaping and work began on various topics such as training, certifications, etc.

The Minister of Foreign Trade and Chairman of the Board of Directors of PROCOMER, Alexander Mora, said the aerospace industry is a very important ally for the country's development and the Solis Rivera administration has a serious and ambitious commitment to this sector. "We are working to expand opportunities and management and promotion tools that will allow the sector to access new markets with high value added. Costa Rica will have the opportunity to build new productive ecosystems, bringing the most out of human capital, the academic and scientific platform, and the emphasis on young talent to attract investment and specialized companies," he said.

Mora added that currently, "servitization" processes of industrial activities, increasingly migrate more quickly to business models that integrate services with manufacturing, something new for the management and promotion of public policies in which we can work with speed and commitment.

Meanwhile Marko Mileta, President of the Costa Rica Aerospace Cluster, explained that this cluster shows a clear evolution of local companies in terms of sophistication of processes, productive linkages and quality managements. "The [aerospace industry](#) is one of the most emphasized on value added, which means that customers are willing to pay more for products whose processes are controlled and certified. Cluster companies are focused on developing skills that differentiate us and thus attract international customers in the aerospace industry. Due to these products requiring high value-added productive linkages, we can involve many SMEs in the supply chain, achieving technology transfer and long-term strategies," he said.

According to data from PROCOMER, in 2015 the sectors associated with the aerospace industry exported US

\$1,557 million. The electrical and electronics sector exported \$ 790.9 million, plastic \$366.4, metal \$334.8 and transport equipment \$65 million.

“We see business opportunities for this sector, in 2015 we exported more than \$1.5 billion in sectors associated with the aerospace industry, such as electronics, plastic, metal, etc. But to be competitive the industry must join, unite talent, share good practices and promote the country”, said Pedro Beirute Prada, PROCOMER General Manager.

Beirute Prada added that since its creation, the challenge for this cluster is continuous improvement and the pursuit of excellence, as the aerospace industry is highly competitive and requires strict certification processes, such as AS9100 and NADCAP.

CINDE Marketing Director, Karin Lachner said that “Costa Rica is positioned as a strategic location for companies that require innovation. Precisely the aerospace industry opens up an opportunity to continue to attract multinational companies that want to take advantage of the already recognized Costa Rican human talent to provide services and produce quality components in one of the most competitive industries in the world, aerospace”.

Lachner added that the country already produces components for this industry, for example, parts for aircraft windows, cables for flight controls, turbine components, landing gear parts, engines flaps, among others.

For 2016, one of the objectives of the Costa Rica Aerospace Cluster is to achieve successful linkages with manufacturing companies in the sector, both in and out of the country. To that end, the cluster will participate in a trade mission in Seattle, USA, in April. It will also participate in the Workshop on Human Space Technology of the United Nations in a poster session where they will have an exhibition space to showcase their products to the aerospace industry.