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Thursday, March 13, 2008

## Tunica Air Group Expands Hangar and Workload

Aircraft maintenance company Tunica Air Group, LLC, recently grew into a 16,000-square-foot hangar at Wilson Air Center and signed a contract March 1 with Delta Air Lines as the sole maintenance provider for its mainline jets in Memphis. The co-founders, Robert Polly and Michael Silvius, are also negotiating with four other carriers for work at Memphis International Airport while providing 24-hour maintenance services at Wilson Air. "There's no telling what the people who land here need. They could be really, really broke with anything from landing gear issues to pressurization to engine problems," said Polly, vice president of operations at Tunica. "Whatever breaks is what we fix." The bigger issues -- engine rebuilds and annual maintenance checks -- are funneled to Tunica Air Center, where the company was started in 2006 with a handpicked team of FedEx mechanics working on the charters that serve the casinos. Today, the company employs 16 full-time mechanics specializing in avionics, sheet metal -- even nondestructive testing -- and reason to expect sales will quadruple in 2008 as they step up contract work at both bases. "By spring, we expect we'll be adding four employees in Memphis with expertise on regional jets," said Silvius, president and chief executive. Silvius and Polly are currently negotiating with Tunica County on construction of a 100,000-square-foot hangar they plan to lease for several multimillion contracts they expect to land in Tunica this year, including a new unnamed company that plans to offer air-taxi service based in Tunica.

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