

Ti producers move through aero supply chain

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LOS ANGELES — VSMPO-Avisma Corp.'s "end-to-end" collaboration agreement with Airbus SAS is another example of a major titanium producer extending itself further along the aerospace supply chain.

Russia's VSMPO this week signed a memorandum of understanding with the European commercial aircraft builder that will extend the two companies' already extensive relationship into new alloy development, the qualification of new products and scrap collection and recycling ([amm.com, Aug. 27](#)).

Portland, Ore.-based Precision Castparts Corp. (PCC) is the only company that has its own separate titanium scrap business segment. PCC, which owns specialty metals recycler Caledonian Alloys Group Ltd. as well as producer Titanium Metals Corp., has already set a goal to retain in-house as much metal as possible.

The memorandum of understanding notes that the two companies have "set up a working group that will seek to enhance" VSMPO's alloys portfolio for Airbus requirements.

Among the most widely known alloys developed earlier by VSMPO is titanium 5-5-5-3 (5-percent aluminum, 5-percent molybdenum, 5-percent vanadium and 3-percent chromium), which reportedly is being supplied for the landing gear of Airbus' new A350 XWB twin-aisle airliner, due to enter service in 2015.

Titanium 5-5-5-3, also used on Boeing Co.'s 787 Dreamliner, meets or exceeds the performance of titanium 10-2-3 (10-percent vanadium, 2-percent iron and 3-percent aluminum), the most widely used titanium alloy for landing gear applications, while also being easier to work and handle, according to its advocates.

The agreement also said the two companies are working toward qualification of VSMPO as an aircraft titanium tubing supplier for Airbus programs. This may involve VSMPO Titan Tubing in Ukraine, which has an annual capacity of 700 tonnes of seamless tubing, now presumably sold for industrial and other nonaerospace uses, industry sources said.

Valencia, Calif.-based machining house Aerospace Dynamics International Inc. will help VSMPO develop its "rough machining" capabilities, according to this week's agreement.

Pittsburgh-based RTI International Metals Inc., Airbus' major North American supplier of mill products, said during a recent quarterly earnings conference call that it expects to supply Airbus with about 6 million pounds of titanium this year.

While RTI doesn't expect this annual total to change much in the next year or two as various Airbus programs ramp up, it has already begun manufacturing parts for Airbus "on a prototype format," which it indicates is a key component in its longer-term business strategy with the aircraft builder ([amm.com, May 1](#)).

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