AIRBUS LIKELY TO INCREASE PRODUCTION IN MOBILE, MAYOR SAYS

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Airbus Group SA is likely to **increase** aircraft output at its **Mobile**, Alabama, factory beyond its current four-a-month target, the mayor of the Southern U.S. city said on Tuesday.

Airbus has said it could produce up to eight single-aisle jetliners a month at the plant, which opened last month, an increase that would help Airbus work through its large backlog of orders, Mayor Sandy Stimpson said in an interview.

Stimpson said he based his view on public statements by Airbus and conversations with Airbus officials, not special knowledge of Airbus plans.

An Airbus spokeswoman said the company plans to build four A320-family aircraft a month at the factory by 2017, and there were "currently no plans to change that rate."

Airbus has a backlog of 5,502 orders for A320-family planes, or nearly 11 years of production. Airlines ordering new planes face a long wait for them, and both Boeing and Airbus plan to increase rates to help shorten delivery times.

"Because of the backlog, they've got to figure out a way to increase production," Stimpson said of Airbus.

Airbus, which also builds A320s in France, Germany and China, has said the newest plant in Mobile will be its most efficient. It plans to increase global A320 production to 46 a month next year from 42 now. U.S. rival Boeing Co also plans to lift production of its 737 plane to 47 a month in 2017 from 42 currently.

Stimpson and Mobile are using the new $600 million Airbus factory as part of an effort to rebrand the city and attract businesses and jobs, Stimpson said during a visit to New York City. Alabama this year created tax credits of up to 4 percent for businesses that create at least 50 jobs.

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