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## Raytheon celebrates facility expansion

*Cornelia de Bruin The Daily Times*

FARMINGTON — **Raytheon** Missile Systems' NAPI facility launched the Memorial Day weekend by honoring its employees and celebrating its new, 30,000-square-foot expansion project. "We have 80,000 employees worldwide," said **Raytheon** Director of Government Relations Suzanne Dutton. "We are mindful of your efforts and we value your work."

The plant's 170 workers produce two weapons, the Excalibur and the Tow systems. Excalibur is an artillery projectile that is used in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Tow is a tube-launched missile.

"Without you, we couldn't make them," said Rick Nelson, a **Raytheon** vice president.

Planning for the **Raytheon** expansion began in 2006, when the weapons manufacturing company approached the Navajo Nation's Project Development Department, said LoRenzo Bates, chairman of the Nation's Budget and Finance Committee and Upper Fruitland delegate to the Navajo Nation Council.

The \$6 million project received \$2 million in funding from the New Mexico Tribal Infrastructure Fund. The Navajo Economic Development Fund and **Raytheon** also helped pay for the project. The expansion itself is expected to add a total of 80 new jobs when running at full capacity.

"The committee saw that it was a viable venture," Bates said.

With a speaker's platform filled with dignitaries, thanks were many and far-ranging, running the gamut from politically correct nods to the construction workers who built the plant to the contractors who supplied labor and the necessary materials.

"Thanks to **Raytheon** for believing it can do this project on Navajo and give us the opportunity to contribute to our soldiers," Bates said. "But mostly, to the people, our employees; the people had extreme faith in you, so thank you."

John Eagles, a U.S. Army customer, told employees **Raytheon**'s product protects "our soldiers."

"Excalibur's success in Iraq will allow us to grow and expand our land product line," he said.

Following a similar verbal path, U.S. Army Lt. Col. Bryan Hight, an artillery officer based in Fort Sill, Okla., told employees that the soldiers are pleased with the weaponry.

"They're not having problems," he said. "This thing works; it's an awesome tool."

U.S. Rep. Tom Udall, D-N.M., whose campaign trail led through San Juan County Friday, said the success of the **Raytheon** facility shows employees' dedication to what they are doing.

"I noticed a lot of women working here," he said. "Navajo women make it happen on the reservation."

Udall praised the group, which includes some of the highest-paid Navajo workers. Each **Raytheon** employee brings home about \$50,000 annually in salary and benefits.

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Photo: Navajo Nation Council Delegate Lorenzo Bates, left, U.S. Representative Tom Udall, and Donnie Quintano, right, of the New Mexico Economic Development Department, are among others in the ribbon cutting ceremony for the **Raytheon**'s NAPI facility expansion Friday at **Raytheon**.

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