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MEDIA CONTACTS:

Nathan Sparks, CEcD
Executive Director
One Okaloosa EDC
(850) 362-6467
nathan@oneokaloosa.org

Tim Rhyne, Sr.
President/CEO
Gulf Air Group, Inc.
(850) 682-8411
tim.rhyne@gulfairgroup.com

Gulf Air Group Slated to Undertake Significant Expansion at Crestview's Bob Sikes Airport

Okaloosa County, Fla. (Sept 20, 2022) – One Okaloosa EDC announced today that Gulf Air Group, Inc. has selected Crestview's Bob Sikes Airport for a competitive expansion project. The anticipated \$16,000,000 investment will be applied toward the construction and equipping of a new, state-of-the-art aircraft hangar complex totaling 70,000 SF. Along with the investment, the company has committed to hiring 55 individuals at an average wage of \$89,000 (179% of Okaloosa County's average wage). These positions are in addition to the 102 employees the company currently employs in their existing facility at Bob Sikes Airport.

Gulf Air Group specializes in the maintenance and operation of the L-382 Hercules aircraft – widely regarded as the most reliable, versatile and powerful aircraft for hauling oversized loads to and from remote areas. The company provides solutions for medium-lift cargo aircraft, maintenance, technical expertise, and research (RDT&E) for clients worldwide. As an FAA repair station, Gulf Air focuses on high-quality, low-volume maintenance across the entire L-382-series of airplanes through our 14 CFR Part 145 Repair Station. In 2019, Rolls-Royce selected Gulf Air Group to be an Authorized Service Center for the AE2100D3 engines.

"Gulf Air Group has been a proud member of Okaloosa's aviation community since 1987. During this time we have found the aviation offerings at Crestview's Bob Sikes Airport to be second to none, and with the recent addition of the Northwest Florida State College Aviation Center of Excellence directly across the airfield from us, it will only get better. Although we reviewed other locations, the support of the Okaloosa Board of County Commissioners, the Okaloosa County Aviation Advisory Board, the Okaloosa County Airports Department and One Okaloosa EDC made it very attractive for us to expand our Crestview maintenance operation with the new facility," said Tim Rhyne, President/CEO, Gulf Air Group.

"Today's announcement, that Gulf Air Group will be undertaking a significant expansion in Crestview is, not only welcome news for the 55 individuals who will ultimately be presented with new career opportunities, it is welcome news for the entire community. Aviation is an exciting industry sector with tremendous growth potential, and companies like Gulf Air Group continue to prove that Okaloosa is well-equipped to share in this future," said Chairman Mel Ponder, Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners.

"The Okaloosa County Airports Department is very proud to help facilitate a significant expansion with Gulf Air Group through a new lease at the Bob Sikes Airport. We are very excited to see the new aeronautical development that will fit like a glove at CEW. Gulf Air Group is well poised to further their success and are thrilled with their commitment to high wage job creation in our community – we look forward to building on our solid partnership," said Tracy Stage, Okaloosa County Airports Director.

“One Okaloosa EDC applauds the decision by Gulf Air Group to undertake their competitive expansion project at Crestview’s Bob Sikes Airport. The targeted infrastructure investments made by the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners in recent years – combined with Okaloosa’s skilled workforce bolstered by an annual pipeline of 1300 technically-trained military transitioners – continue to bear fruit in this highly prized industry sector,” said Leslie Sheekley, Chair, One Okaloosa EDC.

About Gulf Air Group

Gulf Air Group, Inc. is a Crestview, FL based aviation business specializing in the maintenance and operation of the L-382. Gulf Air provides solutions for medium-lift cargo aircraft, maintenance, technical expertise, and research (RDT&E) for clients worldwide. As an FAA repair station, Gulf Air focuses on high-quality, low-volume maintenance across the entire L-382-series of airplanes through our 14 CFR Part 145 Repair Station. The company’s expertise is founded on the professionalism of their personnel and managed through the highest standards-based processes.

About One Okaloosa EDC

Founded in 1989, One Okaloosa EDC is a 501(c)(6) non-profit, public-private partnership serving Okaloosa County, Florida and its nine municipalities (Cinco Bayou, Crestview, Destin, Fort Walton Beach, Laurel Hill, Mary Esther, Niceville, Shalimar and Valparaiso). As the community’s lead economic development organization, One Okaloosa is committed to fostering economic diversification and prosperity through comprehensive strategies and initiatives. In addition to its public partners, One Okaloosa enjoys broad support from more than 130 leading private sector businesses representing a wide range of industry sectors. More information is available at www.oneokaloosa.org.

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