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Butzel Long attorney Beth Gotthelf's passion for Defense Industry trade missions with Israel a win-win for Michigan and Israel businesses

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DETROIT, Mich. – **Butzel Long** attorney and shareholder **Beth S. Gotthelf** is a visionary who spearheaded the *first-ever* trade mission of Israeli Defense companies to a state, which has now led to the *first-ever* trade mission by a state of defense companies to Israel. As a result, Michigan and Israel defense companies are reaping the benefit.

Recently, Butzel Long participated in a five-day trade mission to Israel coordinated by the Michigan Israel Business Accelerator (MIBA), the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), MEDC Defense Center, and Macomb County. The mission was in cooperation with the State of Israel Minister of Defense, SIBAT International Defense Cooperation (SIBAT). The goal of the mission is to expand export opportunities; meet with potential buyers; and, promote Michigan's leadership role in the defense sector. The Right Place, a regional non-profit economic development organization, based in Grand Rapids, also participated.

"The recent trade mission to Israel was extremely valuable in establishing relationships with potential partner companies in Israel, and also creating new Michigan relationships," said **Jim Kendall, President & CEO, Cignys in Saginaw**. "Two new connections could quickly result in new business, which from a timing standpoint, certainly exceeded my expectations of the mission. "Beth Gotthelf is to be commended for her foresight to drive the mission and encourage my participation. It was well worth the investment and I look forward to the development of long-term relationships and business with Israeli partners."

"There are vast opportunities for Michigan to partner with Israeli defense businesses," said **Vicky Rad, Deputy Director Macomb County Planning and Economic Development**. "Due to programs under the Foreign Military Funds (FMF), many businesses, both large and small are seeking to engage the U.S.

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market. This trade mission has helped us educate them on the defense assets we have here in Macomb County and throughout our state.”

Notably, SIBAT wanted Michigan to be the first state SIBAT hosted in Israel for a defense mission, added Gotthelf, Director of Innovation and External Relations and Chair of Butzel Long’s Aerospace and Defense Industry Team and a MIBA Board member. “The mission to Israel just concluded with more business opportunities for both Michigan and Israel companies.”

According to **Gene Sorgi, President, Challenger Communications, LLC in Albion** and **Jill Reschke, Challenger’s Director of Sales and Marketing**, the opportunity to meet with the right people at the largest Israeli defense companies to discuss providing satellite antennas, support, and replacement parts is invaluable.

“The opportunity to travel to Israel with the Michigan delegation was a great opportunity for RAMI,” said **Robert Payne, General Manager, RAMI in Grand Haven**. “The ability to meet with leaders at SIBAT and leading Israeli defense companies will be invaluable as RAMI looks to further expand into the Israeli and international markets. We are looking forward to continuing to develop the friendship we formed while in Israel.”

Meanwhile, Gotthelf stated that SIBAT has had trade missions in the past, but only with other countries. Her vision was for a trade mission to Michigan. She approached SIBAT who at first had no interest. Working with the MEDC, the Defense Center and Macomb County, Gotthelf spent 18 months, including two visits to Israel, convincing, then planning and hosting the 2017 trade mission to Michigan. At the time, Gotthelf also served as the President of the Michigan Israel Business Bridge (MIBB) -- now the Michigan Israel Business Accelerator (MIBA).

The 2017 trade mission to Michigan was successful in netting business opportunities. However, importantly, it garnered key attention to Michigan as a major defense center. Macomb County is a hub of Michigan’s defense industry, anchored by the U.S. Army’s Tank Automotive Research, Development and Engineering Center (TARDEC) and Tank-automotive and Armaments Command.

“The Michigan Israel conference was a success,” said **Amira Ilany, SIBAT European and North American Division Director, based in Tel Aviv, Israel**. “Beth Gotthelf’s initiative of this event, planning all the details of the schedule and executing it was altogether a whole new concept that needs to be duplicated again. I use this event as an example of a successful business-to-business experience. Exposure of the Israeli defense companies to professional end users in Michigan and to defense companies as well, was an unprecedented event. Our defense representatives from the Israeli defense companies were very pleased.”

“There is more opportunity than ever for Michigan and Israel-based companies, from mature organizations to start-ups, to collaborate,” added Gotthelf.