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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **SOUTHWEST FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT HOSTS TRAVELING EXHIBIT COMMEMORATING THE BERLIN AIRLIFT**

Visitors to and citizens of Southwest Florida have the unique opportunity to view a traveling exhibit highlighting the historic Berlin Airlift. The exhibit, "The Berlin Airlift – A Legacy of Friendship" is on display in the main terminal at Southwest Florida International Airport from Jan. 23 through Feb. 13, 2009.

As part of Southwest Florida International Airport's "Art in Flight" program, the traveling exhibition which is touring the U.S. through mid-2009 was brought to Fort Myers - the only city in Florida - by the German Embassy and the German Honorary Consul in Florida, Ms. Norma Henning. The display features historic photos illustrating the Berlin Airlift, including the people and aircraft that made it all possible. "The Berlin Airlift – A Legacy of Friendship" honors the heroes of the Airlift and highlights its historic significance. The exhibit is part of the campaign celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Airlift.

For more information, please see the news release from Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, below.

**JAN. 27, 2009**

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Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany

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## Press Release for immediate release

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### **“Friends Always” Exhibition commemorates 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Berlin Airlift at Southwest Florida International Airport, pays tribute to U.S.-German Friendship**

From Jan. 23 – Feb. 13, 2009, Southwest Florida International Airport, in cooperation with the **German Embassy and the German Honorary Consul in Florida, Ms. Norma Henning**, will host a traveling exhibition to commemorate the history of the Berlin Airlift and its legacy of friendship. Shown on the second level in the east atrium at Southwest Florida International Airport, the exhibition “The Berlin Airlift – A Legacy of Friendship” will highlight the historic importance and honor the heroes of the Airlift.

Honorary Consul Norma Henning explains: *“The years 2008 and 2009 mark the 60th anniversary of the Berlin Airlift, one of the greatest humanitarian efforts of all time. In 1948 and 1949, the United States and her allies saved more than two million men, women and children in West Berlin when the Soviets blockaded the city. The Airlift created a legacy of friendship between the American and the German people.”*

The German Embassy, the Consulate Generals and the Honorary Consuls in the United States have made the commemoration of the Berlin Airlift and its legacy of friendship a focus of their outreach activities all over the United States. Their motto for the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is: “Friends Always.”

Robert M. Ball, A.A.E., executive director of the Lee County Port Authority said, *“We are excited that this exhibition has come to Southwest Florida International Airport. The community and our passengers will get to understand more about the significance of the Berlin Airlift and learn why it is considered one of the most dramatic rescue operations of the 20th century.”*

After World War II, Germany was divided into occupation zones. The United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union and France were to govern occupied Germany jointly. But the Cold War was looming. The Soviets wanted the Western Allies out of the city of Berlin, which was an island of freedom in the middle of the Soviet occupation zone. On June 24, 1948, the Soviet Union began a blockade of the land and waterways to Berlin.

But the United States, together with their Allies, took a stand to protect the freedom of Berlin. During the 11 months of the Soviet blockade, the American Air Force and British Royal Air Force combined to fly 277,569 missions over Berlin, dropping a total of 2,325,570 tons of food, fuel, and supplies. The Allies supplied more than 2 million men, women and children with life’s essentials by air.

*"The Airlift is considered one of the greatest humanitarian actions of all times. It is almost unbelievable that the United States and her Allies were able to sustain the city of Berlin for 322 days, from June 24, 1948 to May 12, 1949," says Klaus Scharioth, German Ambassador to the United States. "Only three years after World War II had ended and thanks to the Airlift, former enemies would become friends."*

Together with Airlift veteran Col. (ret.) USAF Gail S. Halvorsen, Ambassador Scharioth opened the traveling exhibition that will now be at Southwest Florida International Airport after its first stop at the Andrews Air Force Base, MD Joint Service Open House in May 2008. In a gesture that would help win the hearts and minds of the German people after World War II, Halvorsen had dropped candy for the children in beleaguered Berlin, earning him the legendary nickname "The Candy Bomber."

Ambassador Scharioth points out the historic significance of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Berlin Airlift: *"The men and women of the Airlift left us with a legacy of friendship. They tell us: 'Our friendship is based on shared fundamental interests and values. We will face the challenges of the future together.' We want to share that legacy of friendship with people all over the United States. In particular, we want to share it with the more than 15 million Americans - the servicemen and women and their families - who have been stationed in Germany since World War II."*

More on the '**FRIENDS ALWAYS**' Airlift Anniversary campaign at: [www.Germany.info/Airlift](http://www.Germany.info/Airlift)