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Greek official courts Utah companies eyeing involvement in Games

By Mike Gorrell
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As Greece's consul general in San Francisco, Dimitrios Touloupas saw firsthand how well Salt Lake City handled the 2002 Winter Olympics, and he expects Athens to succeed as well with the Summer Games this August.

Touloupas also figures a number of Utah businesses that contributed to Salt Lake City's quality performance will get a chance to repeat their work in Greece, during and after the Olympics.

"We hope that if they start work in Greece, they will enjoy it and stay after the Games with different projects," he told The Salt Lake Tribune Friday. "Greece is a small market, but has a high level of buying power . . . This market will become more prosperous and interesting."

To that end, Touloupas had lunch Friday with representatives of several Utah companies in various stages of obtaining contracts to work at the Athens Games.

"It was terrific, really upbeat," said Bill Wing, general manager of Colonial Discount Flag & Flagpole Co. in Sandy. His company supplied flagpoles and banner hardware for the 2002 Olympics and is negotiating with Greek companies to form a partnership to provide similar equipment for Athens.

"I'm not sure if he is a decision maker, but it's always good to meet people. It's all about opportunity and what you do with it," said Wing, who was joined by officials from Cuisine Unlimited, Power Innovations, Meander Adventures and Salt Lake City government.

Tina Lewis, director of the state Department of Community and Economic Development's International Business Office, said Friday's luncheon was designed to enhance already strong ties between the state and Greece.

"Utah has a solid relationship with Greece that is enhanced by our Olympic experience. Our hope is that Utah businesses will find success in Athens," she said, adding that a trade mission to Greece is being contemplated during the Games if logistics can be worked out.

Touloupas, who also spoke Friday at the Hinckley Institute of Politics and visited St. Sophia Hellenic School in Holladay, said Greece will be ready for the Olympics in August. Despite widespread concern that Greece is vulnerable to a terrorist strike, he promised that "we are doing whatever is possible that can be done to deal with any eventuality. We're throwing a lot of money at the challenge of security."

The Greek people are looking forward to the Olympics returning to their birthplace and, like Utahns, will benefit from both physical infrastructure improvements spawned by the Games -- new freeways and train systems -- and the emotional satisfaction of playing host to the world.

"Salt Lake City's Games were highly successful and raised international awareness of the city



Representatives from Utah companies met for lunch Friday to discuss the Athens Games. Among them were (from left) Marvin and Maxine Turner; Dimitrios Touloupas, Consul General of Greece, and Bob Mount. (Rick Egan/The Salt Lake Tribune)

and what a really beautiful place Utah is," he said. "For Greece, [the Olympics] will showcase the capability of our country to organize this complex event, even though we're one of the smallest countries in the last 50 years to host the Games."

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