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September 16, 2005

## China-Built 300C

Posted Sep 16, 2005, 11:6 AM by Mike Aberlich  
 Category: China Strategy

I'm writing to you today from Beijing—the third stop on a swing through Taiwan and China where Chrysler Group president and CEO Tom LaSorda announced some major developments that are sure to give us a huge boost in both countries.

Today's big blast is the announcement of a new joint venture to build the Chrysler 300C here in China. Teaming up with our long time partner Beijing Automotive Industry Corp., we've created BeijingBenz-DaimlerChrysler Automotive Ltd., with the intention of building the car. In fact, construction's already started on a new plant where we intend to build the 300C. You've all reported just how popular the 300C is, but I've gotta tell you, this new deal aimed at building them here should say to everyone, Chrysler is gunning to expand its brands in the world's fastest growing market. How happy are we? So happy Tom unveiled a giant moon cake, just like the traditional moon cakes given during the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival which takes place on the 18th. Moon cakes were first created during the Ming Dynasty when people hid secret notes in them, before their filling became popular. Hidden under the cake Tom presented was a tasty new 300C.



Yesterday in Fuzhou Tom announced a partnership with Southeast Motors (SEM) with the intention to build minivans here before the end of 2006. This is the first time we'll be building a vehicle in China carrying anything but a Jeep ® though we haven't yet decided how the minivans will be branded. On Wednesday, we announced a joint-venture to build minivans in Taiwan.

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For those of you who weren't able to join us on the trip and take part in the presentations. I want to let you know this is a major play for us in a vital, growing market, and SEM in Fuzhou is emerging as a pillar of our overall China strategy.

The three product programs represent a \$350 million investment by the company and our partners. We look at this as the first step in a broader relationship that we hope will lead to some strong sales and profits in the region.

One more thing, the minivans and 300C's aren't coming back here...everything built in Taiwan and China is for the local market.

Mike Aberlich, Chrysler Group Communications

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September 15, 2005

## Rant Response

Posted Sep 15, 2005, 2:14 PM by Jason Vines

Category: The Fire Hose

It didn't take long for the "brave" web-sters to direct their obviously clueless blather at TheFirehouse.biz. A recent posting on another blog called our media-only site "stupid... insane...completely illogical and non-sensical."

Hmmm...I could use the same terms to describe the cowardly anonymous poster's understanding of what we're doing here...but I won't.

We might do a public site at some point but the idea right now is there's just so much news going on, that like the V-gram you get monthly from me, we want to go beyond the news releases and canned events. The Firehouse.biz is a chance to have an open dialogue with journalists who report on our company and the industry and who literally bombard us with their comments, questions, rants and bad jokes. Unlike our media website, which is a one-way deal, TheFirehouse.biz is a two-way street that goes off the page of the press release and allows reporters to vent, probe, attack, while we get a chance to respond on the fly from anywhere in the world and maybe hose down some rumors, or douse the idiotic rants from someone who is uninformed.

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September 14, 2005

## View from the Road

Posted Sep 14, 2005, 2:9 PM by Caravan Team

Category: Katrina Relief

This morning, 50 Dodge vehicles loaded with supplies and equipment bound for areas affected by Hurricane Katrina arrived in Jackson, Miss. They're part of a 100-vehicle caravan that left the Warren (Mich.) Truck Plant on Sunday, driven by company volunteers.



Here's what they found today on their arrival in Jackson:

Laurie Carter from Mack Avenue Engine Plant I said, "I feel it was a blessing that I was

allowed to come here. I lived in New Orleans as a child, and I feel like that's my home." Photos were snapped and videos rolled as the convoy drove along. Trucks blew air horns, people waved and construction crews gave thumbs up to the purpose of the convoy. As Rick Leisse, St. Louis North employee said, "It's because we want to do even more than give money." Lesia Vaughn, a facilitator from Mack Avenue Engine II, said "I wanted to come and see what I could do personally. It's the right thing to do." According to Romie Morgan, electrician at St. Louis North, "The tragedy hit them, but it affects us all. I take my hat off to the corporation to see what they have done. Most companies would have their name plastered on everything, but for DaimlerChrysler, it's not about profit, but about brotherhood. Makes me proud to be a part of it."



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September 14, 2005

## Katrina Caravan

Posted Sep 14, 2005, 9:17 AM by Jason Vines

Category: Katrina Relief

That long line of Rams, Durangos and Dakotas traveling down the interstate from St. Louis to Jackson, Miss. isn't just a moving traffic jam, it's more like mobile relief. Those 50 Dodge vehicles are jammed with all sorts of equipment and supplies to help clean up and rebuild the communities affected by Hurricane Katrina. This morning, those vehicles rolled into Jackson, Miss. They're stuffed with chainsaws, gloves, shovels, sledge hammers, along with toiletries, baby goods, food and water. Behind the wheel are Chrysler Group employees taking part in a 100-vehicle caravan that hit the road on Sunday from the Warren Truck Assembly Plant just outside Detroit, joining others in St. Louis.

When we asked why he volunteered, Warren Truck Plant employee Jerome Cooper showed the stuff our people are made of. He said "If I were in the situation they are in, I would appreciate it. When disaster hits, people aren't prepared for it—this way, they know people care."

The 50 vehicles arriving in Jackson will stay in Mississippi, with 40 of the remaining vehicles going to Louisiana and 10 to Alabama.

So far DaimlerChrysler has donated \$4.4 million to hurricane relief efforts.

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September 13, 2005

## Live from Frankfurt

Posted Sep 13, 2005, 4:21 AM by Jason Vines

Category: Frankfurt auto show

It's 10 a.m. in Frankfurt and we're live from the IAA. We had a good day yesterday as a whole. Tom LaSorda delivered Dieter Zetsche to the Mercedes Benz stand in a Jeep® Wrangler. Dieter unveiled high performance versions of the M and R-Class vehicles and finished off the press conference with the all-new S-Class. Awesome vehicle. If we could only change corporate policy and let the Chrysler guys lease one!!!! OK, I'm bitter.

We then proceeded to Camp Jeep Frankfurt. The rain had stopped, but the wind hadn't. We lowered a crate filled with two Jeep concepts -- Patriot and Compass -- only to have the crane operator blow our reveal by lifting the cover off too early. Being the ultimate PR professionals and adults, we of course threw a hissy fit, throwing out expletives like we were giving them away. The poor crane operator, who spoke no English, was forced to retreat back into his perch.

We found out later that the poor sap may have saved the reveal for us after all. Apparently, the wind had gotten so strong that he was in fear of losing contact with the crate and decided to pull it up early. Otherwise, we could have been totally SOL.

The good news is the vehicles went over great. And, if you look at where Jeep was a couple of days ago and now where it's going with the new Commander and these two puppies, the expansion of the brand is pretty dramatic. Stay tuned.

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September 11, 2005

## Welcome to TheFirehouse.biz

Posted Sep 11, 2005, 11:23 PM by TOM LaSORDA

Category: Welcome

TOM LaSORDA, president and CEO, Chrysler Group:

The last time Jason Vines gave me a song and dance about a "really fun" activity, I ended up in a dunk tank, neck deep in cold water. So, still soggy from that experience, when our vice president of communications suggested to me that I should speak directly to the media and then field their comments on something called an Internet blog, I reacted in the most appropriate manner I could muster—I tossed him out of my office with the affectionate send-off—"no more of your con jobs!"

But now, the more I'm learning about blogging, the bigger a believer I've become. I'll be watching the give and take between you, Jason and some of the other members of our team. As you begin to hold their feet to the fire, I may decide to jump in from time to time and offer my comments.

I do want to repeat the message I sent to our employees on Sept. 1, my first day in this job. Thanks to Dieter Zetsche's strong leadership, a strategic foundation is already in place, meaning there's no need for dramatic change. We continue to work toward our goal of ranking among the best in the world in operational excellence and customer experience. It's not going to be easy given today's market challenges that show no sign in letting up. That means it's critical we maintain our hard-won discipline in cost, quality and productivity while relying on our creative designs, innovative features and excellent vehicle dynamics.

I hope you'll stop in at TheFirehouse.biz often and find it useful. By the way, I'm glad Jason talked me into the dunk tank. It was part of a wonderful fundraiser for the United Way.

JASON VINES, vice president communications, Chrysler Group.

Thanks a lot Tom. Just think of the dunk tank as your baptism as CEO. This should be at least as much fun and this time we get to turn up the juice on reporters as we hose down rumors, throw cold water on inaccurate stories, toss out a few news nuggets, and hopefully ignite some spirited and honest discussions.

I did want to start by talking a bit about the two concept vehicles we're revealing this week at the 2005 International Motor Show in Frankfurt, Germany—the Jeep® Compass and Patriot.

Some of you have already reported these two vehicles are strong hints at a couple of vehicles we plan to build next year that could go a long way toward expanding Jeep's customer base around the world. There's more to it. While we're not discussing pricing of possible production vehicles, I can tell you they're both aimed at capturing customers new to the brand, offering cool styling, terrific fuel economy and interior flexibility at a great value.

Now here's my first chance to throw some cold water on an inaccurate assumption. Yes, both vehicles are car-based platforms, the same platform the Caliber is based upon. That is where the similarity ends as we engineered Compass and Patriot to be true Jeep vehicles. That means they are designed to be the most capable vehicles in the segments they would compete, whether 4x2 or 4x4.



They're tough little buggers that live up to Jeep's storied heritage. If they couldn't, we wouldn't call them Jeeps. It is not a stretch of any sorts to recall the old Jeepster and the Cherokee, the vehicle that started the modern SUV movement, when you look at these new interpretations. Now remember, the Patriot and Compass we're showing in Frankfurt are just concept vehicles, but they both designed to be equipped with the powerful and fuel-efficient all-new 2.4 liter World Engine and 2.0 liter diesel, for overseas markets. They could also be coupled with a new continuously variable transmission. As they say, stay tuned.

I'll have more from Frankfurt on the 14th

Now some ground rules: Everything we say in TheFirehouse.biz is on the record, so you're all free to use anything posted by me or our executives in a story or broadcast. All I ask in return from the media, is please, no X-rated stuff. I get enough of that in my email box... and I'm trying to get my mother to stop.

Also.. in the spirit of keeping things open and honest, we'd prefer you use your real names when you submit a comment or question. You can use a screen name if you like, but then how would I know to leave you off the list for the holiday party?

Finally, we'll never edit your submissions, but we'll only post those that stay on the topic and agree with everything I say. That last part's not true.

So let's hear from you and let's get this Firehouse smokin'.

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