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Upstate ranked with nation's top exporters

Machinery accounts for much of $3.5 billion in sales

By Raju Chebium
WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON — South Carolina's Upstate is among the country's top exporters, sending nearly $3.5 billion worth of products overseas, according to a new report.

The Greenville-Mauldin-Easley region ranked 73rd among the largest 100 metropolitan areas in export revenue, with much of that money coming from machinery sales abroad, according to the Brookings Institution study of 2008 data.

Five other areas — Concord, N.C., Charleston, Columbia, Summerville and Richmond County, Ga. — also were ranked. Concord and Richmond County were parts of regions that straddled North Carolina and Georgia respectively.

With companies like BMW, General Electric, Caterpillar, Michelin and Baldor operating in Upstate, the region's high ranking for exports isn't a surprise, said Charles Wilson, who heads the machine-tool technology program at Greenville Technical College.

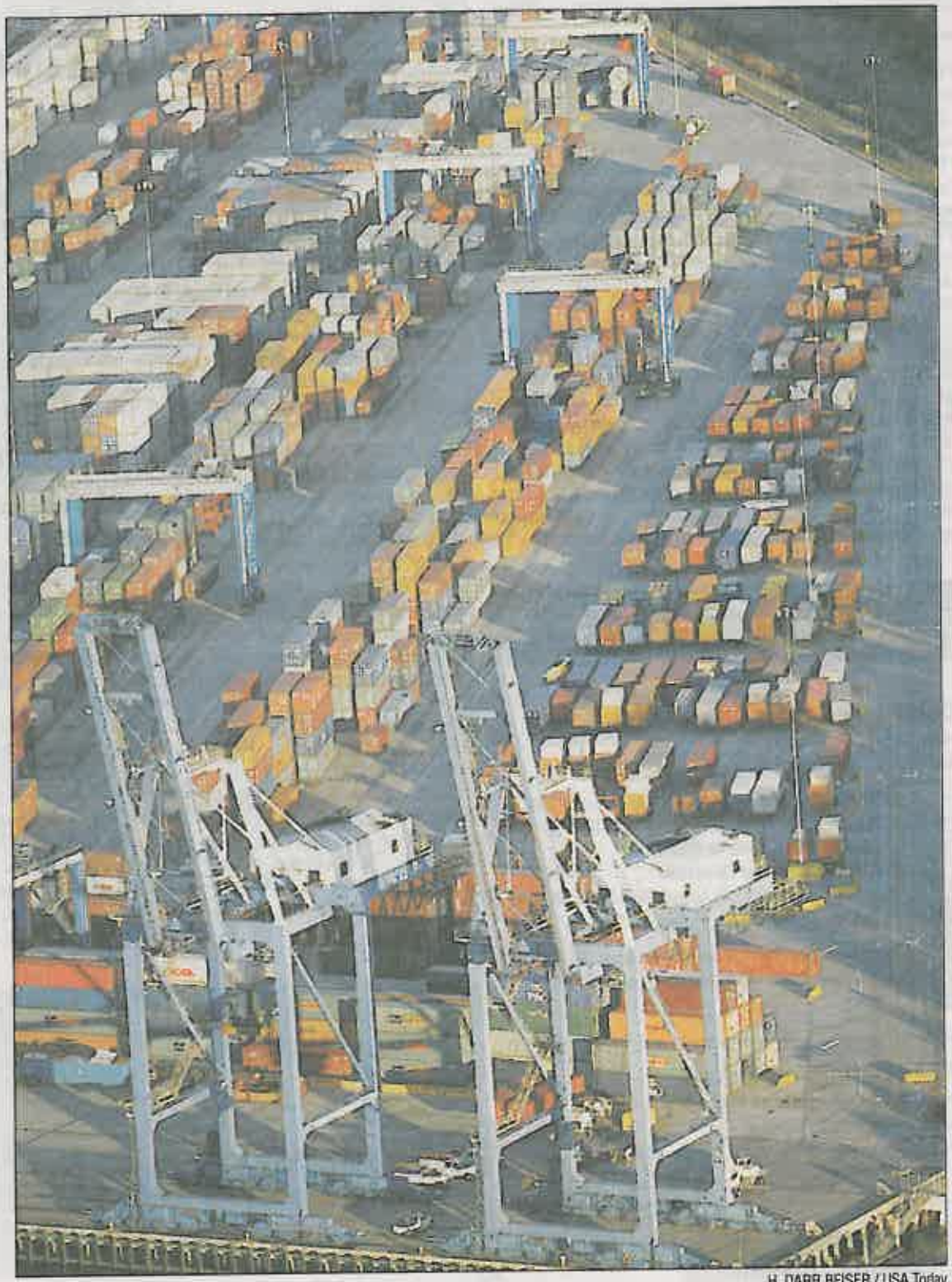
"We are a community of builders right here," he said. "Of course, we love to export ... because that's the bread and butter."

South Carolina has aggressively wooed manufacturing companies for decades.

See EXPORTS on page 2E

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Read the report at www.brookings.edu. Type "Export Nation" in the search box on the site.



H. DARR BEISER / USA Today

Hundreds of shipping containers are stacked up at the Port of Charleston, waiting to be trucked away or loaded onto ships. Charleston and the Upstate are among the top exporters in the country.