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# Aerospace exec bullish on use of South Point as launch site

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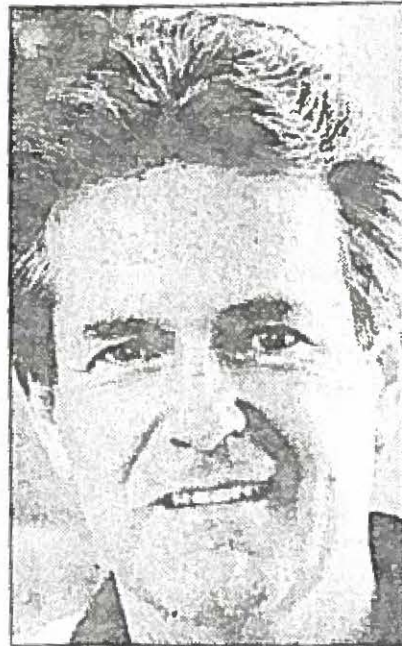
The United States may well need a third site to launch space payloads and, on paper, there is no better place for it than the Big Island's South Point area.

So said Richard E. Brackeen, vice president/general manager of Martin Marietta Corp.'s Denver-based Space Launch Systems unit, in an interview and speech here yesterday.

He is by no means the first to say so. Space Systems Inc. of Texas, starting in 1982, sought to launch private commercial satellites from South Point. But some area residents opposed the idea and the firm went looking elsewhere.

Martin Marietta has no plan to involve itself in such a venture, said Brackeen, but his company has an indirect interest. It's one of three principal U.S. manufacturers of launch vehicles. Its Titan family of rockets has competed for more than two decades with McDonnell Douglas' Delta and General Dynamics' Atlas families.

And since the Challenger disaster in January, U.S. policy has flip-flopped. Now, unman-



Brackeen

ned expendable launch vehicles again are to be the principal means of putting commercial payloads into space.

Why Hawaii as a launch site? South Point is the southernmost point in the United States. And the closer to the equator a rocket is launched, the greater the lift that's provided by the centrifugal force of the earth's

rotation — and the less the energy needed.

Also, Hawaii's insularity means rockets could be launched east or south (when polar routes are required) without risk to populated areas. The two existing launch areas, Cape Canaveral/Kennedy Space Center in Florida and Vandenberg Air Force Base in California, have less flexibility.

Also, Hawaii's clear atmosphere would make tracking and astronomical work easier.

Furthermore, civilian customers would have priority at a new site, in contrast to the existing ones.

Brackeen spoke to the annual meeting of the Economic Development Corp. of Honolulu at the Waialae Country Club. The invitation reflects EDCH President Frederick Sexton's interest in "taking advantage of a variety of natural advantages we have."

Sexton recently went to Washington to talk to NASA officials and aerospace executives "and that led me to contact Martin Marietta to explore what private industry development could come here," he said.

A South Point launching site could have its communications

infrastructure in Honolulu, where the employment pool is much larger, Sexton said. He pointed to Houston's key role in Florida launches as showing that separation is feasible.

An executive of C. Brewer & Co. Ltd., a large landowner at South Point, said yesterday his company would favor a launching site at South Point "if it would benefit the community and the state." It would also fit the state's objective of high-technology development, he said. (The other principal landowners at South Point are the state Department of Hawaiian Home Lands and Bishop Estate.)

Martin Marietta's Brackeen said partial U.S. government funding for a Hawaii spaceport might be obtained if it were determined that a third site were desirable — to provide an alternative in case of, for example, a disabling accident at one of the others. The price tag would be high, he said — hundreds of millions to perhaps \$1 billion.

Japan also would be a logical co-financier, and indeed a Big Island launch operation could serve a Pacific-wide clientele, he added.