

Aerospace leaders advocate for small satellite launch sector in Hawaii



Several aerospace leaders discussed why they think there is a place for the small... [more](#)

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Several leaders in the aerospace industry want to see Hawaii become a player in the \$260.5 billion global satellite industry.

Citing the state’s geographic location – close to the equator and surrounded by close to 2,500 miles of water in every direction – several aerospace leaders shared why they think there’s a place for the small satellite industry in Hawaii during a panel discussion at the Future Focus Conference on Wednesday.

“Right now, there are only two equatorial launch sites in the United States. Practically, it’s Wallops and Cape Canaveral. And they are designed to carry the large missions into equatorial orbit that we need for national security,” said [Martin Lindsey](#), an aerospace engineer for United States Pacific Command. “And they are very congested space ports.”

Lindsey was joined by [Craig Campbell](#), president and CEO of [Alaska Aerospace](#); [Ed Knobbe](#), president and CEO of [Spectrum Photonics](#); [John Roth](#), vice president of business development of [Sierra Nevada Corporation](#) and [Luke Flynn](#), director of the Hawaii Space Flight Laboratory, who moderated the panel.

“There needs to be another equatorial launch site for the United States,” Lindsey added. “From a physics standpoint, Hawaii is the best place to do it.”

Since the earth's rotation is faster near the equator, equatorial locations are favorable sites for launching payloads into orbit.

Lindsey said the state's isolation in the middle of the ocean also has advantages.

"Hawaii is surrounded by 2,500 miles of water in every direction. And when a rocket launches, it's going to have stages that drop and those stages cannot drop over land," he added.

Roth, whose aerospace company, Sierra Nevada, is currently developing its Dream Chaser spacecraft, said the ocean component also has its advantages for air launches.

"It gives us access to all the inclinations," said Roth. "We can fly far enough where we can go any inclination."

Flynn, who was part of the state's first satellite launch two years ago, which ultimately failed after takeoff from the Pacific Missile Range Facility at Barking Sands on Kauai, said the state is in the process of providing his program with funds to explore potential launch sites throughout the state.

"We are looking for private land," he said. "We're looking for private land owners that would want to host something on their land that's fallow right now and not used for anything else."

Campbell said Hawaii could be a suitable location for launching satellites from both the air and the ground.

"I'm advocating that Hawaii has the chance to capture both," he said. "It's not one against the other. If you want to develop an aerospace industry, you want to be able to accommodate what the industry needs, not just what you may think will be a slice of the industry, because you may bet wrong."

According to a recent report by the Satellite Industries Association, small satellites are the fastest growing segment of the global satellite industry.

The study, which was released in July, found small satellite services generated \$127.7 billion of revenue in 2016, the biggest single piece of the industry.

"The key is the business side," said Roth, on what the state can do to grab a piece of the market. "It's not about just looking at the technical part of building the satellite, you have to look beyond that. ... Hawaii should be focused just as much on the technical capabilities as looking at the business side of it, saying, 'What can we do that's going to raise ourselves above the fray?'"

One of those ways could be in the form of tax incentives, Roth added.

"Companies love incentives. Our company is no different," he said.

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