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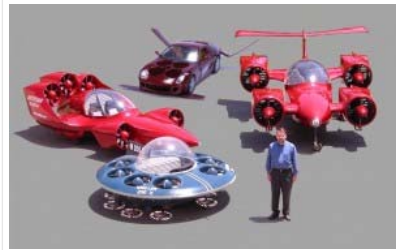
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Futuristic Flights Of Fun

By Rene Romo / Journal South Reporter on Sat, Oct 22, 2011

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Some of the other-worldly creations that might be seen at Spaceport America, thanks in part to a Socorro-area man who is a distributor. Photo Credit - Courtesy of Moller International

LAS CRUCES – Will the suborbital trips Virgin Galactic plans to launch from Spaceport America attract flying saucers?

A Socorro-area distributor of saucer-shaped aircraft hopes so.

Lindsay O'Brien Quarrie, chairman of Space Sciences Corp. of Lemitar, N.M., wants the saucers, which take off and land vertically powered by eight encased rotors, to become a permanent part of the tourist attractions at the state-financed Spaceport America nearing completion in southern Sierra

County.

Quarrie said he envisions the saucers flying over the dunes at White Sands National Monument, a la Luke Skywalker's landspeeder on the planet Tatooine.

"This is the land of UFOs and flying saucers," he said.

The saucers, which are about 10 feet in diameter and carry two to three passengers depending on the model, are manufactured by Moller International, based in Davis, Calif.

A Florida-based contractor, IDEAS or Integrity Arts & Technology Inc., is drafting plans for a menu of interactive exhibits and other features to educate and wow visitors to Spaceport America.

Quarrie said the opportunity to ride a flying saucer at a space-oriented facility is a natural fit. He said he has been in contact with IDEAS about making the saucers part of the tourist attraction.

The Spaceport Authority board has not been formally asked to consider proposed tourist attractions yet.

"I just want to see the smile on people's faces when they experience our technology," Quarrie said.

One version of the saucer, known as the M200 Neura, is able to fly to an altitude of 2,000 feet, with a cruise speed of 75 mph and a range of 100 miles, according to the Moller International website.

But, Quarrie said, a flying saucer available for tourist rides at Spaceport America would be restricted to no more than 10 feet off the ground and no more than 35 mph.

The vehicle, Quarrie said, could be operated by remote control or pre-programmed for a designated flight pattern so passengers do not have to try to pilot it themselves. The estimated cost of a ride in the flying saucer has not been determined, Quarrie said, but it would be affordable to the average visitor, especially compared to the \$200,000 price of a ticket on Virgin Galactic's rocket plane.

Quarrie said his company has received plenty of interest in the vehicles, which have a variety of applications, including search and rescue operations, delivering light payloads, military missions and recreation as a "Star Wars"-style hovercraft ideal for off-road travel.

Quarrie gave a presentation on the flying saucers at the International Symposium for Personal and Commercial Spaceflight, which ended Thursday at the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Museum. He plans to bring a model to the symposium next year.



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Donald Burleson, the Roswell-based director of the state chapter of the Mutual UFO Network, a civilian group that investigates reported sightings of unidentified flying objects, said having a flying saucer at the spaceport makes sense in a state so associated with extraterrestrial phenomena.

Dozens of books, movies and documentaries have been devoted to the reported crash of a UFO north of Roswell in 1947, an incident that is officially denied by the federal government but that is the basis of the International UFO Museum and Research Center and an annual festival, both in Roswell.

"Anybody who came here and saw that would go away with an even stronger sense that New Mexico is where the UFO phenomenon started and where it's continuing," Burleson said.

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