



Excalibur Almaz showcases spaceship and stations

Compiled from staff reports

When people think about the giant leap of the Apollo moon missions that forever changed human history few would imagine a growing space industry based on a small island as capable of replicating such an achievement. However this is the position that the Isle of Man, a British Crown Protectorate in the Irish Sea, is in since it was recognized as one of the space superpowers that could return humans to the moon.

At the forefront of this effort is Excalibur Almaz (EA), an Isle of Man (IOM) company founded in 2005 that has been working to leverage the island's pro-space government and professional infrastructure to become the world's leading commercial provider of private space transportation services.



(Against the back backdrop of the 15 ton Almaz space station frame, cosmonaut and Excalibur Almaz project consultant Valery Tokarev shares his space flight experiences with Isle of Man students)

“Because of the friendly business atmosphere and tax conditions - specifically for space businesses - it became very attractive to be based on the Isle of Man,” said Dr. Leroy Chiao, former astronaut and Executive Vice President of Technical Operations for EA.

To achieve its commercial space goals, EA is combining its flight-tested legacy Russian spacecrafts from the “Almaz” program with modern technology and engineering.

“We are leveraging the billions of dollars worth of research, development, and testing that have already been put into these spacecraft,” said Art Dula, CEO and founder of EA. “Having these tested and proven systems give us a unique and tremendous advantage.”



EA's space program and family of space systems were on full display earlier this month when the company opened its hangar doors to the students, media, and general public on the Isle of Man. More than 8,000 people - roughly 1 in 10 citizens on the island - as well as visitors from around the globe traveled to EA's facility located at a former Royal Air Force Station in Jurby to see first-hand what the company has to offer.

What they saw were EA's two space stations, one a near-completed test unit and the other a flightworthy frame, as well as the Reusable Return Vehicle (RRV) that will serve as the transport vehicle to and from the space stations in orbit.

Tim Craine, Director of the Isle of Man Government's Business Development Agency said, "We were delighted at the event that Excalibur Almaz held on Island June 17-18. It attracted worldwide media attention and thousands of Island residents went to view the amazing spaceship and twin space stations."

Although none of the spacecraft on display have flown in space, the Almaz RRV consist of proven hardware that has successfully completed nine unmanned spaceflights, while similar Almaz space stations have flown three manned and two unmanned flights as part of a secrete Russian government space program that operated from 1960's-1990's.

"I never expected to see space stations and a capsule first-hand and the reaction of those who attended was positive and very appreciative," said Minister Eddie Teare from the IOM Department of Education and Children. "It brought home to me the scale of the operation and how fortunate we are to have a company such as Excalibur Almaz as part of our community."

In contrast to the covert history of the stations, EA's business plans for its spacecraft is to serve as space destinations as well as platforms for microgravity scientific experiments for governments, corporations, and academic institutions.

"We are evaluating the stations for modernization and future use as an orbital vehicle for space tourism, exploration, and microgravity science," said Buckner Hightower, Executive Vice President of Business for EA. "We know it works; now we are redesigning it for the future."



Along with the days open to the general public, hundreds of student from the island's primary schools also received a personalized educational tour from cosmonaut and EA project consultant, Valery Tokarev.

“Excalibur Almaz has always been keen to educate and enthuse the Island’s school children about space and the growing opportunities and true to form, they did this again with this event by organizing a series of visits in conjunction with the Department of Education and Children,” said Mr. Craine.

“Excalibur Almaz has a clear objective to educate and encourage our young people to participate in the space industry which forms an integral part of our economy,” added Minister Teare.

Aside from the educational benefits, the Excalibur Almaz event supports the island's efforts to grow its space industry as well as the emerging international space market with the same spirit and determination reflected on the IOM's motto, “whichever way you throw us, we always land on our feet.”

Therefore, when the next giant leap in cooperative space exploration is achieved, it should be no surprise to see EA and IOM on ‘its feet’ and leading the way.

(Mission Statement) Excalibur Almaz's mission is to become the world leader in providing reliable, affordable and routine access to space for exploration, experimentation, and tourism for customers around the world. EA plans to accomplish this by leveraging proven flight tested products and systems from US, European, and Russian space programs to create value, reduce costs, and development time. 🌐



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