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**Global Telecommunications Company Signs Lease at
Spaceport America**
HAPSMobile will develop High Altitude Platform in New Mexico

SPACEPORT AMERICA, N.M. - HAPSMobile Inc., a subsidiary of Japan's telecommunications operator SoftBank Corp. (TOKYO: 9434) has chosen New Mexico's Spaceport America for test operations and development of a specialized communications platform designed to provide internet connectivity to hard-to-reach places around the globe, Economic Development Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes announced today.

The company, along with its minority owner and aircraft development partner AeroVironment, Inc. (NASDAQ: AVAV), is working on development of the unmanned solar-powered High Altitude Platform Station. The stratospheric telecommunications platform, a so-called cell-tower in the sky, is designed to provide better communications to under-served areas, including rural communities.

A lease for development and flight testing at Spaceport America was signed in March, and an investment into the site is planned.

The work at Spaceport America will help HAPSMobile and AeroVironment obtain government certification for the unmanned aircraft system, which has 260-foot wingspan and is designed to circle in the stratosphere for extended periods of time while carrying a telecommunications payload. It is expected to operate at an altitude of 65,000 feet above sea level.

"This announcement is further evidence that New Mexico's ambitious vision for Spaceport America is being realized. We've always been clear that we were building a platform where visionary companies could develop space-based solutions to all kinds of problems, and it's gratifying to see that work paying off and to welcome HAPSMobile and AeroVironment to our state," Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham said. "We look forward to being home to the world's first cell tower in the sky."

The companies said the large swath of restricted airspace at Spaceport America, its weather, and proximity to Las Cruces and New Mexico State University make Spaceport an ideal location for flight testing. They also praised New Mexico's business climate, aerospace workforce, and technical expertise.

The New Mexico Economic Development Department is supporting the expansion with \$500,000 from the Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) fund. LEDA was created by the Legislature to assist new and expanding businesses with financial support for land, buildings, or infrastructure.

“The business-friendly environment in New Mexico, along with incentives like LEDA and JTIP help us bring forward thinking companies such as HAPSMobile and AeroVironment to New Mexico,” Cabinet Secretary Keyes said. “Add to that the strong aerospace and engineering workforce cluster and we see an important path forward to grow jobs and diversify the economy.”

“The project is an exciting concept that can positively impact communities and relief efforts throughout the world with internet connectivity. We are tremendously proud to have this program, along with their high-tech staff, as our newest collaborator at the Spaceport,” Daniel Hicks, Executive Director of the New Mexico Spaceport Authority, said. “We’ve been discussing this effort for some time and I believe it was Spaceport America’s professional team, our unique capabilities under WSMR’s restricted airspace, along with our strong partnership with EDD that allowed for a successful site selection for this project.”

Sierra County is the fiscal agent for the LEDA grant. County Manager Bruce Swingle said the community is starting to see real benefits from businesses in and around Spaceport America.

“We’re seeing more people coming and going and more revenue from those people coming into town buying gas and going to stores. These are higher paying jobs that help us diversify the economy,” Swingle said. “We will do everything we can to accommodate them.”

About Spaceport America

Spaceport America is the first purpose-built commercial spaceport in the world. The FAA-licensed launch complex, situated on 18,000 acres adjacent to the U.S. Army White Sands Missile Range in southern New Mexico, has a rocket friendly environment of 6,000 square miles of restricted airspace – surface to unlimited, low population density, a 12,000-foot spaceway, and 340 days of sunshine and low humidity. Spaceport America is currently home to four full-time tenants- Virgin Galactic, SpinLaunch, AeroVironment and Up Aerospace. We regularly host testing and launches for other customers including Boeing, Exos Aerospace and Sugarhouse Aerospace.

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*Photo credit: NASA/Carla Thomas | September 2019
HAPSMobile's unmanned aircraft system takes flight at NASA Armstrong Flight
Research Center in California*

The New Mexico Economic Development Department's mission is to improve the lives of New Mexico families by increasing economic opportunities and providing a place for businesses to thrive.

