

Riding A Ribbon To Space A Thousand Feet Closer

September 29 2005

LiftPort says it has completed preliminary tests of its high altitude robotic lifters under its waiver to use airspace granted by the Federal Aviation Administration.

The lifters are early prototypes of the technology that the company is developing for use in the LiftPort Space Elevator, its commercial space elevator to ferry cargo back and forth into space.

In tests conducted in Washington state last week, the robotic lifters successfully climbed 1,000 feet up a simulated, working space elevator a model elevator "ribbon" attached to a moored high altitude balloon. According to the company, these tests represent the first-ever use of this technology on a free-hanging ribbon in the development of the LiftPort space elevator concept.

"These tests mark an historic milestone, in regards to the general space elevator concept as well in the development of the LiftPort Space Elevator, and we appreciate the FAA's willingness to work with us on these tests," said Michael Laine, president of LiftPort Group.

"The ability to test our hardware in a simulated working environment is a critical step in the ultimate development of the LiftPort Space Elevator. Additionally, these tests are dual use - not only will they help us learn more about the things we need to do to ultimately build the LiftPort Space Elevator, but they have great value for real world applications today.



"Our system called HALE (High Altitude Long Endurance) will have uses in a variety of fields. For example, after a natural disaster, we can provide radio, cellular or Internet access using our platform as a relay station. Or it could provide real time surveillance over the damaged region. Once our hardware is tested, we believe it can be deployed to save lives."

The company plans additional tests later this fall. Dates for the tests will be forthcoming.

A revolutionary way to send cargo into space, the LiftPort Space Elevator will consist of a carbon nanotube composite ribbon eventually stretching some 62,000 miles from earth to space.

The LiftPort Space Elevator plans to be anchored to an offshore sea platform near the equator in the Pacific Ocean, and to a small man-made counterweight in space. Mechanical lifters are expected to move up and down the ribbon, carrying such items as people, satellites and solar power systems into space.

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Citation: Riding A Ribbon To Space A Thousand Feet Closer (2005, September 29) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <u>https://phys.org/news/2005-09-ribbon-space-thousand-feet-closer.html</u>

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