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Our View: Spaceflight Symposium brings spotlight to Las Cruces

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The International Symposium for Personal and Commercial Spaceflight wrapped its fifth annual visit to Las Cruces Thursday.

For those who couldn't make it - and that's most of us, since the price tag was \$445 - the symposium is designed to bring scientists, businesses, investors and key players in the spaceflight industry together to discuss where things are headed.

It is significant that this symposium, organized by the New Mexico Space Grant Consortium, is now a regular event. It has put Las Cruces and southern New Mexico on the map, and with each return visit, attendees are seeing continued progress with the development of Spaceport America. They're also learning about the importance of space to many aspects of human life; just think of all the things you use that depend on satellites.

U.S. Air Force Undersecretary Gary Payton, one of the keynote speakers, said Wednesday, space also has a critical role in national security.

"Our reliance on space is getting more and more critical every day," Payton said. With 43 other countries having a presence in space, it is "no longer a sanctuary, it's a contested domain," he said. Payton added that the commercial space industry can play a role in replacing or repairing space technology systems that are damaged or destroyed.

The resumes of speakers and presenters read like a roll call of the world's greatest science institutions

and organizations. And to make sure people are paying attention, the ISPCS also scheduled someone less predictable: Dan Bjork, the director of market and sales for the Ice Hotel in Sweden. That may sound odd until you recall that Sweden also has a spaceport which will be a "sister" spaceport to ours. Tourism is an important piece to the spaceport, and this had some interesting information to share.

There were eight scheduled presentations, including, for example, "Unique Capabilities in New Mexico for Reusable Launch Vehicles and Payload Processing."

Everything that went on the past three days is a potential building block for a thriving spaceport industry, which could one day become a vital piece of our local economy.

We appreciate all the local individuals and businesses who made this event happen.

We also appreciate the inclusion of the Leonard P. Sugerman Public Forum Tuesday, a free event open to the public.

This year's Sugerman Forum drew 110 people from around the region, and several speakers updated them on Spaceport America and its attendant opportunities.

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