

# Re: DIRECT question for Oberg, Simberg, Spencer, et. al.

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On Tue, 11 Sep 2007 11:59:09 -0700, Frank <[landings.geo@xxxxxxxx](mailto:landings.geo@xxxxxxxx)> wrote:

Forgive me if this has been asked of the "experts" here already, but I'm wondering what you guys make of the "DIRECT Launcher" proposal at <http://www.directlauncher.com/> (or [http://www.directlauncher.com/Test\\_Site/](http://www.directlauncher.com/Test_Site/) for their new site.) The AIAA-Houston August issue of "Horizons" also has an interesting article on the project, available for download at <http://www.aiaa-houston.org/> .

As I'm sure you know, DIRECT is being promoted as an "open source," single-launcher alternative to Ares I and Ares V, and uses much more shuttle-derived hardware (both flight and ground service) to loft, they claim, some three times the payload of Ares I in DIRECT's initial version; to do it several years sooner; and to do it at a savings of tens of billions of dollars.

I must say as a layman that I find the financial, technical, and political arguments of DIRECT proponents to be extremely compelling. However, I am just a layman. Any thoughts on the matter from experts in the field?

I'm no expert, but DIRECT seems to be a much more sensible way to go, if NASA absolutely must build its own launch system yet again (which it shouldn't.) The main argument against is the "two-SRBs per human launch = double the chances of a catastrophic launch failure (versus Ares I.)" Fortunately, the SRBs have been behaving themselves since Challenger, so I'm not sure how serious an issue that really is.

Second, in another, now seemingly desperate attempt to shave weight from the Orion CEV in attempt to save their anemic booster of choice (Ares I) NASA recently dropped the requirement that the Orion land on land.

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No, it didn't. It looks as though they're leaning that way, but that decision has not been made yet.

One wonders what a cash-strapped Defense Department thinks of NASA committing it to billions in future expenditures field fleets of splashdown recovery forces?

The land landing (there must be a better way to say that) would have been at Edwards. If the Orion can make that precise a landing on land, it should be able to at sea as well. Therefore, massive recovery fleets aren't needed (and Apollo's recovery forces weren't enormous, either... just usually one of the older support carriers.) A Coast Guard Cutter will do. A big version of the SRB recovery ships (with a helipad) is the likely choice.

I have yet to see any of this discussion make the mainstream media, but with Ares I continuing to falter, I suspect we will.

There is only hearsay that Ares I is faltering. I'm in the "where there's smoke, there's fire" camp, but really we're all just arguing in the presense of a little smoke.

Brian

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