



S A T O P

SPACE ALLIANCE TECHNOLOGY OUTREACH PROGRAM

#### **News release**

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### Haiti to benefit from SATOP success story

## SunNight Solar is lighting world two flashlights at a time

**BAY AREA HOUSTON, TEXAS** – Two billion people on this planet cannot simply walk over to a wall and flip on a light switch. When darkness comes, they use kerosene lanterns, candles and single-use battery flashlights to light their homes or paths where they walk. Thanks to Mark Bent, founder and CEO of SunNight Solar, and Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership’s Space Alliance Technology Outreach Program, this is changing - two flashlights at a time.

SATOP is administered by BAHEP. It is a State of Texas and federally funded initiative designed to transfer the knowledge and technology of the U.S. Space Program to small businesses to solve technical challenges they are unable to solve themselves.

Bent, a former Marine, diplomat and oil executive, spent over 20 years in Africa and the developing countries of the world. When that part of his career came to a close, he decided to help those who had made such a difference in his life. Safe, affordable light sources are not readily available in the world’s poorer regions; therefore, Bent set to work developing a solar-powered flashlight that could be used as the main light source in a home as well as outside at night. His first design was not water and shock resistant - two critical factors for the flashlight to survive the harsh conditions in Africa and other developing countries.

Bent had read about the SATOP program in an article that appeared in the Houston Chronicle. Not one to give up easily, he completed a Request for Technical Assistance through the University of Houston’s Small Business Development Center. Fernando Amaton, an electrical lead project engineer with Houston-based MEI Technologies, Inc., a SATOP Alliance Partner, was assigned to the project.

Amaton said, “Changes were needed in the materials used as well as modifications to the design to make it easier to build.” Housing the flashlight in industrial strength plastic solved the durability and water resistance problems. However, the Light Emitting Diodes in the flashlight were breaking. This resulted in a second RTA, and Amaton, again, was up to the challenge. He discovered that the supplier wasn’t using the proper amount of metal in the LEDs. A change of suppliers solved the problem. Bent stated, “Everyone involved with SATOP was very responsive, very concerned about my level of satisfaction. Receiving information from the best in the field is invaluable.”

Once the LED situation was resolved, tens of thousands of Bent’s BoGo flashlights found a place in African homes where children can now study better at night and women feel safer being out after dark. Thousands more were shipped to cyclone ravaged Myanmar and the victims of the earthquake in China. Now, Bent has partnered with the Clinton Global Initiative Light Haiti Project to help in the disaster recovery. A community of organizations has set the goal of sending 500,000 lights to Haiti.

How is Bent's SunNight Solar company lighting the world two flashlights at a time? BoGo stands for "buy one give one." For each flashlight sold, Bent donates a second identical light to a non-profit, international assistance organization that distributes it to people in developing countries.

SATOP's Alliance Partners donate hundreds of hours to people just like Bent, and they are helping to make a big difference in small businesses that need their expertise. Amaton commented, "I'm pleased to be working with SATOP, sharing the value of my aerospace background and experience for the public good." It seems that SATOP is shedding its own kind of light on technical challenges faced by today's small business owners and, often through them, helping people in dire need as well.



*Fernando Amaton, left, an electrical lead project engineer with Houston-based MEI Technologies, Inc., a SATOP Alliance Partner, was assigned to assist Mark Bent, founder and CEO of SunNight Solar, with a technical challenge involving his BoGo flashlights.*

**The Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership** is a member-driven organization that provides the leadership to stimulate regional economic development and employment in southeast Texas. Its members include more than 260 investor companies, business professionals, local governments, and educational institutions encompassing 13 cities, Galveston and Harris counties, and the Port of Houston Authority. Visit [www.bayareahouston.com](http://www.bayareahouston.com).

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