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PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

LATEST NEWS

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China-Hawaii airlift void seen

The executive director of the Hong Kong-Hawaii Chamber of Commerce says China business people are willing to do more business with Hawaii but see the lack of direct air connections as a major obstacle to that.

Johnson Choi, back from two weeks meeting with 30 business leaders in Hong Kong and Southern China, says that's the main point he took away from meetings that he described as more truthful and down-to-earth because they were away from public attention.

"It is very disturbing when I introduce myself from Hawaii at the beginning of each meeting that all except one said the absence of direct flights have made Hawaii an inconvenient business destination," Choi said. He added that those who visited Hawaii more than five years ago also complained of unfriendly customs officers, but he feels this isn't a problem any more and told them so.

A generation ago there were frequent direct flights between Hong Kong and Honolulu, because Honolulu was a mid-ocean stopover on flights to U.S. mainland. But when airlines were able to fly over Hawaii in longer-range jetliners they did, saving the cost of ground crew and landing fees in Hawaii. Now flying from Honolulu to Hong Kong usually means going through Tokyo.

Hawaii companies that want to do business in China may benefit from partners in Hong Kong. Frank Martin, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, says when U.S. companies fail in China it is usually because they lack knowledge of the local market, lack a credible local partner, and think they can solve problems by throwing money at them.

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