
WERNHER VON BRAUN AND HUNTSVILLE

Wernher von Braun was a rocket scientist from Wirsitz, Germany who began his work for the US government after he and his team of fellow engineers surrendered to US forces on May 2, 1945. Over the following years he helped the US government in its development of rockets and ballistic missiles as well as trained American rocket scientists.

In 1950, the US government transferred von Braun and his team to the Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama. Here he and his team developed several launch vehicles, including the Juno II, Saturn I, and Jupiter C rockets. The United States' first satellite, Explorer I, was propelled into orbit by a Jupiter C rocket. After NASA's establishment in 1958, the Marshall Space Flight Center was added to Redstone Arsenal and von Braun became its first director. Under von Braun's leadership, the Marshall Space Flight Center developed the Saturn V superbooster, which carried the Apollo 11 mission to the Moon.

Aside from his influence in the aerospace sector, von Braun also had influence on the city of Huntsville. Von Braun aided in creating the Huntsville Symphony Orchestra, the Rocket City Astronomical Observatory and Planetarium, and he influenced the development of the University of Alabama at Huntsville's Research Institute. He and his team of German engineers also brought elements of German culture to Huntsville, and von Braun publicly supported hiring minorities and opposed Jim Crow Laws.

Sources: <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-2349>
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