

Casino CEO Kerzner dies in crash

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic (Reuters) – Howard „Butch“ Kerzner, chief executive of hotel and casino operator Kerzner International Holdings Ltd., was killed on Wednesday in a helicopter crash in the Dominican Republic.

Kerzner was surveying potential development sites for his company when the helicopter went down near the resort of Puerto Plata. He died along with two pilots and another passenger, the company said in a written statement.

„It is with great sadness that the entire company mourns the tragic loss of Butch Kerzner,“ the company said.

Kerzner, 42, and his father, chairman Sol Kerzner, recently led a USD 3.2 billion buyout of their company, which operates Atlantis Paradise Island, a casino resort in the Bahamas, and the One&Only luxury hotel chain.

Privately held Kerzner International, based in the Bahamas, is nearing completion of about USD 1 billion in expansions at its Bahamas resort and is constructing a second USD 1.5 billion Atlantis-branded resort in Dubai.

Butch Kerzner told Reuters in an interview last month the company was also eyeing Las Vegas as a potential site for a multibillion-dollar Atlantis resort.

Singapore license bid

Kerzner has partnered with Singapore’s CapitaLand to bid for a license to develop a casino resort worth more than USD 1.5 billion on the city-state’s Sentosa island.

The helicopter crashed about 120 miles (190 km) north of the Dominican capital, Santo Domingo, in the area of Sosua and

Cabarete, near the well-known resort of Puerto Plata.

A civil aviation official said the aircraft, which belonged to a company called Helipuertos Dominicanos, encountered bad weather and was believed to have had mechanical problems.

It was flown by two Dominican military pilots and carrying another Dominican national, the official said.

Sol Kerzner, the South African gaming tycoon who created Sun City and founded Kerzner International, was en route to the Dominican Republic.

The company said board member Paul O'Neil, the former chief executive of the company's largest operation in the Bahamas, has been appointed acting CEO of Kerzner effective immediately.

Butch Kerzner, who was appointed chief executive in January 2004, is survived by his wife and two children.