

Re: cost of probe to Pluto?

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- *From:* "David Nakamoto" <res07oeg@xxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Mon, 23 Jan 2006 20:21:42 GMT
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"Tim Killian" <TJK@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message news:6sydnXY_h4KIpUjeRVn-hg@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

> Yes Tom, that certainly makes sense should NASA's one "basket" get holed by a
> small meteor during the 9-year cruise to Pluto.
>
> It will be the ultimate irony if China or ESA sends an ion engine powered
> probe to Pluto and it arrives years ahead of a New Horizons mission that went
> silent five years out!
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> Tom Rauschenbach wrote:
>> On Sat, 21 Jan 2006 12:48:33 -0700, Tim Killian wrote:
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>>>It's too bad they didn't build any redundancy into this mission. Two
>>>spacecraft would greatly improve the chance of success for such a long
>>>flight, and the marginal increase in cost would have been a good investment
>>>IMO. But that's NASA -- all the eggs in one basket.

I think what you guys are forgetting is the cost of the War in Iraq, which is really still continuing, on the NASA budget. Billions of dollars are being spent on this war every month. Due to this, funding for other things like space exploration have suffered. So if the NASA director says you only have so much money to use on an entire mission, if you know you need a minimal science suite of instruments to get any meaningful science done, you know that the cost of developing those instruments, developing a spacecraft to haul all that out there, and include paying the people to do this and guide and monitor the spacecraft during those 10 years, and you tally that up and find you can only build one spacecraft, and you as the head-honcho of the project say, well, we won't fly then, I hope you can outrun all those pissed-off scientists.

Risk is part of the space exploration biz. Yeah, we'd like redundancy, but if you can't build two spacecraft then you build one the best way you know how.

And neither China more ESA nor anyone else has a mission in the works. You don't slap such spacecraft together in a few years. At least you don't, and expect it to work. Ask the people across the pond about Beagle II.

--- Dave

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Pinprick holes in a colorless