

## Re: Bush cancels Hubble telescope rescue mission

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George William Herbert ([gherbert@retro.com](mailto:gherbert@retro.com)) wrote:

: Eric Chomko <[echomko\\_at\\_\\_at\\_polaris.umuc.edu](mailto:echomko_at__at_polaris.umuc.edu)> wrote:

: >I think Mark Whittington in his article on the HST repair:

: >[http://www.washingtondispatch.com/article\\_10682.shtml](http://www.washingtondispatch.com/article_10682.shtml)

: >

: >...makes a very good point. If we plan to go on to the moon and Mars with

: >manned missions then we shouldn't flinch at not ding the HST repair due to

: >a risk factor. There will ALWAYS be risk.

: The question is, what level of risk, for a specific vehicle and

: mission profile.

: Risk cannot be eliminated, and anyone trying to do so is dangerously

: delusional. Risk should be managed: understood, taken into account

: in planning and communications, etc.

Agreed.

: Shuttle is a riskier vehicle than NASA wants it to be, and for

: that and cost reasons it's going to go away as soon as its

: currently unique capabilities can be duplicated elsewhere.

Which makes sense.

: The problem with Hubble is complicated. The Hubble repair

: mission has to be done before they lose enough more gyros

: that it starts tumbling.

Yes, time is an issue as we do not have the luxury of getting to it when we simply want to.

: That is running up against a number of risk management

: and availability challenges in the overall Shuttle program.

: In case you haven't noticed, we have a major space station

: partially up and partially running and partially manned

: right now, being supplied via a very thin pipeline via a

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: nation whose political stability and friendliness are still  
: not entirely certain. We have no way of completing the  
: station construction with existing vehicles other than  
: Shuttle, nor of keeping the station maintained in a  
: reasonable manner including supplies and such.

This brings us to a judgement call. Also, can ISS wait? We know HST can't, but can ISS, just a little? It has waited this long...

: Oh, and did you notice that the shuttle is still grounded?...

Hopefully, by the summer it won't be. That is the plan as you well know.

: Once it gets ungrounded, there is a reasonable case to  
: be made that the remaining flights in the lifetime of the  
: program all go to Station, to get it resupplied, reboosted,  
: finish assembly and then that's it.

This is where we disagree. And again it is a value call. Can we do both ISS and fix HST? I believe that we can. Unfortunately it is not my call. Those making the call feel that HST is expendable and ISS can't miss a single shuttle on the manifest. And they claim risk is the issue, where to me I can't help think politics plays a role.

: It's not just one more mission on top of the 25-odd Station  
: missions that have to fly. It's the one oddball mission  
: out in the planning process, and it will have to come sooner  
: rather than later, and the time crunch on sooner is currently  
: getting to be a big problem.

It is one we have done before! It is not out of the blue. Also, this is no time to be timid. Where is Chuck Yeager when you need him?

: I personally feel that the Hubble repair mission is probably  
: worth doing a flight for. However, I feel that having studied  
: the real problem and having some understanding of the depth  
: and complexity. And having done so, I find myself willing  
: to accept the validity of NASA staff who have decided (with  
: the same info and dilemmas) that they should not.

A return to space mission is always good for confidence. No one wants the unthinkable to happen. Well, maybe bin Laden, but screw him, he's not part of the equation. At least he shouldn't be!

: If you spin a terrifically simplified and naive story  
: around the decision not to repair Hubble, then it seems  
: such a clearcut evil in the universe. But doing so is  
: to neglect a whole host of safety and operational problems.

I'd like to see two or three successful ISS missions under our belts and then reevaluate the HST mission. Again we need some confidence and some

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leadership!

: That's not responsible in general, and in particular it's  
: not responsible or wise post-Columbia. What will happen  
: to ISS and the manned space program if we lose another  
: shuttle between now and completion of assembly is not  
: a happy thing to consider.

Yes, another disaster would be more than double the problems we have now.  
Our whole manned program would be dealt a huge setback. But, I'm focusing  
on success, why aren't you?

: We are, all things considered, very lucky that Columbia  
: happened late enough in the assembly process that ISS did  
: not re-enter and burn up in the time it took to get  
: Shuttles flying again. A number of us have been aware for  
: at least the last 15 years that there was a significant  
: risk of losing another Shuttle, and that there was a  
: significant risk of losing one during Station assembly, and  
: a significant risk that we'd lose Station as a result of  
: that loss. All of which points to structural problems  
: in the current manned space / shuttle program paradigm,  
: but that's beyond the point. Those have been hashed out  
: and are being addressed, as soon as they are programmatically  
: possible.

Statistically speaking the Columbia disaster fits the timeline. In short,  
disaster s happen in space.

: I take the long view. We have a lot to lose here,  
: right now. Risk management, in the long term sense,  
: does not mean blind risk acceptance in this particular  
: case is a wise thing to do. I would rather not lose  
: manned spaceflight credibility in another accident  
: with a known brittle system.

Well all said and done success has a way of changing things. I'm a little  
taken aback by our timidity in the post 9/11 world when it comes to manned  
spaceflight. I don't recall any of this negative focus after the  
Challenger disaster. Our goal should be both ISS and to fix the Hubble,  
IMO.

Never forget what JFK said: "We don't do these things because they are  
easy, we do them because they are hard."

Eric

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