

Re: Hubble Marching orders

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From: George William Herbert (gherbert_at_retro.com)

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Greg Kuperberg <greg@see-web-page.edu> wrote:

> *George William Herbert <gherbert@retro.com> wrote:*

>> *Greg Kuperberg <greg@see-web-page.edu> wrote:*

>>> *Alex Roland said at the very beginning of this story that the real*

>>> *purpose of the Bush space vision was to sustain the space station and*

>>> *only pretend to move on. It's like saying, "I am absolutely resolved*

>>> *to quit smoking --- six years to the day from today!" [Henry's] complaint*

>>> *is exactly consistent with Roland's take on it.*

>>

>> *Except that Station's growth has been solidly truncated for the*

>> *forseeable future,...*

>

> *For about the fifth time. But, as Robert Park pointed out many years*

> *ago, the space station is a hydra: no matter how much you cut off, it*

> *will just grow back. One reason for this is that the space station was*

> *a mountain of wild promises from day one, when Reagan first announced it.*

>

> *They aren't really truncating the space station unless they lay off a*

> *lot of people. That is exactly what Washington still doesn't want to do.*

It's Dead, Greg. It's pushing up daisys.

The production lines for node hardware and components are shut down.

One could presumably recreate that capability from scratch, but there isn't anyone employed in a position to be making new ones right now.

Hardware that doesn't already exist isn't going to get built without significant new investment.

So, yes, everyone involved in manufacturing the basic components is "laid off"; they still have the final assembly and checkout people there because you don't completely abandon that capability until it's up in orbit, but the whole back end of the process is all done.

>> *and Shuttle's lifespan has had its limit defined.*

>

> *But not really. First, Bush is taking no responsibility to retire the*

>space shuttle himself; the next guy is supposed to do it.

Because it won't be done with flying ISS components up until the next President's term. Or do you think we should abandon ISS and just shut down the program and Shuttle now?

> Second, in

>the face of this supposed retirement, they were still planning 28 more

>shuttle flights until recently, so Bush's date isn't even credible.

They're planning to complete the ISS assembly. Shuttle upgrades and such related to flights past that time have been terminated. They aren't investing any more in new technology or lifetime extension beyond what's needed for those flights. The budget for those upgrades and extensions and capability adds other than those needed in the next few years of ISS flights has been zeroed.

Again, that could get reversed, but as of right now, Shuttle's lifetime will be Over a very few years from now.

>And third, even though the retirement date isn't politically credible,

>the date is close to a truism of engineering. In other words, Bush

>"limited" the shuttle to about when it will fall apart anyway.

The Shuttles aren't all going to immediately fall apart at that time: they needed major refurb and various systems to be recertified or remanufactured. Endeavour at least has quite a bit more lifespan left on her, as she's much newer.

To keep it flying past then, there needed to be money spent, a lot of it now. Money on long term work on the engineering and improvements and repairs.

That money now isn't going there, it's going other places.

>Or, as I should say in all of this, Bush and O'Keefe. Frank

>Seitzen reported in November that O'Keefe was promoting the then-fetal

>space policy to the White House. I believe it.

>

>>I think that there's an implicit "we can't go on to Moon/Mars

>>until we have shown that we can actually finish this Station

>>project" in a lot of what O'Keefe and Bush have done.

>

>And, you know, you can't climb Mount McKinley until you have

>shown that you can smoke 10 more cartons of cigarettes.

Greg, I don't really care if you agree with it. But I think that Congress *does* agree with it, and would look upon NASA's inability to actually finish ISS as a sign of its inability to execute on anything. That's the point. NASA doesn't get its money from a giant dollar tree in the VAB. They have to keep

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Congress and the President and OMB convinced that they're worth it and can use it reasonably wisely. If those people lose faith then NASA goes away, or withers.

–george william herbert
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