

Re: Back to the moon? When?

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 - *Date:* Wed, 28 Nov 2007 15:41:46 GMT
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On Wed, 28 Nov 2007 06:26:33 -0800 (PST), in a place far, far away, Quadibloc <jsavard@xxxxxxxxxx> made the phosphor on my monitor glow in such a way as to indicate that:

On Nov 9, 12:12 pm, John Schilling <schil...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

The point is, A: human lives are *meant* to be risked, on account of they are each and every one of them guaranteed to be lost whether you risk them or not, and B: humans are roughly a thousand times better than the best contemporary robots at doing the sort of things space scientists care about (and better still at doing the sorts of things politicians care about), so sending them off to do space science and whatnot is a really amazingly good way to risk a human life.

It's bad enough that, yes, humans will eventually die of old age. But every death of an innocent human being is a tragedy of such immense proportions that it is not at all true to say that human lives are "meant to be risked". Only the most serious reasons should lead us to do such a terrible thing.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with your second point – and yes, since people will accomplish more in studying Mars than machines will, of course it would be legitimate for people to want to go there. At some risk to their lives.

Spending absurdly high amounts of money to reduce risks in ways that don't even work is not what I recommend. But the opposite temptation of rushing and cutting corners is always present as well.

The approach to risk in space should be one that leaves no ambiguity, but instead makes it resoundingly clear:

- the astronauts themselves are brave individuals who were willing to face the hazards of space, and
- we, on the ground, did everything we could as best we could to get

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them back safely.

Then space will remain forever unaffordable.

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