

## Re: NASA gets SGI 2048-core Itanium 2 supercomputer

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Dr. Dweeb wrote:

Can someone give me one, clear, unequivocal reason why manned space flight out of earth's orbit in any way justifies its cost relative to unmanned missions (which are massively less expensive) to other solar system bodies?

When Christopher Columbus set out, he was hoping to find a way to india by going west. He didn't find what he was looking for. But he found something totally unexpected.

Mankind is compelled to explore. From a kid wanting to take things apart to see what is inside, or adults wanting to see new lands and explore, it is a built-in need.

Going to other planets and possibly finding other life forms is not an economic activity, it is a humankind activity. It is money spent to make us feel good, give us a feeling that mankind is evolving positively and possibly might find something terribly exciting. And even if we don't going to mars and coming back will be quite the accomplishment.

Humans need challenges. Whether it is climbing everest, cycling across australia or going to mars, it is a challenge.

Going to mars is a difficult challenge because we don't quite yet have the technology to go there and must develop and test it. The space station is one such test. In and by itself, the station isn't going to yield any fanstastic discoveries, but it will teach us how to build a long term vehicle, how to live in such etc etc. If your goal is to climb everest, you will likely start by climbing smaller mountains to test your equipment and know yoru capabilities.

Apollo (and the CEV/Constallation) will just be weekend camping trips to the Moon. Humankind has been there, done that. Nothing new.

But building a vehicle that can go to mars and back with a large crew, as well as the vehicles to land on mars and get back to the main ship remains a formidable challenge.

the space station is also baby steps in learning to work together so that different countries could contribute to a trip to mars. So such a trip, instead of being a immature competition on who can get to te moon first, will be a truly human endeavour encompassing the planet.

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Instead of building new shuttles, the USA has chosen to build appolo vehicles and some cargo rockets, and hopefully will also develop automated docking capabilities which the USA has not needed due to the shuttle's abilities. Once the shuttle's abilities have been fully replaced (or new shuttles built once constellation is cancelled), then the USA can resume its progress in building large structures in space that would be capable of eventually going to mars and back.

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