

> -----Original Message-----  
> **From:** Dermer, Charles  
> **Sent:** Friday, November 12, 2004 11:08 AM  
> **To:** 'letters@washpost.com'  
> **Cc:** Dermer, Charles  
> **Subject:** Letter to the Editor  
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To the Editor of the Washington Post:

Please consider the following letter for publication in the Washington Post. This letter is exclusive to the Post, and can be considered to be signed in view of being sent through this e-mail header. (I would be glad to send a signature, for example by fax, if needed.)

My home address is:  
XXXX Road [redacted]  
Alexandria, VA XXX [redacted]  
My home telephone number is: XXX [redacted]  
My business telephone number is: 202-767-2965

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,  
[s] Charles D. Dermer

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Code 7653, Naval Research Laboratory  
4555 Overlook Ave., SW (202)767-2965  
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<http://heseweb.nrl.navy.mil/gamma/~dermer/default.htm>  
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It will be a sad end to the Hubble Space Telescope mission if thrilling and fundamental science of the sort that Hubble provides is lost by a desire to keep this telescope alive at all costs. And the costs are enormous: the \$1 billion - \$1.6 billion dollar figure given in the November 12th article (page A3) for robotic servicing of instruments and installation of the de-orbiter is at the low end of any price tag quoted in public NASA advisory meetings. The development of new robotic capabilities on a time frame where battery failure could scuttle the entire effort is very exciting, very ambitious, and very high risk. This would seem worthy of the NASA legacy if there were no opportunity costs, but some NASA program has to foot the bill. If this is the science program, the Hubble servicing effort could sideline other NASA missions poised to make the next great discovery about our universe. More sensible is to do everything possible to extend Hubble's life from ground while developing autonomous capabilities on a realistic timeframe (attachment of a de-orbiter for Hubble can wait until 2011-2012). This extra time will also permit these technologies to be developed in line with the President's Vision for Space Exploration.

Charles Dermer  
Alexandria, VA

The writer, a former chair of the Division of Astrophysics of the American Physical Society, is an astrophysicist at the US Naval Research Laboratory. The opinions expressed are his own.

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