

SHUTTLE FOREVER.

The abortion of X33 "proved" that the free access to space is not feasible, quod (NASA) erat demonstrandum.

by Fabian Eilingsfeld

When NASA selected the winning X-33 bid on 1 July 1996, it seemed to be clear from the outset that this concept would not deliver. Poor Al Gore, who announced the decision: Revolutionizing space transport with the X-33 was a promise he couldn't keep. Too many bells and whistles. Too many new technologies. Too many open questions. At times I think that just this was intended by NASA: to select a concept that had the least chance to ever endanger the status quo with NASA's standing army of umpteen-thousand people

in Shuttle operations alone. And: to keep out the contender that already had proven part of its viability in form of the DC-X ...

Why should NASA have changed anything? There simply was no reason for it. They can only loose, in whatever direction change goes forth. If NASA had chosen the MDD proposal by 1996, the thing would have been flying to orbit by now. Probably. And: NASA would have lost control of access to space ...

Now NASA can point fingers in industry's direction and say: "Hey, we told you so. SSTO and low-cost space flight will never happen! X-33 proved it."

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