

## No need for NASA

### Spaceshipone's success demonstrates benefits of privatized space program

"It is error alone which needs the support of government," Thomas Jefferson once said. "Truth can stand by itself." On the morning of June 21, Americans witnessed two truths. The first was that the creative mind of an engineer could fly into space at almost three times the speed of sound.



MIKE WALTERS

The other truth is space travel is possible without needing government support—it was financed by Microsoft Corp. co-founder Paul Allen.

"Our success proves without question that manned space flight does not require mammoth government expenditures," said Burt Rutan, the aerospace designer behind Spaceshipone and its mother ship. "It can be done by a small company operating with limited resources and a few dozen dedicated employees."

Rutan is absolutely right—no one can argue with the facts shown as clearly as his rocket's contrails stood against the blue sky over the Mojave that morning. While NASA sucks up billions of dollars trying to do a job hampered by its status as a government agency, the journey of Spaceshipone demands that private individuals should be handed the keys to the American space program.

"By placing the space program under governmental funding, we necessarily place it at the mercy of governmental whim," say Robert Garmon, a philosophy professor at Texas A&M. "The results are written all over the past 20 years of NASA's history: the Space program is a political animal, marked by shifting, inconsistent and ill-defined goals."

As a government program, NASA is forced to accommodate to, initiate and scrap projects by the will of politicians. Take for example the X-38, a project started in 1995, designed to serve as a

"lifeboat" in space. Despite the need for a support system sadly demonstrated by the Columbia tragedy, it was scrapped in 2002, only two years short of completing its flight test phase and showing a great deal of promise.

According to the Federation of American Scientists, around 200 people were employed on this project. While one can only guess at the cost of building and testing prototypes and employing that many people for that long, the bottom line is that their work was all wasted.

Corporations would never spend that kind of time and effort on a project and then dissolve it, because they are motivated by making a profit. Without that motivation, NASA has no incentive not to spend money irresponsibly. Though a lot of good has come out of NASA, men like Rutan prove that the space program can be handled by civilians who can do the same things, and more cheaply.

"Before Wilber Wright went to Paris with his airplane, the Europeans thought he was lying," Rutan said. "Then they watched him do turns, and they watched him fly for a long time and they watched him do multiple flights a day. I believe the significant thing is that they then all said, at the same time, 'I can do that, too, because these are just bicycle shop guys.'"

The fact that the era of human flight was started by a couple of "bicycle shop guys" stands as a concrete example of a notion often dismissed as idealistic by bitter old men—that ordinary human beings are capable of heroic feats of excellence, if a passion and desire to do so is followed by courageous action. The Wright brothers embodied such a spirit, and the recent flight of the Spaceshipone presents further proof of what man is capable of.

The true human spirit is found in all those things America's enemies seek to annihilate—hard work, dedication, vision and the individual rights necessary to pursue our lives and dreams. This spirit was seen as Spaceshipone climbed toward the heavens in triumph. Further, it was an accomplishment unblemished by the theft of American money.

Though the Apollo landings and other such marvels in the realm of human space travel are



fantastic, they are sadly marred by the ill use of government funds. As long as NASA is funded by income tax, money will be forcibly taken away from us by our government and fed into an inefficient bureaucracy that holds back what is possible.

The government must let go and allow the proof of people like Rutan are providing to convince

Americans that space exploration is best handled by the men and women who can do it without stealing their funding.

Mike Walters is a senior psychology major. Graphic by Rylie Deyoe

**"The space program can be handled by civilians who can do the same things, and more cheaply."**

## Talk alone won't make peace in Middle East

By Garin Hovannisian  
THE DAILY CALIFORNIAN

Without variation and with omnipresent intensity, the single cure to every natural, economic and political calamity is said to be civil dialogue.

What is the solution to heated debates between campus groups? Discourse, proudly proclaim student leaders. How about the solution to labor strikes? Round table discussions, opine the analysts. And what can we use to resolve this Middle East conflict once and for all? The media, body politic and government all agree: mutually beneficial conflict-resolution dialogue.

In minor disputes and legal arbitrations, dialogue sure works. Cases that would take years to be resolved are quickly and effectively settled outside the courtroom. And often a petty quarrel between friends can be overcome through discussion and understanding.

But in the matter of court cases, the opposing sides are citizens bound by the same set of laws and the problem is a misunderstanding, not a clash of worldviews.

In the present conflict, Israel and Palestine are not governed by the same laws and their conflict is not rooted in misunderstanding.

The origin of the conflict between Israel and Palestine is clear - it is their diametrically opposite historical, political and cultural beliefs about the world around them.

The conflagration here extends even beyond a strong ideological matchup. The problem is not in the debate itself but rather in the rules of the debate. The different historical legacies of Israel and Palestine have rendered them incompatible entities. The recent history of the Middle East peace process seems to prove this.

The most promising outcome of the Middle East peace process, which was initiated in October 1991 at the Madrid Conference, came in August 2000.

President Bill Clinton, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and the head of the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat got together in Camp David for some good, hearty discussion. At fir it everything seemed to be going well.

But just one month later, when Israel's opposition leader Ariel Sharon visited the

Islamic sites on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, suicide bombing began again, and the Middle East was thrust once again into chaos.

But if Sharon had not visited the Temple Mount, the voice of dialogue still asserts, then perhaps the peace could have been maintained.

Until when? Until one rebel suicide bomber blew up a mall in Israel or until an impassioned Israeli soldier killed an innocent civilian? When two sides fight on the same level as Israel and Palestine now fight, there will always be occasion for violence.

The peace process by its very nature requires that both parties at least agree on the terms of debate. But due to disparate cultural, historical and political circumstances, Israel and Palestine can never do this.

The total inefficacy of billions of dollars, thousands of Web sites, tens of thousands of articles -- decades of energy expended by dozens of governments on the Middle East peace process -- prove that peace through debate is not possible.

So we have arrived at that dreadful conclusion -- in this instance, peace will never be achieved. It will not be achieved because two sides are fighting tirelessly for what they believe is the truth -- their destiny. The two sides have their eyes on the same prize.

How will this whole thing end? If history has anything to do with it, it will end when one side scores a convincing victory and the other side bears a substantial defeat. Every major conflict in world history, from the Peloponnesian War to the American Civil War, has ended with the victory of one side and the defeat of the other side.

The battle in the Middle East is only part of this grand historical pattern.

Of course, college students from both sides should cooperate and lead discussions. Civil discourse is the best way to tell our side of the story and hear the other side. Group discussions, though they abound in cliches that are pregnant with nuances but devoid of meaning, can help us in our eternal pursuit of human understanding.

But not for a moment should we believe that this dialogue can -- or will -- change the turbulent future of the Middle East.

Garin Hovannisian is a columnist at U. California-Berkeley

## Legislation to ban spyware won't solve real problem

So what exactly is on your computer?

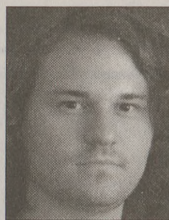
This is a troubling question for millions of Americans whose home computers have been hijacked by viruses and spyware. To remedy part of this widespread problem, a bill endorsed by California Republican Mary Bono and New York Democrat Ed Towns that would try to ban spyware is working its way to Congress.

Even though such a bill is based on good intentions, it will take more than an act of Congress to make spyware go away. Any law that tries to relieve home users from malicious spyware companies will be ineffective, partially because the nature of spyware and partially because of the users themselves.

The first problem with any attempt to regulate spyware is the fact that programs considered as spyware are hard to define in a legal sense. In broad terms, spyware is software that installs itself on a user's computer and gathers knowledge about the user. In legal terms, many of the actual actions carried out by spyware programs are also carried out by benevolent programs.

For example, if any spyware law was to ban the gathering of a computer user's information, Microsoft would not be able to collect information to determine if a computer required any updates. It is too difficult to write a law that attacks only spyware, so any spyware law would prevent legitimate software activity as well.

Another problem with a law against spyware is that in many ways, such a law would be redundant. Federal Trade Commissioner Mozelle Thompson recently stated in the



JONATHAN SMITH

Washington Post that, "There are some kinds of practices that we may consider unfair or deceptive that we already have existing power to pursue." If the laws on the books against consumer fraud and identity theft are not currently being implemented effectively to shut down spyware companies, another law banning the same practice will do no good.

A third problem is that as soon as the law passes, many spyware companies will choose to move overseas rather than allow themselves to be regulated by U.S. law. The global nature of the Internet, the primary means of distributing software such as spyware, is such that it is impossible for the U.S. government to regulate foreign companies that provide services to U.S. customers as long as they do not have a physical presence in our borders.

The final problem with any spyware legislation is that it does not address the attitude of computer users who allow spyware and viruses to spread. It is each computer user's responsibility to keep his or her computer spyware-free.

Too many people buy a computer with the attitude that it is a self-sustaining appliance. Instead, computers are complex machines similar to cars and, just like cars, they need maintenance.

If one doesn't have the time or know-how to perform such maintenance, he should be willing to pay the modest fee it takes for a local computer company to do it for him. It isn't the government's job to force the car companies to change someone's oil every 3,000 miles, and the government should adopt the same attitude toward computers.

If users don't want to deal with spyware on a Windows-based computer, there are many effective technological solutions for keep-

ing a computer spyware free that users can perform themselves. Even users who are not computer-savvy can protect themselves by running regulated updates, downloading spyware removal programs and using Internet browsers besides Internet Explorer. Users who neglect to upkeep their computers also leave themselves open to viruses; a computer problem worse than spyware that Congress has been unable to control with strict laws.

Many of the problems caused by spyware are due to flaws in the Windows operating system. Even though Microsoft works hard to provide updates to prevent attacks from software, the fact that enough users complain about spyware for a bill to be built means that the company has a big problem with its product.

The free market will eventually decide the fate of spyware in the future when less people use Windows computers because of the many security flaws.

Like a weaker species, natural selection in the technology market will force weaker products into extinction.

With or without a new law on the books, spyware will continue to be a big problem for computer users. Any such law will only stand in the way of legitimate companies and give Americans a false sense of security on the matter. Congress cannot fight the war against spyware; the job is the responsibility of every computer user.

Jonathan Smith is a junior history major.