

From MMM #92 February 1996, p 1.

IN FOCUS: SFF's "Alpha Town" proposal hits all the right notes An "afterlife" for Mir?

Once the International Space Station Alpha [ISSA], anchored on the Mir II module, becomes a reality, what will become of the present Mir facility? Will it simply be decommissioned, its orbit allowed to decay like Skylab's, and be doomed to a fiery death? Or can it be leased or sold to a commercial operator, rehabilitated and remodeled, to suit new purposes in orbit, or elsewhere?

Space Frontier Foundation has found a better alternative than "if you can't beat them, join them." "If you can't beat em, *get them to join you!*" better sums up SFF's recent (11/10/'95) "Alpha Town" proposal.

By this plan, Alpha would become the kernel of the first economically self sustaining town in orbit. "Alpha Town encompasses the concept of the station as the financial and institutional hub of a business park." As described by SSS Senior Advisor Tom Rogers, the important actions called for are:

1. Handing over the operation of the US portion of the station to an innovative commercial contractor as soon as possible, with the understanding that the facility be operated in an entrepreneurial, profit oriented and cost reducing manner.
2. Competitively bid all payloads and passenger flights to and from the US portion of the station amongst US launch firms.
3. Requiring that all expansion of the US portion of the station beyond the current design be leased from US commercial firms.
4. Assuring that all domestic and international laws, treaties and agreements involving Alpha Town create a level playing field for US firms and act to encourage private investment in space.

Converting the civil Space Station program into a economically viable outpost in orbit - the heart of "Alpha Town," achieves the Chairman's vision - it makes the project relevant. After having for years opposed both the Space Station Freedom program and the successor International Space Station Alpha project, the Space Frontier Foundation has found a better alternative than "if you can't beat them, join them." "If you can't beat them, give it an easily understandable rationale for the taxpayers and will eventually make human space flight as important to the American public as airline travel is today."

Proponents of the concept see "Alpha Town" as the "federal heart of a bustling free enterprise based community, carrying on all types of activities, from science, to new product development and tourism".

This concept is a great start in the right direction. The MMM editor and the Lunar Reclamation Society are happy to endorse it. There will be considerable resistance to letting commercial and for-profit interests play in this multi-governmental sandbox. Still, we need to aim yet higher to hit even that mark. We think the above provisions offer a basic core and can benefit from further embellishment and offer the following additional suggested improvements: [picking up as #s 5-9, adding to the #s 1-4 list above]

5. We need to dust off the late 1970s “Space Cartage Act” proposal, by which only commercial operators could carry equipment or personnel between space locations (between orbits and/or stations, etc.) This would put an effective limit on NASA’s operational “career.” We will need a “commercial tug marina.”
6. “Commercial Refuelling Depot,” cryogenic scavenging from expended External Tanks brought the remaining 2% of the way into orbit, before being deorbited as proposed in the 1988/89 Space Studies Institute Systems Study.
7. Bid for a “Commercially operated Hotel Module.”
8. Derelict satellite salvage and refurbishment and resales – i.e. a commercially operated hangar with pressurized bays.
9. Draft legislation requiring that additional stations with US involvement in other orbits be wholly commercial.

The Space Frontier Foundation Proposal to turn ISS over to a “Port Authority” type organization (2001) as published in **MMM # 143 MAR 2001** p 13.

An International Space Station Authority - FAQs
<http://www.isscongress.org> - *Domain no longer exists*

A White Paper that lays out our shared view of how best to manage ISS Alpha - by James Muncy, Rick Tumlinson and Bob Werb, Space Frontier Foundation

We wish to encourage and facilitate discussion about how ISS Alpha is to be managed after its construction is complete. We believe that this challenge requires creating an international, quasi-governmental ‘authority’ to manage the operations of the ISS on behalf of all the governments that have contributed to its development.

Our proposal raises numerous questions about which reasonable people can disagree.

Here are some Frequently Asked Questions -- FAQs [abridged (by Peter Kokh?)]
<http://www.isscongress.org/Pages/faqs.html>
- *Domain no longer exists*

1. Must the Authority be International?

Some propose that it would be easier for each space agency to form its own governing Authority to run its parts of the ISS. This would create more problems than it solves.

This is an *International* Space Station and its management must be international! An Authority that does not embrace all the elements of the ISS raises some very hard questions.

- # Who sets the rules for visiting vehicles?
- #Who determines schedules?
- #What laws apply?
- #How are contracts enforced?
- #How are prices set?
- #Are new landlords bound by all the previously negotiated international barter agreements?
- #What are the relationships between landlords?
- #What is the relationship with the PCT (international body administering and enforcing patent law between countries)?

2. Can the Authority be limited to utilization?

Such a limited Authority would be little more than an exclusive broker that addresses none of the basic problems that the authority is being formed to solve. Only by embracing *all* activities conducted on and near the facility as well as *all* of its physical elements, can the Authority prevent conflicts from arising among the various stakeholders. This does not preclude any or all of the users of the station from forming organizations empowered to represent them in their dealings with the Authority. Nor does it preclude the Authority from assigning rights and responsibilities to other people or organizations in the public, private or not-for-profit sectors.

3. What are the high level goals of the Authority?

The fundamental intent is to better serve the goals of the governments and citizens of countries that have invested large amounts of resources in ISS. The big goals are scientific, diplomatic and commercial. We translate those goals into a mission statement for the authority as follows:

- # Ensure safety in and around the ISS
- # Enforce the rule of law in and around the ISS
- # Promote the greatest possible productive use of ISS and of its environment
- # Achieve efficiency in operations; foster a free, competitive marketplace for ISS goods and services.
- # Promote and facilitate improvement and expansion of the Station and of its capabilities

4. How is the Authority to be governed?

The various transportation, environmental and research authorities around the world are governed in a wide variety of ways. It is too soon to determine the precise form that the Authority should take. The ISS partner nations are quite capable of negotiating a format that would serve all their interests.

The key is that the authority governs itself in a manner both fair to the citizens of the various nations involved, and efficient. The nature of the ISS requires the ability to make

quick, clear decisions without much second-guessing by member governments. It is essential that the governing structure be independent of the various owners, tenants, brokers, contractors, suppliers, and customers.

5. What are the limits of the Authority's authority?

One of the greatest strengths of an Authority as an organizational form is its enormous flexibility. But it is essential that clear limits be imposed on the ISS Authority to assure that it continues to serve the interest of the nations that created it:

The Authority shall not own stock or participate in the financial or business operations of any ISS tenant, customer, contractor or supplier.

The Authority shall not expand into businesses not directly related to its responsibilities.

The Authority shall not conduct non-safety ISS operations, but instead shall contract them out.

6. How does the proposed Authority differ from NASA's proposed NGO?

NASA's proposed NGO is essentially an outsourcing of the US portion of science and commercial activity on board the ISS, designed to address a very different set of concerns. The proposed NGO is not international and it does not control operations. The NGO would seem to be a step in the right direction" it would create a quasi-private customer focused on US-funded ISS science and commercial activities.

7. Are Authorities subject to patronage deals, and corruption?

Authorities are government/public entities set up to provide the opportunity for private entities to do things, such as run airlines, explore space, etc. Their employees are subject to the same temptations as government employees. An Authority will need to impose the same sort of constraints on the activities of its employees. An ISS Authority would receive an unusual public scrutiny, and should be less prone to these sorts of problems than some other Authorities.

More: <http://www.isscongress.org/Pages/faqs.html>

Domain no longer exists – the original files probably belong to Jim Muncy, and whether or not they have survived the usual succession of computers is an open question only Jim can answer.