

Leaked documents reveal Trump's proposal to halve NASA's science budget

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The Trump administration has proposed significant cuts to NASA's science programs in its budget plan for fiscal year 2026, according to leaks from the White House reported by the *Washington Post*.

Documents sent to NASA from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) show plans to reduce the agency's overall budget by 20 percent, from \$25 billion to approximately \$20 billion. The Science Mission Directorate would face the most severe reduction, dropping its budget from \$7.3 billion to \$3.9 billion.

Among the science missions under the leaked plan, astrophysics funding would be slashed from \$1.5 billion to \$487 million, Earth science cut to \$1.03 billion and studies of the Sun cut to \$455 million. Funding for planetary science would be cut to just under \$1.93 billion. The documents also suggest that the Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland, with its workforce of approximately 10,000, would be forced to close.

The closure of Goddard would be an even greater loss of scientists, engineers and skilled production workers than the shutdown of the shuttle program in 2011. This intellectual resource, developed through decades of public investment, would effectively transfer to private aerospace and defense contractors as workers seek new employment.

It is difficult to overstate the impact that these cuts would have on the continued progress of science and the resultant positive development of human culture. Even amid the decline of US capitalism, particularly since the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, missions such as Cassini, Spitzer, Juno, New Horizons, Voyager, Hubble and the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) have inspired generations and caused tens of thousands to take up science as their career. In doing so, they have

stood objectively against the onslaught of anti-scientific philosophies of postmodernism promoted in academia and the obscurantism and mysticism promoted in particular by the Republican Party.

The orientation toward science is no doubt why many federal workers have taken part in protests against the Trump administration, including the most recent mass mobilization across the country on April 5. Trump, along with billionaire advisor Elon Musk, stand at the apex of all that is putrid, backward and reactionary in contemporary society.

Among the missions that would be terminated include the long-anticipated Mars Sample Return mission, the culmination of several decades of Martian exploration and the reason why the Perseverance rover was designed to collect and leave behind samples in the first place.

Another mission on the chopping block would be DAVINCI, a planned orbiter and descent probe to study Venus. It would be the first mission to Venus since the Japanese Akatsuki orbiter which studied the planet from December 2015 to April 2024, and would be the first probe to enter Venus' atmosphere since the Soviet Vega missions in 1985.

Arguably the most critical mission that will be cut is the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope, which is already assembled and scheduled for launch as soon as September 2026. It is a near-infrared telescope designed for large scale surveys of the sky. It is slated to study the cosmic acceleration known as dark energy, directly image and gather spectra of exoplanets and gather data to detect primordial black holes.

Even missions still getting support, such as the flagships Hubble and JWST, would likely be indirectly impacted by the cuts. Moreover, given that no new missions would be permitted, the leaked plans would be

setting an effective end date for NASA science once all current missions reach the end of their lifetime.

The attack on NASA's science programs is part of a broader war against science under the Trump administration. The mass firing of over 20,000 scientists and public health workers at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) marked a systematic dismantling of scientific and public health infrastructure.

Agencies including the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, the CDC's Global Health Center, and the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control have seen massive layoffs and restructuring. These cuts have crippled research into mining safety, infectious disease tracking in over 40 countries, and eliminated programs tracking chronic diseases, HIV prevention, and firearm mortality.

The cuts to HHS have also disrupted agencies monitoring the nationwide outbreak of H5N1 "bird flu." Scientists have repeatedly warned that bird flu requires only one mutation to develop human-to-human transmission, threatening the lives of millions in the US and internationally.

The potential cuts to NASA are also aimed at Earth science programs, in line with the Trump administration's efforts to suppress research exposing the dangers of continued greenhouse gas emissions and the impacts climate change is having on the world's population. The budget reduction would also eliminate crucial satellite monitoring programs that track global temperature changes, sea level rise, and other climate indicators.

These cuts, alongside those proposed for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), would set back climate and weather studies for decades. Among the immediate results would be far less accurate hurricane tracking, leaving the tens of millions on the East Coast at the mercy of ferocious storms with little to no warning.

These proposed cuts continue a pattern of subordinating scientific research to profit motives and military interests within American capitalism. Since the 1990s, starting under the Clinton administration, NASA operations have shifted increasingly to private contractors, initially Boeing and Lockheed Martin.

Today, much of NASA's operations have been contracted out to SpaceX, owned by Elon Musk. The

billionaire is also the head of the so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), the pseudo-legal mechanism through which Trump is pushing through cuts across the federal government, including to Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security.

The defense of science cannot be disconnected from the fight by workers and youth to defend immigrants and democratic rights as part of the broader struggle against the Trump administration's efforts to establish a fascist dictatorship and go to war with the world.

The socioeconomic system which demands workers sacrifice their lives to enrich the oligarchy, capitalism, is the same one that stifles basic research in order to serve corporate interests. The only way forward is through the revolutionary transformation of society, led by the working class, and the elevation of social and economic life on a higher scientific and socialist basis.



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