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NASA to get more money, but must scratch moon plan

By **SETH BORENSTEIN** AP Science Writer © 2010 The Associated Press
Jan. 28, 2010, 5:32PM

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WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama is essentially grounding efforts to return astronauts to the moon and instead is sending NASA in new directions with roughly \$6 billion more, according to officials familiar with the plans.

A White House official confirmed Thursday that when next week's budget is proposed, NASA will get an additional \$5.9 billion over five years, as first reported in Florida newspapers. Some of that money would extend the life of the International Space Station to 2020. It also would be used to entice companies to build private spacecraft to ferry astronauts to the space station after the space shuttle retires, said the official who was not authorized to speak

by name.

The money in the president's budget is not enough to follow through with NASA's Constellation moon landing plan initiated by President George W. Bush. An aide to an elected official who was told of Obama's plans, but who asked that his name not be used because of the sensitivity of the discussions, said Obama is effectively ending the return-to-the-moon effort, something that has already cost \$9.1 billion.

It all comes down to money. The six-year-old Bush plan, which a former NASA chief called "Apollo on steroids," sputtered when promised budget increases didn't materialize. And now money is a big consideration in NASA's latest shift in focus.

A new direction for NASA has been on hold for several months while an independent commission studied options and the White House weighed them. Obama's choice will be made clear Monday, when he releases his 2011 budget proposal.

"It certainly appears that the Bush moon mission not going to be included" in future funding, said a senior NASA official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk about the plans.

Space policy scholar John Logsdon, who was on an Obama space campaign advisory committee and has served on NASA advisory panels, said Obama is adopting the preferred option of a White House-appointed outside panel of experts last year. That concept includes reliance on a commercial spaceship, a space station that functions for five more years than planned, and a "flexible path" for human space exploration. That might mean trips to a nearby asteroid, a Martian moon or a brief visit to the moon, instead of the Bush plan for a moon base by the end of the decade.

"What kills the moon mission is the decision to extend the space station to 2020," Logsdon said. That means the Bush goal of "moon by 2020 is dead. We can't afford using the station for five more years and going to the moon."

While the Constellation program "is dead, exploration is not dead and that's really important," Logsdon said.

Already proponents of the moon mission and thousands of workers in space centers in Florida, Alabama and Texas are upset. Congressional officials in those states have denounced such ideas and some of them sit on key committees where they could fight Obama's plans. For example, Sen. Bill Nelson, D-Fla., chairs the space subcommittee in the Senate. And the chairwoman of the House space subcommittee, Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Ariz., is married to a space shuttle astronaut.

The budget numbers were first reported this week by the Orlando Sentinel and Florida Today.

In a statement, Rep. Suzanne Kosmas, D-Fla., said, "The president's proposal would leave NASA with essentially no program and no timeline for exploration beyond Earth's orbit."

Ken Matthews, a member of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers in Huntsville, Ala., said his members worry about "jobs that won't be there."

If Obama does cancel the Constellation program, it "leaves NASA and the nation with no program, no plan and no commitment to any human spaceflight program beyond that of today," said former NASA Administrator Michael Griffin in a statement.

He said this would be recommending "that the nation abandon its leadership on the space frontier," Griffin said.

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Kosmas and others raised questions about the safety of switching to a privately run space travel system that NASA would pay to carry astronauts. Companies pursuing such business include Space Exploration Technology Corp. which is already building a new rocket, called Falcon, and capsule, called Dragon. The company is run by PayPal founder Elon Musk.

And a recent report by NASA's Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel warned NASA not pursue unproven technology and abandon the Ares I rocket — the first rocket in the Bush moon program and one based on the Apollo design.

The report called such a path "unwise and probably not cost-effective."

But the Obama administration official said the Bush program was so underfunded that it wouldn't get astronauts to the moon until 2028 or 2030.

The Bush moon plan was announced after the 2003 Columbia accident that killed seven astronauts. After that disaster in which the shuttle broke apart as it returned to Earth, a special investigative panel said NASA needed a new goal. In January 2004, Bush proposed the return to the moon. It would have involved the Ares I rocket, carrying astronauts in a capsule called Orion. Another Ares spacecraft would carry heavier cargo.

So far NASA has spent \$3.5 billion on Ares I and \$3.7 billion on Orion and nearly \$2 billion on other moon mission work. In the mid-1990s, NASA went through a similar stutter-step that meant abandoning plans that cost billions. That involved President Ronald Reagan's Freedom space station, which ran into trouble after costing \$11 billion without building any hardware. President Bill Clinton had the space station redesigned and restarted.

Associated Press writer Jay Reeves contributed from Birmingham, Ala.



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A21CAV wrote:

Someday our great-great-great grandchildren's generation will look back and wonder how we could have been so foolish to step back instead of forward.

1/28/2010 3:55:47 PM



(22)

Recommend: (32) (12)

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Southern_Select wrote:

"So it is not surprising that some would have us stay where we are a little longer to rest, to wait. But this city of Houston, this state of Texas, this country of the United States was not built by those who waited and rested and wished to look behind them. This country was conquered by those who moved forward - and so will space.

If this capsule history of our progress teaches us anything, it is that man, in his quest for knowledge and progress, is determined and cannot be deterred. The exploration of space will go ahead, whether we join in it or not, and it is one of the great adventures of all time, and no nation which expects to be the leader of other nations can expect to stay behind in this race for space.

We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too.

And finally, the space effort itself, while still in its infancy, has already created a great number of new companies, and tens of thousands of new jobs. Space and related industries are generating new demands in investment and skilled personnel, and this city and this state, and this region, will share greatly in this growth. What was once the furthest outpost on the old frontier of the West will be the furthest outpost on the new frontier of science and space. Houston, your city of Houston, with its Manned Spacecraft Center, will become the heart of a large scientific and engineering community. During the next 5 years the National Aeronautics and Space Administration expects to double the number of scientists and engineers in this area."

-JFK 1962

"We don't need no space. Screw Houston. Hope and change."

-Obama 2010

1/28/2010 3:55:08 PM



(0)

Recommend: (31) (15)

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Scott1961 wrote:

This is just like when they scrapped the super collider. Spend all this money, then scrap it. If



you're going to spend the money then follow through with it. Scrap the shuttle and scrap the moon. So what now?

1/28/2010 4:00:51 PM

(20)

Recommend: (21) (9)

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AJ_11 wrote:

Another smack in the face by Obama. Man 2012 can't come soon enough!

1/28/2010 4:03:22 PM

(0)

Recommend: (20) (14)

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johngalt1 wrote:

\$6 billion over 5 years is \$1.2 billion a year. Not enough to head in a new direction, no guarantee the funding will be there for all four years.

1/28/2010 3:51:06 PM

(0)

Recommend: (17) (4)

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gaetanomarano wrote:

hey, politics, engineers, scientists, why are you lose your time?

you already have the solution to your problems!

just look towards this side!

there is only ONE person in the world that has...

said that the Ares-1 was "too expensive"... in 2005...

proposed the RIGHT shuttle-derived rocket (the FAST-SLV aka Ares-5-lite) in 2006...

said that the 5-segments SRB can't work... in 2006...

said that the Ares-1 can't fly... in 2007...

etc. etc. etc.

yes, he isn't american... but, who cares?

you just need to give away a retired Shuttle to have the solutions to your problems...

too much?

no, it's less than 1% of the money burned by NASA to (only) add a 5th segment to the SRB...

do you REALLY want to SAVE the Constellation and Moon program?

do you REALLY want to CUT the US spaceflight GAP?

do you REALLY want to save thousands space-related jobs?

if the answer is YES then read this article: <http://ow.ly/10hxl>

1/31/2010 4:09:17 PM

Recommend: (0) (0)

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mikbone1 wrote:

It is rumored that Bush, Palin, and that mental giant Sheila Jackson Lee all are equally convinced that moon mission costs will easily be offset by all the green cheese that can be brought back.

1/29/2010 10:18:36 AM

(0)

Recommend: (1) (0)

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S_Dogood wrote:

jjmartin99 wrote:

Disgraceful and short-sighted. Our government eagerly hands out billions to bankers, failing businesses, foreign governments, and other rat holes, but is unwilling to support any sort of R&D effort which would open up new technologies, create new job

<
How wrong you are. Why don't you simply Google Current NASA missions and you'll see over 25 spacecraft in space at this time including the ISS, Cassini Saturn orbiter, Messenger Mercury orbiter, Hubble space telescope, SPITZER infrared space telescope, CHANDRA X-Ray space telescope, Deep space one (ion propulsions that's been cruising the solar system for years), one remaining working Mars rover and several orbital imaging craft, Phoenix Mars Lander, a spacecraft that's heading to Pluto and the list goes on and on producing mountains of data as well as spin-off technologies.

At this time we don't need to go to the Moon. R & D can still take place
And no promise was broken with regards to the Moon – that was a Bush proposal that sunk

in his term only to be proposed again. If you haven't noticed we are in the middle of two wars and hard economic times.

However we do need a cheap replacement for the shuttle. A three man capsule similar to the Orion craft that's already in final development.

NASA should really do a better job of PR with regards with the enormously successful missions that are happening now and in the future.

1/29/2010 10:04:57 AM

Recommend: (2) (1)

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jjmartin99 wrote:

Disgraceful and short-sighted. Our government eagerly hands out billions to bankers, failing businesses, foreign governments, and other rat holes, but is unwilling to support any sort of R&D effort which would open up new technologies, create new jobs, and keep us as a world leader in science and technology. Yet another broken promise. It seems that Wall Street is the only thing that Washington cares about any more.

1/29/2010 9:29:56 AM

Recommend: (1) (1)

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joetempel wrote:

We had better go forward and explore. Man cannot stay dormat and look back. Where would we be if man had not looked ahead and dreamed? Still in Caves with clubs? The space program gave the world so much technology that it paid for itself many times over. Where would we be without it? No computers? Just think of the THINGS we have because of research brought on by the space program. Every discovery, technology etc., caused someone else in business, research, university to think of something else, another direction that they could go with their research/thinking and benefit all of us.

1/29/2010 8:39:03 AM

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