



# Obama budget would cut moon exploration program

By **John D. Sutter**, CNN

February 1, 2010 8:15 p.m. EST



NASA's Constellation Program, which includes this Orion space capsule currently under development, would be axed under President Obama's proposed 2011 budget.

## STORY HIGHLIGHTS

**NEW:** NASA administrator says budget won't prevent future moon missions

Obama's proposed budget would cut NASA's moon exploration program

The Constellation Program aims to take astronauts back to the moon by 2020

The budget would increase overall funding to the U.S. space agency

**(CNN)** -- American astronauts will not return to the moon as planned if Congress passes President Obama's proposed budget.

Obama's budget -- which aims to tighten the nation's purse strings in certain areas while increasing money used to create jobs -- would cancel NASA's Constellation Program, which had sought to send astronauts back to the moon by 2020.

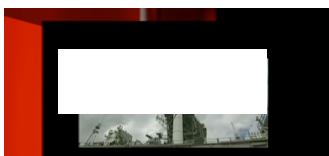
Constellation also intended to study the idea of establishing a moon colony. The program was set to follow the U.S. space agency's shuttle missions, which are due to end in September.

On its Web site, the [White House](#) Budget Office says the program to send astronauts to the moon is behind schedule, over budget and overall less important than other space investments.

"Using a broad range of criteria, an independent review panel determined that even if fully funded, NASA's program to repeat many of the achievements of the Apollo era, 50 years later, was the least attractive approach to space exploration as compared to potential alternatives," the site says.

"Furthermore, NASA's attempts to pursue its moon goals, while inadequate to that task, had drawn funding away from other NASA programs, including robotic space exploration, science, and Earth observations."

Overall, Obama's proposed budget increases the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's budget by \$6 billion over the next five years. The president's budget



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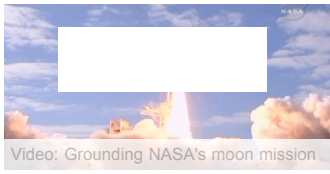
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would give NASA a \$19 billion budget in 2011, compared to its \$18.3 billion budget this year.

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Congress has to approve the federal budget, and a final ruling may not happen for months.

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The budget changes will not prevent NASA from returning astronauts to the moon and exploring the rest of the solar system, NASA Administrator Charlie Bolden said in a conference call with reporters on Monday.

"Imagine trips to Mars that take weeks instead of nearly a year; people fanning out across the inner solar system, exploring the Moon, asteroids and Mars nearly simultaneously in a steady stream of firsts ... That is what the president's plan for NASA will enable, once we develop the new capabilities to make it a reality," Bolden said.

The NASA administrator emphasized the fact that the president's budget would increase NASA funding overall and said the Constellation program was behind schedule and over-budget anyway.

"The truth is we were not on a sustainable path to get back to the moon's surface, and as we focused most of our efforts and funding on getting back to the moon we were neglecting investment in key technologies to get us beyond," he said.

Sen. Bill Nelson, a Democrat from Florida, criticized the president for slashing NASA's moon-mission program from his suggested budget.

The move could cause the U.S. to fall behind other countries in space exploration, he said.

"If they don't push hard now for research and development of the new big rocket that'll take us out of low-Earth orbit and let us explore the heavens, then we are going to be falling behind China and Russia, and that's something I don't think will sit well with the American people," he said in an interview with CNN.

Louis Friedman, executive director of The Planetary Society, called that assertion "ridiculous," and said he's hopeful the end of Constellation would lead to the U.S. returning to the moon more quickly.

Friedman believes that Constellation is a flawed and bloated program, which should be replaced with a new program that would get the U.S. back to the moon more efficiently.

Constellation was behind schedule, and a new program offers a fresh start and puts needed emphasis on space exploration beyond the moon, he said.

"I think the Constellation program probably fell on its own weight as opposed to any major policy change," he said.

Others questioned what will happen to the money NASA has already spent on its program to return to the moon.

"I think that some of the things they're working on could be used regardless of what the program is," said John Pike, director of GlobalSecurity.org and a space policy expert. "Some of it however, I think is just going to end up on the cutting room floor."

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investments in the Constellation Program, according to a CNN report. NASA's current budget gives Constellation \$3.47 billion in funding, according to the White House Budget Office.

NASA says the Constellation research and technology would be useful in other space endeavors.

NASA first sent astronauts to the moon in 1969, and the space agency's Apollo program sent astronauts to the moon at total of six times.

CNN's John Couwels and John Zarrella contributed to this report.

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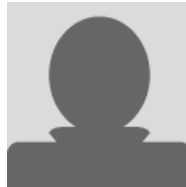
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*vijbada*  
Space programs exploration and NASA contribute far more to our country and the world than all the stupid(Iraq) wars that we are so fond of fighting.Do you know that words and phrases like " blow them out of the sky...." don't exist in the vocabulary of most nations? Yet we use them routinely since w ...[more](#)  
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*Guest*  
oilengineer - You're obviously assuming a linear consumption level. Petroleum consumption over the next 50 years will be anything but linear. When you combine that with the max oil threshold (being a petro-chemical engineer I'm sure you're familiar with the term), the need for an alternative solutio ...[more](#)  
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*Mendrys*  
To those who act as if this is the end of NASA or the American space program you did read that he has actually called for an INCREASE in NASA's budget didn't you? NASA has done much more than just send people to the moon and will continue to do so. The idea of reinventing technology from the 60's ...[more](#)  
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*Guest*

No, Constellation is an END. And it is about TIME!

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• [TomKas](#)

*TomKas*

Thirty or more years of indecision about a three day one way trip to the moon, when subs cruise the ocean depths for months at a time. How do you expect them to get anything done with a budget that is a joke like NASA's? It's a disgrace. No matter what one may think, Constellation was a start. ...[more](#)

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*Guest*

In your dreams. NASA will have no direction when Constellation is canceled and it will wither on the vine. Just as it should.

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• [Guest](#)

*Guest*

BYE BYE NASA!! Time to put away your toys!!! LOL!!!!!!!

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• [Tamooj](#)

*Tamooj*

Well, there is certainly some questions about whether the Constellation program was the best way to get us into a space leadership program; bigger rockets, even using new materials and computers, are just an evolutionary step forward, not a revolutionary one; so the jury is out on this one. By incre ...[more](#)

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• [Guest](#)

*Guest*

Do some homework yourself, moron. The space program does absolutely nothing. It contributes zero. Nothing. Nada. ZIPPO.

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• [Tamooj](#)

*Tamooj*

Oh. speaking of math - our military presence in Iraq costs us \$11 Million \*per hour\*... for nine years. That adds up to more than we've ever spent on space, all together, for fifty years... all the people, industries, jobs, space ships, moon missions, all the weather satellites, etc. All together ...[more](#)

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*Guest*

1/2 of the taxes you pay go to fund war. That is why awesome space programs get shut down.

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• [Guest](#)

*Guest*

1/2!!!! It is AMAZING what morons will simply make up!!!

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*Guest*

Thank GOODNESS!! Finally! Close it NOW!

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NASA's 16B budget is dwarfed the Pell grant budget of 35B.

Pell grants are somewhat shady in that the university of Phoenix with its 4% graduation rate will be the single biggest winner of the Pell grant increase. The university of Phoenix made 3.2B (of all kinds) from government money in 2008

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Okay. You talked us into it. Cut Pell grants also.

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I believe our president is more interested in creating blue collar jobs than keeping or creating white collar ones.

There are any number of reasons why he'd choose this path but I can't help but think that unions and special interests as well as his party's focus on the unskilled workers as their v...more

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I have never met a black person who had any interest in space or space exploration of any kind. They consider anything like that to be a "white" thing and since most blacks hate whites they also hate anything they consider to be "white". If you think I am wrong then look around you the next time yo ...more

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Sorry had to laugh at this. My college roommate was a black man dual majoring in Nuclear Engineering and Aerospace Engineering and his life goal was to design an engine capable to efficient space exploration.

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Guest

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Seriously dude? You're saying that he cut the Constellation program because of a secret penchant black people have toward hating outer space? I just want to be clear on this...you're saying that black people consider space a 'white' thing? Like a black dude looks at a map of the solar system and thi ...more

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You could have stopped after word 7.

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Yorgl

Yorgl

Nasa should fund a program to export people like you to the moon: everybody would be happy, you would get there, you would see no blacks and would read no more stupid comments.

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People seem to think that going commercial is cheaper but I'll tell you what, the bottom line is a trade-off between safety and cost. You go cheap and you loose quality and safety. Impose the same specs and standards on the commercial sector that the existing aerospace companies are required to comp ...more

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• [Lucian1](#)

*Lucian1*

John D. Sutter/CNN writes "...the space agency's Apollo program sent astronauts to the moon at total of six times."Actually the Apollo programme "sent astronauts to the moon" eight times: Apollo 10 (orbited the moon), Apollo 11, Apollo 12, Apollo 13 (which went around the moon in a free return trajj [...more](#)

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• [Guest](#)

*Guest*

There is no need to go to the moon now. Save the money and spend elsewhere that's needed more importantly.

Exploring space can wait for a long while.

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