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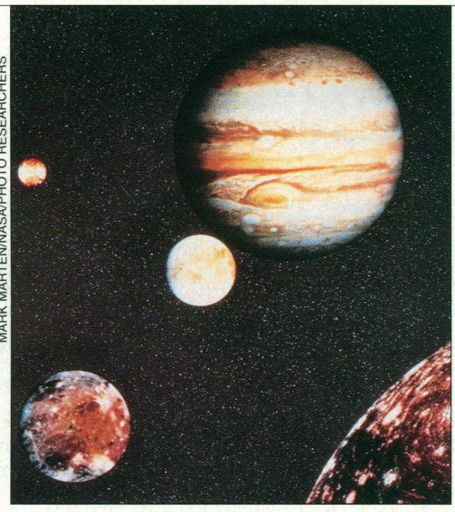
edited by RICHARD STONE

The Long Arm of the NASA Beancounters

You'd think the Galileo spacecraft, having left Earth far behind on its journey to Jupiter, would be well out of reach of terrestrial concerns. But even the 155 million miles between Galileo and Earth may not be enough to protect the craft from financial problems back home: Galileo is scheduled to suffer deep cuts in its scientific program because of shortfalls in the 1994 budget for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

This is bad news for Galileo managers, who thought they'd trimmed enough fat earlier this year by cutting $60 million from its budget through 1998. But even tighter times at NASA this year have forced managers to plan on slashing $20 million more. Galileo programs that might get the ax include a study of the magnetic fields associated with Jupiter and its moons, and remote sensing studies such as an ultraviolet look at Jupiter's upper atmosphere. Another tough cut that would reduce the total mission budget to $462 million: a loss of $15 million slated for retooling Galileo's transmission equipment, which was crippled when the craft's main antenna jammed (*Science*, 26 June 1992, p. 1762). Retooling would have boosted Galileo's transmission rate 10-fold.



MARK MARTEN/NASA/PHOTO RESEARCHERS

Scientific mystery? If NASA's budget stands, don't expect Galileo to transmit much new data on Jupiter and its moons.

Why did NASA budgeters go after an operating spacecraft? According to NASA officials, the Clinton Administration and NASA chief Daniel Goldin think the agency should spend more money on new projects and less on operating old missions. This has angered some NASA scientists. "It's a little like killing your children to get pregnant again," complains one NASA official. But that's what might happen—unless NASA shuffles its priorities or Congress earmarks funds for these missions.

HHS May Join Crime Conference Fray

The University of Maryland seems to be heading where few National Institutes of Health (NIH) grantees have gone before: to the appeals board of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Maryland officials say they plan to appeal an NIH decision to terminate a grant that was slated to pay for a conference last fall on links between genetics and crime.

Last July, NIH suspended the peer-reviewed grant—forcing Maryland to cancel the conference—after the Congressional Black Caucus and other critics argued the conference brochure was racist to suggest the existence of links between genes and crime. Attempts to modify the brochure to the satisfaction of Maryland and NIH failed, and last month NIH terminated the grant (*Science*, 30 April, p. 619).

In a 16-page letter to NIH Director Bernadine Healy last week, Maryland provost Jacob Goldhaber assailed NIH's decision. "This action—taken by a federal agency—has placed the federal government's imprimatur on censorship," Goldhaber wrote. He told *Science* he blames NIH for bowing to the "hue and outcry" over the conference.

John Diggs, NIH deputy director for extramural affairs, agrees that the controversy surrounding the conference helped kill the grant. But in the pervading atmosphere "it would have been impossible for the conference to achieve its goals," Diggs claims, and therefore impossible for Maryland to uphold the terms of the grant.

Goldhaber is arguing that the public, not NIH, should decide whether the conference is too controversial to be held. Maryland plans to appeal next month after it receives a letter from Diggs that spells out NIH's position.

Russians to Launch Their Own UARS

As Russian engineers struggle to grasp the extent of pollution in the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe, their comrades in environmental science will soon have a new tool to study it: a cluster of high-tech environmental monitoring equipment that the Russian Space Agency plans to launch into space later this year or in early 1994.

The "Priroda" instrument module, which will attach to the Russian space station Mir, will study a range of manmade and natural environmental phenomena, from depletion of the stratospheric ozone layer to the formation of typhoons. Outfitted with 15 instruments (including microwave radiometers and multispectral spectrometers for remote sensing), much of Priroda resembles the Upper Atmosphere Research Satellite (UARS), which the National Aeronautics and Space Administration launched in September 1991. UARS has been studying ozone depletion, among other things. Since UARS has finished its 18-month mission, "we're interested to see to what extent the Russians can extend what we've done," says UARS program scientist Robert McNeal.

Another Reversal for The AIDS Vaccine Trial?

A severe case of government gridlock is jeopardizing a planned $20 million trial of several companies' therapeutic AIDS vaccines.

The trial in question traces its roots to a political decision last fall, when Congress, after heavy lobbying from Connecticut's MicroGeneSys Inc., appropriated $20 million to the Department of Defense (DOD) to test that company's therapeutic AIDS vaccine. Soon afterward, separate panels convened by DOD and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) determined that the money would be better spent on testing several companies' vaccines. Last month DOD agreed and said it would shuttle the money to NIH for a large-scale, multiproduct trial (*Science*, 16 April, p. 288).

But the deal may turn sour. Lawyers at NIH's parent agency, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), are wrestling with two issues, says HHS spokesman Victor Zonana. One is simply working out language in the agreement between DOD and HHS. Another, says Zonana, is that it's unclear whether MicroGeneSys will supply its vaccine to the trial unless the government pays for it. HHS has stated it will not purchase experimental products for human testing.

Congress, however, explicitly stated that a gp160 vaccine—the kind made by MicroGeneSys—must be tested. Only one other company, Immuno AG, makes a therapeutic gp160 vaccine, and both the NIH and DOD panels agreed that its product had not yet had enough testing in humans to qualify it for a large-scale trial. MicroGeneSys did not return repeated phone calls.

David Ho, head of the Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center and a member of the NIH panel, says the decision to have a multiproduct trial should not be reversed on a technicality. "It's against the spirit of what most people thought should be done," says Ho. "It's so frustrating. It seems like all of this was settled."