

SPACE POLITICS

Reshuffling Plan Riles Congress

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Administrator Dan Goldin, scrambling to preserve agency programs despite a dwindling budget, has come up with a plan to eliminate science work at two major agency centers, cut thousands of jobs at Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland, and remove space-related activities from Ames Research Center in California. Although the proposals have evoked protests from lawmakers whose districts would be hurt by Goldin's attempt to streamline work done by the agency's dozen centers, NASA officials maintain it's the only way to keep the agency intact. "Everybody is upset," says one agency official. "But this is not a situation with winners and losers: Everybody is going to lose."

The changes are outlined in an eight-page white paper prepared by senior NASA managers and obtained by *Science*. It concludes that, given projections of a 25% reduction in NASA's budget by the end of the decade, "overlapping roles at the field centers [are] no longer an option." The document, which NASA managers insist is only a draft, is part of a larger exercise by Goldin and the White House to revamp the agency that is expected to be completed this spring.

But the white paper already has raised the ire of lawmakers intent on protecting federal jobs and funding for their constituents. For example, Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) pledged this week that she "will be in the trenches every day fighting to preserve and enhance the scientific excellence we have built in Maryland."

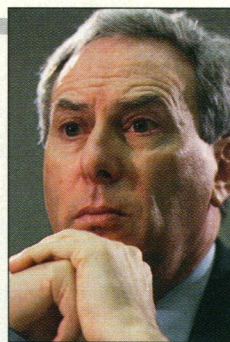
The plan calls for Goddard to give up its role in mission operations and communications, which employ about 3500 people. Nearby Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia, managed by Goddard and also used by the Defense and Commerce departments, would be transferred to "someone else," according to the document. And the 20 people at the Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York City would be transferred to a university.

Ames Research Center would transfer its space activities to other centers and focus on aeronautics, which now accounts for about 60% of its annual budget. That means jettisoning its role in NASA's Earth-monitoring satellites called Mission to Planet Earth as well as life and planetary sciences, including animal research.

Representative Norm Mineta (D-CA), whose district is close to Ames, acknowledged that Goldin must make some tough choices but vowed "to insure that NASA/Ames and the Bay area are protected from any unnecessary burdens or irresponsible cuts." Mineta even suggested that NASA move all space research to Ames.

One of the most dramatic proposals is to shift responsibility for the space shuttle, NASA's largest single program, from Johnson Space Center in Houston to Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Johnson would assume many of the operations and communications jobs now at Goddard and give up all its science programs except for life sciences research. The proposals have angered Representative Steve Stockman (R-TX), a freshman on the House Science Committee. At the same time, the Kennedy Space Center would be turned over to a contractor, although NASA officials would retain the final say over shuttle launches. The result would be many fewer civil servants—scientists, engineers, and support personnel—at the Florida center.

Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama, under the plan would revert to its original mission—engineering vehicles for space flight. It would no longer conduct microgravity research, design science spacecraft, or take part in operating the future space station. A non-NASA institute would manage the Advanced X-ray Astrophysics Facility control center and operate the spacecraft, to



Loss leader. NASA's Goldin looks for ways to save shrinking budget.

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be launched later this decade.

The Goldin plan appears to supersede the work of an independent panel led by former TRW executive John Foster, which is putting the finishing touches on a report requested by Goldin and the White House to streamline NASA operations (*Science*, 24 February, p. 1087). Although some members of NASA's Advisory Council worry that the white paper makes the Foster report irrelevant before it is even completed, others say the speed with which Goldin has identified candidates for surgery is an indication of the severity of the crisis facing NASA. "A lot of the things in the white paper were rapid reactions by Goldin to the constructive criticism of the Foster committee," says Robert Rosenberg, an industry executive and member of NASA's Advisory Council. "And yes, the council was aware of that dialogue."

NASA officials are betting that their decision to distribute the pain evenly will help them push through these reforms. White House officials have given their blessing to Goldin's plan, and agency managers insist they did not act unilaterally. Key lawmakers like Mikulski, they say, were quietly informed several weeks ago that drastic cuts were on the horizon.

—Andrew Lawler

FEDERAL BUDGET

Proposed Cuts Include R&D Funding



Federal agencies last week felt the first budgetary shock waves of the Republican takeover of Congress. A dozen House appropriations subcommittees, acting individually, voted to take back \$353 million in research funds that Congress had already approved for the current fiscal year.

The cuts, part of a multibillion-dollar rescission of 1995 funds, are expected to be voted on shortly by the Appropriations Committee, then by the full House. The process will then be repeated in the Senate, and differences between the two bodies must be reconciled before any cuts take effect. Specific cuts include:

- **NASA.** \$27 million for a building to house the Consortium for Earth Sciences Information Network in Michigan, terminating the project; \$10 million for the Hubble Space Telescope program for data analysis and a future servicing mission; \$25 million for the Earth Observing System; and \$3 million for supercomputing activities.

- **NSF.** \$132 million for the Academic Facilities Infrastructure program, leaving \$118 million.

- **NIH.** \$20 million for an extramural facilities program, leaving nothing for 1995; and \$50 million for construction projects on the Bethesda campus.

- **Interior.** \$16 million (a 10% reduction) for the National Biological Service.

- **Energy.** \$35 million for solar energy and renewable research; \$15 million for an Environmental Molecular Biology facility at the Pacific Northwest Laboratory and for construction relating to the human genome project at Lawrence Berkeley National Lab; \$7.5 million to start planning a spallation source to replace the Advanced Neutron Source; \$5 million for advanced computing; and \$8 million for technology transfer.

- **EPA.** \$14.6 million for research, with specific programs yet to be determined.

- **Office of Technology Assessment.** \$650,000 for equipment, salaries, and other administrative costs.

—Andrew Lawler