

NASA funds search for past life on Mars

January 18 2007

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration has awarded a \$750,000 grant to a U.S. researcher for help in searching for evidence of past life on Mars.

NASA is funding the work by University of California-Santa Barbara organic chemist Luann Becker to further develop the Mars Organic Molecule Analyzer -- an instrument nicknamed MOMA that will search for the remnants of life on Mars.

The analyzer -- a mass spectrometer -- will examine soil samples taken from up to 6 1/2 feet below the surface of Mars. It will be one of a suite of 10 instruments in the European Space Agency's ExoMars "Pasteur" payload, scheduled to arrive on Mars in 2013.

Becker is the principal investigator of a team that includes French and German scientists, as well as two co-investigators from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

NASA said ExoMars is to be launched from the Kourou space port in French Guiana and will deploy a highly mobile rover equipped with a drill to provide the first subsurface vertical profile of Mars.

Copyright 2007 by United Press International

Citation: NASA funds search for past life on Mars (2007, January 18) retrieved 4 May 2024

from <https://phys.org/news/2007-01-nasa-funds-life-mars.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.