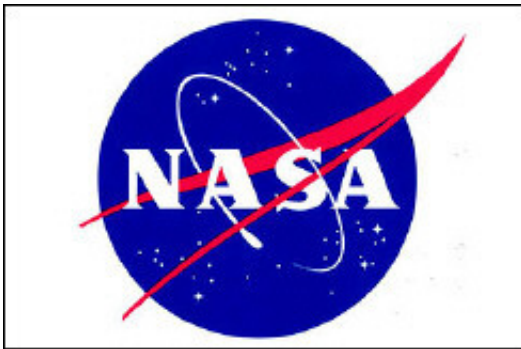


NASA creates buzz with 'extraterrestrial' announcement

December 1 2010, By RANDOLPH E. SCHMID , AP Science Writer



The US space agency has created a buzz with its announcement of a press conference Thursday to discuss a scientific finding that relates to the hunt for life beyond the planet Earth.

Speculation that life has been discovered beyond Earth exploded on the Internet after NASA announced plans for a briefing involving scientists who study unusual life forms.

The briefing, set for Thursday, focuses on a paper being published in the journal *Science*, which has not been made public.

But when it is released, the paper will be a disappointment to those speculating about its contents. It does not report finding life outside of

Earth, according to science writers who have seen the paper.

The American Association for the Advancement of Science - which publishes the journal in which the research will appear - said Wednesday it has received numerous inquiries about the "mostly erroneous online and/or tabloid speculation about the forthcoming research.

"These reports clearly are not based on the peer-reviewed research being published under the auspices of the journal *Science*."

The flap began when blogger Jason Kottke speculated on Kottke.org that - based on the areas of expertise of the scientists scheduled to speak - NASA might announce it had found bacterial life on Titan, Saturn's largest moon. That speculation was quickly picked up and repeated by a number of Internet sites.

Because modern science can be complex and hard to explain, major journals such as *Nature*, *Science*, *Journal of the American Medical Association* and others make their papers available to selected science writers in advance. That gives the writers time to prepare their stories. In return, they are required to promise that they will abide by release times for the papers they see in advance.

Kottke, AAAS said Wednesday, is not registered to receive papers in advance.

The headline on his blog was: "Has NASA discovered extraterrestrial life?"

By Wednesday he had added a note to his posting quoting a science writer who does have access to the paper. The answer to the question in the headline, the writer said, is "no."

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