

Funding for US-German airborne observatory cut

March 4 2014



In this 1998 photo provided by NASA and Universities Space Research Association (USRA) shows a modified Boeing 747SP jetliner containing the Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy (SOFIA) infrared observatory, a project of NASA and the German Aerospace Center. The White House released its budget on Tuesday, March 4, 2014, that proposes to mothball the observatory unless Germany and other partners can kick in more money. (AP Photo/NASA/USRA)

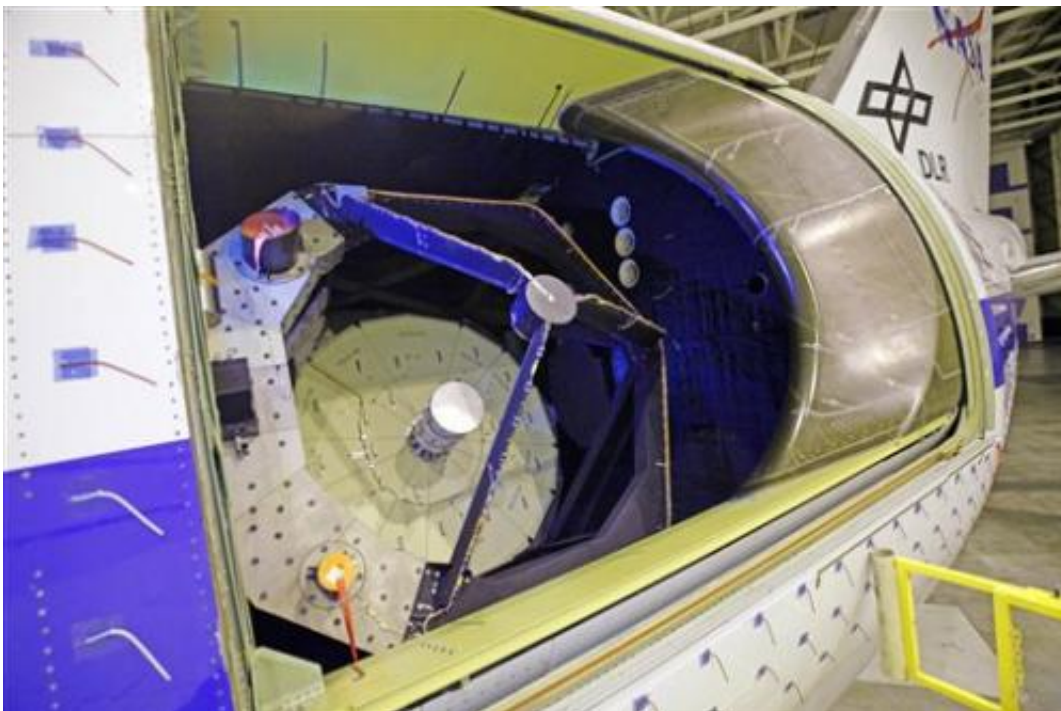
NASA plans to mothball its infrared airborne observatory unless it can get some financial help from international partners.

The White House budget released Tuesday proposes to slash funding for the U.S.-German project from \$84 million to \$12 million.

NASA is the main backer of the Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy, or SOFIA for short.

The 40,000-pound telescope is mounted in the rear of the former Pan Am jetliner. Flying between 39,000 feet and 45,000 feet, the telescope scans the skies for celestial objects that give off radiation in infrared wavelengths, which are not visible to the human eye.

NASA says the observatory will continue its mission through September. If there's no extra funding, then the space agency will have to put it in storage.



This April 20, 2010 file photo shows the bay of a modified Boeing 747SP jetliner containing the Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy (SOFIA) telescope at a NASA Dryden Flight Research Center test facility in Palmdale, Calif. The White House released its budget on Tuesday, March 4, 2014, that proposes to mothball the observatory unless Germany and other partners can kick in more money. (AP Photo/Reed Saxon, File)



In this April 20, 2010, file photo, the telescope control console is seen inside the aircraft at the first public viewing of the Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy (SOFIA), a cooperative venture between NASA and German scientists, where a 2.8-meter (98-inch) telescope has been mounted inside specially modified Boeing 747-SP, at a NASA Dryden Flight Research Center test facility in Palmdale, Calif. The control mechanism for the telescope is seen at rear. The White House released its budget on Tuesday, March 4, 2014, that

proposes to mothball the observatory unless Germany and other partners can kick in more money. (AP Photo/Reed Saxon, File)



In this April 20, 2010, file photo, U.S. and German flags are seen on the side of the aircraft at the first public viewing of the Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy (SOFIA), a cooperative venture between NASA and German scientists, where a 2.8-meter (98-inch) telescope has been mounted inside specially modified Boeing 747-SP, at the NASA Dryden Flight Research Center test facility in Palmdale, Calif. The White House released its budget on Tuesday, March 4, 2014, that proposes to mothball the observatory unless Germany and other partners can kick in more money. (AP Photo/Reed Saxon, File)

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